PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 102

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1985-86

COMPRISING PERIOD
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THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 102**

SEVENTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1985-86

House of Commons

Monday 21 July 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

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[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL

PONTYPRIDD MARKETS FAIRS AND TOWN HALL BILL
Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

General Certificate of Secondary Education

1. **Mr. Rowlands** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what additional resources are being made available to local education authorities specifically to reduce the size of classes taking the new general certificate of secondary education syllabus.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): It is for local education authorities to manage the resources available for education. Funding secondary schools for the GCSE is clearly a high priority, and I am pleased to see that some authorities have already made additional resources available for this purpose. So indeed has the Welsh Office, which has made available over £3 million for purposes specifically related to the introduction of the GCSE.

Mr. Rowlands: Is the Minister aware that no teachers or headmasters, and only a very few parents, believe that we can introduce this syllabus, with classes of 30-plus for mainstream subjects, although that is what the majority of our children will face when the new system is introduced? Will he therefore look again at the pupil-teacher ratios for the introduction of the scheme, because they are vital to the success of the introduction of a new syllabus and examination system?

Mr. Roberts: I wholly disagree with the hon. Gentleman. I believe that teachers are showing the will and commitment that is needed to introduce the new examination. As for the pupil-teacher ratio, in the hon. Gentleman's own county, Mid Glamorgan, the pupil-teacher ratio is 16·7.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My hon. Friend will be aware of the parental concern, even cynicism. Is he satisfied that local councils will deploy these additional resources at the chalk face?

Mr. Roberts: I have already said that two local authorities have announced their plans, and I have exhorted local authorities to do so. There has been some concern about books and materials. The Government are making available this year £5,000, on average, per secondary school in Wales. A similar sum will be available over the next two years. That is in addition to the capitation allowances that are to be provided by the local authorities.

Mr. Rogers: Is the Minister aware that the extra £5,000 that is to be given to each secondary school is quite pathetic? The general certificate of secondary education is a new philosophy which will depend upon project work, more laboratory work and continual assessment. The resources that are being given to it are quite inadequate. When will the Government properly fund this particular examination?

Mr. Roberts: We are funding it properly. I have already announced what extra finance is available from the Welsh Office specifically for this examination. I remind the House that in Wales about £659·5 million is available to local authorities for education in the current year.

Mr. Raffan: Will my right hon. Friend seriously consider allocating further resources over the next three years to ensure that teachers can develop the new range of skills that are required to supervise and evaluate GCSE course work, bearing in mind that to release a teacher for one day costs a local education authority at least £50?

Mr. Roberts: In the amount that I have announced as being available from the Welsh Office, there is a grant scheme for in-service training, teacher training seminars and syllabus-specific training. We have sought to meet practically every reasonable requirement for additional finance for this examination.

Mr. Barry Jones: Would not the biggest boost for this important examination be more teachers? Is not the crucial mechanism for the funding of the school system the rate support grant? We demand a generous rate support grant settlement. Would not a means of helping education authorities in Wales be a switch of cash from private schools to the budgets of the local education authorities? Would that not give the new examination a better start, because the Minister is throwing more cash at the private schools than he is giving extra case to the new examination?

Mr. Roberts: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's last remark. The amount given to private schools is over £1 million, but I have just added it up, and the total that we have given to the new examinaton is £3 million. That is additional to the support given through the rate support grant, which, under this Government, has increased from £601·8 million in 1979-80 to £628·5 million in 1984-85, at a time of falling pupil numbers. Therefore, expenditure per pupil has increased over that period by £100 in real terms.

Welsh Water Authority

2. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of the Welsh water authority to discuss the authority's budget.

9. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to meet the chairman of the Welsh Water Authority to discuss with him the decision by the Government not to proceed with the plans to privatise the water industry in the next Session of Parliament.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of the Welsh water authority regularly to discuss a variety of issues. I last saw him on 15 July.

Mr. Wigley: As the Welsh water authority recently announced a record £12·3 million profit, is it not scandalous that water rates in Wales should be increased next year by 9 per cent., an average of £10 per household, at a time when the Government are increasing pensions by only 1 per cent.? Does that not put an unacceptable burden on the lowly paid in Wales?

Mr. Robinson: No final decisions have yet been taken on the charges that are likely to be levied by the Welsh water authority in the coming year. The £12·3 million profit has been used to finance an increase in the capital programme from £41 million in 1984-85 to £54 million in 1985-86.

Mr. Powell: We have no objection to the coupling of questions, but one expects the Minister to reply to the second question. My question relates to the discussions with the chairman of the Welsh water authority about the Government's decision. On 9 June, only six weeks ago, the Minister was arguing for the privatisation of the water industry. Now the Government have changed their mind. It is no good the Minister shaking his head. If he reads *Hansard* for 9 June he will see what he said about privatisation. As the Government have changed their mind, one would have expected a Welsh Office Minister to make a statement to the House so that Labour Members in particular Welsh Members, could advocate what they wanted with regard to the water authorities, not what the Minister wants. In future, if the Minister is minded to couple my question with another, will he ensure that he answers it properly?

Mr. Robinson: In my reply I said that I met
"the chairman of the Welsh water authority regularly to discuss a variety of issues."
These include the current status of water privatisation. As the hon. Members knows, having been in the Chamber for the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Government have no plans to change their policy towards water privatisation. They have simply announced that we shall not be introducing legislation in the coming Session.

Mr. Raffan: I welcome the extra £30 million of capital expenditure by the Welsh water authority in 1984-85, but will my hon. Friend join me in welcoming the chairman's foreword to his annual report, which says that it sets the authority on the road to even higher levels of capital spending over the next three years?

Mr. Robinson: My hon. Friend is right to point that out. The chairman is very keen that capital investment by the Welsh water authority in the water industry should continue to go on apace. The chairman's report sums up the position well.

Mr. Alex Carlile: When the Minister last met the chairman to talk about the water authority's budget, did he discuss providing extra money to enable the Welsh water authority to monitor the caesium levels in sheep within its area? If not, will he give an assurance that Welsh Members will be given all the information necessary to enable them to judge the caesium levels in sheep in Wales? Furthermore, will he ensure that that includes all the statistical data in the Welsh Office's possession?

Mr. Robinson: That was not on the agenda at my meeting with the chairman of the Welsh water authority, but I assure the hon. and learned Gentleman that we are publishing all the relevant information that is available on that topic.

Mr. Mark Hughes: I rise with great deference to intervene in Welsh Question Time, but why do the latest figures for England include the caesium level for brown trout, rainbow trout——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going very wide of the question.

Mr. Hughes: I accept that, Mr. Speaker, but——

Mr. Speaker: The trouble is, I cannot accept it.

Mr. Hughes: Why did the Minister not discuss the absence of any figures from the Welsh Office on the caesium levels in fish? It got figures on cabbage, rhubarb and gooseberries. Why not on fish?

Mr. Robinson: We are publishing all the statistics available to us.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It may be premature to question my hon. Friend about the greater flexibility of capital raising after privatisation, but in the meanwhile can he confirm that he will issue firm advice to the Welsh water authority on the importance of ensuring that future rate increases are not significantly higher than the prevailing rate of inflation?

Mr. Robinson: I know that the water authority will do everything in its power to keep down rate increases to the lowest level possible.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: The Minister will be aware that more than 30,000 houses in Wales are served by unadopted sewers. Will he say when the Government will introduce measures to correct that, in line with their consultation paper, "Water and Sewerage Law"?

Mr. Robinson: As the hon. Gentleman has said, we have issued a consultation paper and we are now studying the responses that we have received.

Mr. Barry Jones: Is it not true that a privatised authority would not be a viable enterprise? Would not a commercialised water industry be disastrous for the country? Do not the Government's plans excite the hostility of tens of thousands of anglers in the Principality? There is no mandate in Wales for the privatisation of the water industry, and the party that proposes privatisation will be electorally wiped out.

Mr. Robinson: It is very likely that we shall be seeking a mandate for the privatisation of the water authorities. We certainly believe that the authorities have a great future as a privatised industry, as they will then be able to raise much-needed funding on the capital markets. There is every possibility that the Welsh water authority will be able to expand any recreational activities after privatisation.

Labour Statistics

3. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales; what were the equivalent figures in May 1979; and what has been the percentage increase in each case.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): On 12 June 1986 the total numbers of unemployed claimants in the Newport travel-to-work area, Gwent and Wales, were 12,775, 29,229 and 173,708, respectively. Unadjusted figures for 1979 are not available on a comparable basis.

Mr. Hughes: Has the Secretary of State recently looked at the population statistics for Newport? They show that the population is apparently declining in numbers. Moreover, there is evidence that it is the young who are leaving. Is that any wonder when, for a week or so, the local press has been full of reports of our young people frequenting amusement arcades, with all the debauchery that is associated with them? Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that last Saturday I received a deputation of ladies, who presented me with a petition containing horrific details about glue sniffing in one area of the town? After more than seven years in office, is it not time that the Government started to think about providing some real jobs for young people?

Mr. Edwards: I am glad to say that Gwent is one of the areas that has proved to be successful in attracting a wide range of new industries. The kind of approach adopted by the hon. Gentleman to these matters will hardly encourage investment of the kind that we all want.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the continued creation of new jobs is important, not the old dreary ritual of despair that we keep getting from the Opposition? Is not one of the best pointers the latest survey from the Cardiff chamber of commerce, published in this morning's *Western Mail*? That survey, carried out among its members throughout south Wales, shows that approximately two thirds expect to increase their business in the coming year. Does my right hon. Friend also agree that we ought not to ignore the fact that over 20 per cent. of them report difficulties in recruiting suitable labour, especially skilled tradesmen?

Mr. Edwards: I am sure that my hon. Friend is quite right. There are other favourable indications, such as a very high level of factory allocations by Government agencies this year. Inquiries to the small business unit are at an all-time record high and there is continued success in attracting a high proportion of the United Kingdom's total inward investment.

Mr. Anderson: Does the Secretary of State tell the House that the welcome reduction in inflation is wholly due to the success of the Government's policy and that the alarming increase in unemployment is wholly due to external factors?

Mr. Edwards: I make no claims of the kind just put into my mouth. We are attracting a high level of investment in new jobs in Wales, and there are some signs that unemployment is stabilising and marginally improving relative to the situation elsewhere in the United Kingdom. That suggests that at least the long decline of the basic industries from which we have suffered for so long is coming to an end and that the Welsh economy is more and more dependent on the large number of new companies that we attracted in recent years and on the large number of new small businesses that are starting up.

Kidney Patients

4. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many new kidney patients per million head of population received dialysis treatment in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In 1985 approximately 56 new patients per million population received dialysis treatment in Wales, compared with 19 new patients per million population in 1979.

Mr. Favell: I trust that Welsh Members will forgive me for venturing into health questions, but it is a subject in which I am interested. Can my hon. Friend tell me whether the wonderful improvement in kidney dialysis provision in Wales is due to a partnership between the private health sector and the National Health Service? Elsewhere in the United Kingdom, could not scarce resources as well as lives be saved by following the excellent example of Wales?

Mr. Robinson: I welcome my hon. Friend's question. This has been an outstandingly successful experiment in Carmarthen and in Bangor. In order to see what has been achieved in terms of co-operation between the public and private sectors in health care provision, I have written to my colleagues in the Scottish Office, the Northern Ireland Office and in England to inform them of what has been done and to urge them to look at it if they are so minded.

Mr. Coleman: I welcome the increase in the number of dialysis treatments in Wales, but can the Minister guarantee that this will continue, especially in the light of the *Western Mail* report this morning, which talks of shortages of doctors in Welsh hospitals? It says that authorities have to pay as much as £1,000 a week for locums and that young junior doctors have to work 104 hours a week. What will he do about that to ensure that the Health Service in Wales can continue successfully?

Mr. Robinson: Not only can I guarantee to the hon. Gentleman that the service will be maintained, but I can tell him that at the moment we are working on plans to extend the service.

A55–A548 Delyn (Link Road)

5. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to construct a link road between the A55 and the A548 in Delyn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Raffan: As Delyn borough council regards this as the most urgent priority road scheme in the borough, and as industrial growth will be hampered until the link is created, will my hon. Friend consider giving financial help to Clwyd county council to enable it to carry out its promised evaluation study of the proposed link road as soon as possible?

Mr. Roberts: As my hon. Friend will realise, the link road which he proposes, which is supported by Delyn borough council, is a matter for Clwyd county council. If and when the county council produces proposals, they will be considered in the usual way for support by means of the transport supplementary grant. I understand that Clwyd is prepared to carry out an evaluation study in due course, but that it gives higher priority to the second Dee crossing.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Apart from the A55, will there be a statement on Thursday about the building of a second Severn crossing? Have the Government rejected the report of the Select Committee on Transport on estuarial crossings, which calls for their abolition——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am reluctant to interrupt a Front-Bench spokesman, but does this relate to the A55?

Mr. Hughes: It relates to the Government's road programme.

Mr. Speaker: The question relates to a link road between the A55 and the A548.

Mr. Hughes: Is it not time that the Government employed some plumbers to stop the perpetual leaks? At least they should start to show a little respect for the House of Commons.

Mr. Roberts: Whatever may be said about a second Severn crossing, it will not go over the A55 or the A548.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Minister agree that the A55, with or without the link road, is only one part of the roads necessary for a reasonable east-west crossing in Wales? Will he give immediate consideration to giving greater priority to the mid-Wales east-west crossing?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. and learned Gentleman will have read "Roads in Wales 1985" and "Roads in Wales —the 1990s and Beyond." We are consulting on those proposals, which refer in part to mid-Wales.

European Regional Development Fund

6. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total value of grants which Wales has received from the European regional development fund in each of the past three years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Net commitments in 1983, 1984 and 1985 amounted to £45·1 million, £63 million, and £54·9 million, respectively. Allocations to Wales in 1986 to date total £12·6 million, with applications for a further £37·2 million of aid under consideration in Brussels.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend believe that the size of the grants has been sufficiently well publicised? If not, what steps is he taking to ensure that the public are made aware of the extent of the assistance that Wales receives from the fund?

Mr. Edwards: The assistance has made a valuable contribution to the provision of infrastructure. The most recent example was the announcement by the Commission of financial support for the splendid new innovation centre on the campus of Swansea university, which was opened by the Prince of Wales a fortnight ago. Every opportunity is taken to publicise such support through press notices and by other means. When I was at the university last week the principal expressed his gratitude for the support and said how important it was.

Mr. Wigley: As one of the most important European grants for Gwynnedd — that to the lamb and sheep farmers—is being lost because of the radioactivity ban, thus causing an immense cash flow crisis for the farmers, when will the Secretary of State make a clear and detailed statement on compensation for those farmers? When will he come out of his bunker and come to Gwynnedd—he has not yet been there, although the crisis has continued for a month—and meet those farmers, who are facing a desperate time?

Mr. Edwards: I understand the importance of the questions being asked, which is why we are taking urgent steps to ensure that the areas are reduced as quickly as possible. But this does not arise under a question about the ERDF.

Transport Act 1985

7. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest assessment of the effect upon transport services in Wales of the operation of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The evidence available so far suggests that the new arrangements will help to check the decline in the bus industry and encourage the provision of public transport services better suited to the needs of passengers.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister appreciate that there is great anxiety about the problem in Wales and that there is great apprehension that evening stage carriage services and the problems of bussing children to and from school will become much worse as a result of the Transport Act? If he does not agree that that will happen, what guarantees can he give on those two points?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman is being unduly alarmist. He must consider the whole picture, not just of registered commercial services, but of the subsidised services as well. He will know that no county in Wales has yet evaluated the tenders for subsidised services, but they all seem confident that they will be able to buy additional services through the subsidy tender system, and that includes Clwyd. I understand that Clwyd proposed to award contracts on the basis of competitive tenders, including those for school transport.

Housing (Multiple Occupation)

10. **Mr. Anderson** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance he will give to local authorities to protect the safety of those in houses of multiple occupation.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend has recently issued detailed guidance to local authorities on 22 May about their powers to control houses in multiple occupation and protect the safety of the people who live in them.

Mr. Anderson: The Minister must be aware from representations from the Institution of Environmental Health Officers and those working in the field of their continued concern about the real dangers to the health and safety of that vulnerable section of our population who live in houses in mulitiple occupation. Will he at least undertake to look sympathetically at the Bill that has been introduced by Baroness Vickers in the other place, which would impose duties on local authorities to enforce certain standards for health and safety and would provide regular inspections by local authorities of houses in multiple occupation?

Mr. Robinson: We are aware of the Bill to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Indeed, many of its provisions contain sympathetic and sensible ideas. However, our current legislation is adequate. Indeed, we have introduced some new legislation fairly recently and we want to see how that works before taking the matter further.

Welsh Water Authority

11. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what current steps are being taken by his Department to prepare the Welsh water authority for privatisation.

Mr. Mark Robinson: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment said in his statement to the House on 3 July, the Government intend to proceed with water privatisation as soon as practicable. Preparatory work to that end is continuing.

Mr. Davies: I take it from that answer that the Minister is confirming that staff in the Welsh Office are now carrying out preparatory work. Will he confirm that staff of the Welsh water authority are being directed to carry out preparatory work? Is not that expenditure of public money and use of public servants' time fundamentally dishonest when neither the Welsh Office nor the Government have any mandate for their privatisation proposals? Will the Minister now take steps to direct staff in his Department to cease forthwith action on privatisation and direct the Welsh water authority to do the same? Will he confirm that the Government's privatisation proposals will form a centrepiece in the Government's manifesto at the next election?

Mr. Robinson: It is very likely that our privatisation proposals will form a central part of our manifesto. The hon. Gentleman has great first-hand experience of water as a result of his valiant attempt to push the Welsh Eight off the rocks during the regatta last week.

However, the answers to his other questions are no, Sir.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Can the Minister tell the House something about the debt of the Welsh water authority? Are we to understand that if the industry is privatised the debt will be wiped out, but if it stays in public ownership the debt will remain?

Mr. Robinson: There will be a major restructuring to take account of privatisation, but until that time comes we have no plans to change the capital structure of the water authority.

School Visits

12. **Mr. Barry Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales which schools in Wales he has visited from November 1985 to June 1986.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has visited Pembroke comprehensive school; I have visited Cardiff high school, while my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson), visited Malpas Church in Wales junior school in Newport.

Mr. Jones: Will the Secretary of State show more commitment to the local education authority schools in Wales? Is the Under-Secretary aware that the Social Security Bill may well eliminate some 27,000 free school meals in Wales, yet the community health experts and nutritionists are already worried about the low nutrition levels of many Welsh families? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that many Welsh children depend for their nutrition upon free school meals? Bearing in mind nutritionists' worries, what will the Government do? Surely the Bill is wrong and will hit Welsh schoolchildren from the poorest families.

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman might be right in saying that a certain number of children will lose free school meals under the Social Security Bill, but an even greater number will benefit from the alternative scheme. We are totally committed to the maintained sector.

Mr. Grist: Is my hon. Friend aware that he will be a most welcome visitor to the Howardian high school in my constituency? That school is under threat of closure by the south Glamorgan authority, although it is one of the most successful in the county.

Mr. Roberts: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know of his close connection with the Howardian high school. He will understand that there is scope for the rationalisation of secondary school provision, particularly

because of the fall in pupil numbers. Local education authorities make proposals that are the subject of consultation. A closure proposal is referred ultimately to

Hospital Waiting Lists

13. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on hospital waiting lists in the Cynon Valley and Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Representations on matters relating to waiting lists have been received from many parts of the Principality, including Cynon Valley. I indicated the extent of our response to the hon. Lady in replying to her question on 30 June.

Mrs. Clwyd: Is the Minister aware that there are far fewer general surgeons in post than when the Government came to power in 1979, and that there are now fewer consultant surgeons per head of population in Britain than in any other Western country? Does that not nail the lie perpetuated by the Government that they have put more into the National Health Service? Does the Minister agree with the president of the Royal College of Surgeons, who said recently:

"Wards are being closed, beds are being closed, surgeons are being told to reduce their operating sessions. Many of us, including myself, have been criticised for doing too much work. That is unbelievable. The prime reason is finance."

Mr. Robinson: I am pleased to tell the hon. Lady that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State opened no fewer than two new hospitals on Friday. Staff directly concerned with front-line patient care, including the categories to which the hon. Lady referred, have increased by 12·5 per cent. since 1979, nursing staff are up by 10 per cent., medical and dental staff are up by 13 per cent.—an overall increase of 18 per cent. I am astonished that the hon. Lady should refer to falling resources, because expenditure that we have made available to the Health Service since we came to power has increased by no less than 26 per cent. in real terms.

Welsh Joint Education Committee

15. **Mr. Gwilym Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to meet the Welsh Joint Education Committee.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I attended the annual meeting of the Welsh Joint Education Committee on 4 July 1986 and set out Government policy over a range of educational issues of current concern in Wales. I have placed a copy of my speech in the Library.

Mr. Jones: Did my hon. Friend take the opportunity to raise the important TVEI programme with the WJEC?

Mr. Roberts: I touched upon the subject and was delighted to tell the WJEC of my pride over the fact that every local education authority in Wales is involved in TVEI. We have announced an extension of the TVEI scheme and have published the White Paper "Working Together — Education and Training" which relates to TVEI.

Mr. Wigley: At the meeting to which the Minister referred, Councillor Emyr Currie-Jones asked him why the suggested plan for the Welsh language, given to the Welsh Office by the Welsh Joint Education Committee in November, had received no response. Why has the Welsh Office been sitting on that plan for seven months?

Mr. Roberts: The WJEC has certainly put forward proposals on that matter. However, they involve a somewhat complex machinery of committees and sub-committees and a complex programme of work. What the WJEC has not done is to meet the requirements spelt out by my right hon. Friend in his letter to it of 23 July last year.

Mr. Barry Jones: The Minister is being unnecessarily laggardly about this matter. Was it not a major error of judgment to attack the WJEC while failing to indicate the financial resources available to it? There is a bitter taste in the mouths of people in Wales because of the Minister's mistake. Should he not apologise to the WJEC?

Mr. Roberts: My intention was to spur on the WJEC, and I think that what I said achieved the desired effect. After all, it is a year since my right hon. Friend wrote to it, and I have openly regretted the fact that we have not been able to make more progress together in such a long time.

I think that the spur that I gave to the WJEC has been successful and that we shall advance more quickly in the near future. One reason why we have not advanced as quickly as we might has been the stress that the WJEC has placed on resources, whereas I have been stressing the need for a proper framework for discussion.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church Halls

19. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what criteria the Commissioners use in the provision of funds for church halls.

Sir William van Straubenzee (The Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing Church Commissioners): The Church Commissioners do not provide funds specifically for church halls. However, they do make grants to dioceses for the provision of church buildings in new housing areas, and that could include church halls.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Do the Church Commissioners share my concern at the number of unsightly annexes to churches? Do they think that the Church should remain free from planning control? Does my hon. Friend recall that in France and Italy clerical iconoclasts have been restrained by municipal authorities?

Sir William van Straubenzee: If that were the position, it would be a matter for anxiety. However, I am happy to reassure my hon. Friend completely by telling him that all church buildings are subject to normal planning control. I think that he has in mind exemption from listing building control. If a particular case offends his susceptibilities—and he may be right, I do not know—he has to blame those who gave the planning consent, not the Church authorities.

Mr. Favell: Does my hon. Friend agree that too many parish churches confine the use of their church halls to their congregations? Would it not be far better if parish churches were prepared to provide, for example, meals for the elderly and social activities for the elderly and for under-privileged children? After all, many committed Christians would be only too pleased to undertake such excellent work if their vicar were to give a lead.

Sir William van Straubenzee: I am afraid that I must avoid taking any responsibility for the work of individual parishes. I mean no discourtesy to my hon. Friend, and if he has a specific case in mind I shall willingly pass it on to the diocesan bishop concerned.

Buildings (Expenditure)

20. **Mr. Chapman** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement on the current level of Church Commissioners' expenditure on Church buildings.

Sir Willam van Straubenzee: The Church Commissioners' expenditure on church buildings during the year ending 31 December 1985 totalled £3·3 million.

Mr. Chapman: As the Church raises about £55 million —whether through the Church Commissioners or parish fund-raising—to conserve and preserve its architectural heritage, and as the Church has a 3:1 better record in preserving its heritage than owners of secular buildings, does my hon. Friend agree that that is a matter of commendation and that it would be foolish to seek to change the laws related to listed buildings consent by getting rid of the ecclesiastical exemption? We should leave things exactly as they are.

Sir William van Straubenzee: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. As he knows, the matter is under the scrutiny of the Select Committee on the Environment. It will be interesting to see what the Committee contributes. In the meanwhile, I am able to confirm that congregations provide £55 million each year for the upkeep and maintenance of their buildings, compared to about £4 million received in the form of state aid.

Parsonage Homes

21. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many clergy occupy parsonage homes maintained partly or wholly with funds provided by the Church Commissioners; if any scheme exists to assist clergy to purchase their homes; and if he will make a statement.

Sir William van Straubenzee: There were 8,223 in 1985. The Church of England pensions board also operates a scheme to assist clergymen to purchase a home on retirement and the commissioners contribute financially to it.

Mr. Bruinvels: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. I recognise that the Church of England, through the commissioners, is generous in its provision of clergy housing. I understand that £8·8 million was provided in 1985, which was 7p in each pound. Does my hon. Friend agree that many clergy would like the flexibility of movement that would come from owning their own homes? Could not some help be given to them to allow them to buy their own homes, recognising that at present they have to live on the job and are contacted regularly at home day in and day out? They do a magnificent job, but they could do with some flexibility.

Sir William van Straubenzee: This issue was last considered as recently as 1982, before my hon. Friend joined the General Synod. A paper was circulated at that time. It was clear that the ownership of houses by the serving clergy would have a serious effect on deployment, and there was little desire among the clergy for such a change. The emphasis is put upon making it infinitely easier than it ever was before to purchase a house, or to be provided with retirement housing, once active service has come to an end.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ethnic Monitoring

23. **Mr. Janner** asked the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what information he has as to the monitoring of the sex and ethnic origin of staff at the Palace of Westminster and applicants for employment at the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. A. J. Beith (A House of Commons Commissioner): The House of Commons is an equal opportunity employer and, following arrangements agreed for the Civil Service, a programme for monitoring the ethnic origins of staff of the House is to be conducted in the near future. The details of this programme are subject to discussion between management and trade union representatives. There is currently no monitoring of the sex of staff of the House or of applicants for employment.

Mr. Janner: Can the hon. Gentleman say why the House of Commons, of all places, has not yet complied with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission? Surely it should be for the House to set an example to others and not to drag behind in what is an important area of equal opportunities, in which it is not good enough merely to say that the House is an equal opportunities employer and then to continue to operate what appears to me from casual observation to be a sexist and racist organisation in which employees do not reach the top unless they are from the majority?

Mr. Beith: The House of Commons Commission is making every effort to implement the code of practice. Indeed, it is statutorily bound to follow the Civil Service in doing so. The timetable by which it is carrying out the proposals is based upon adhering to that statutory obligation and consulting the trade union representatives within the House. I know of no basis for the hon. and learned Gentleman's wild charge that the House is either racist or sexist in the way in which it carries out its employment responsibilities.

Mr. Stokes: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that for jobs in the Palace of Westminster the only criteria should be suitability for the post and loyalty to this country?

Mr. Beith: Perhaps I should remind the hon. Gentleman that the Commission is responsible only for its employees and not for the entire staff in the Palace of Westminster. A number of separate organisations employ staff here. The features to which the hon. Gentleman has referred are, of course, part of our employment policy. We have a duty to ensure that there is no discrimination on the grounds of race or sex in employment within the House.

Mrs. Shields: As there is a House of Commons barber, does the Commission have any plans for establishing a ladies' hairdresser?

Mr. Beith: I am delighted that, from the Liberal Bench, we may have increased the demand for ladies' hairdressing

facilities within the House. However, I must tell my hon. Friend that the matter is one for the Services Committee. Were she to address her question to the Leader of the House, I am sure that he could give her an account of the lengthy discussions that have taken place on this subject.

Mr. Harris: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that many hon. Members think that the question on the Order Paper appears thoroughly racist and sexist, and that we should have nothing to do with discrimination, one way or the other?

Mr. Beith: The House of Commons Commission is carrying out its proper duties to ensure that there is no discrimination in employment. It is also seeking to ensure, by the monitoring process that has been agreed for the Civil Service generally, that it has full knowledge of whether people of particular ethnic groups and the two sexes have appropriate opportunities for promotion within the service of the House.

Parliaments (Morning Sittings)

24. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Lord Privy Seal what information he has as to which Parliaments in the EEC have morning sittings; and if he will make a statement.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I understand that the following EC countries have arrangements for morning parliamentary sittings, either on a regular or an occasional basis: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy and Spain.

Mr. Bruinvels: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Recognising that I am not the greatest supporter of the European Assembly, may I suggest that our House should consider sitting, at least occasionally, in the morning, in addition to the regular Friday morning sittings. It costs far too much to run the House of Commons. We are sitting far too late into the night, although, happily, not as much as in the past.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend's observation overlooks the fact that many hon. Members recall the period when the House sat in the morning on an experimental basis. That experiment has never led to an informed demand for its renewal.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the Leader of the House recollect that one of the problems with the late Dick Crossman's ill-starred attempts to bring in morning sittings lay with the Law Officers? Is there not a general problem with the accountability of the Law Officers? Should there not be an opportunity for the Attorney-General to explain why he gave immunity to Miss Colette Bowe, when on 30 January he told us that he was first informed of the involvement of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) on 22 January?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is ingenious but wide of the original question.

Mr. Biffen: I stayed here till the closing minutes on Friday to hear the hon. Gentleman. I now realise with what sadness I missed his contribution. I am glad to take note of it now. It would be quite inappropriate for me to follow the hon. Gentleman in that question, except to say that he seems to have had much more difficulty than the late Dick Crossman did with the Law Officers.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the difficulties that the House would face with morning sittings is that Governments do not always have a large majority and that, if a Government's majority were much smaller, Government Members would be required to start all the House's Committees? In addition, Scottish Members would be required to start all the Scottish Committees and the Scottish Grand Committee. Therefore, most of the time, they would be excluded from attending the morning sittings.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. When the Crossman experiment took place, it was recognised that because Ministers would often be doing work within the Ministry, no votes could take place during morning sittings. Therefore, they were all left over to the evening, when some quite esoteric subjects suddenly found that they had the most extraordinary turn-out because of their proximity to a three-line Whip. I refer to the future of the Oswestry market, which was under consideration. */Interruption./* That happens to be true, and it is for any historian to judge. Once the practices of this House are disturbed, we cannot suppose that automatically we have an improved position as a consequence.

Mr. Williams: Does the Leader of the House not find it more than slightly surprising that the request for morning sittings has come from, of all people, the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Brunivels), who, after all, was eager to bounce to his feet claiming the discredit for having sank the morning sitting that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) should have had on a Friday?

Mr. Biffen: I would find it surprising if the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) had not torpedoed himself last Friday.

Mr. Wallace: Many hon. Members feel that there is insufficient time for debating private Member's motions and Bills. Will the Leader of the House consider having an experiment, even one morning a week, and if hon. Members did not turn up to debate their own material, the experiment could be abandoned?

Mr. Biffen: The House should be careful before engaging the whole bureaucracy of morning sittings to meet such a narrow point as that suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

Line of Route

25. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Lord Privy if he will review the policy of curtailing the normal line of route for a week on the occasions when Her Majesty's Government invite foreign dignitaries to speak in the Royal Gallery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: No, Sir.

Mr. Taylor: As this is the people's Parliament, and not the Government's Parliament, does my right hon. Friend not think that it is unfair, unreasonable and unkind that groups of schoolchildren and pensioners who have saved up for a long time to come to Parliament for pre-arranged visits should have their tours disrupted because of one of these occasions? Cannot such meetings be held in a Committee room? As the last three visits have been by representatives of Spain, France and Italy, and none have

been by representatives of the Commonwealth, will my right hon. Friend tell us exactly who selects the people who come to these privileged occasions?

Mr. Biffen: That is a touching reference by my hon. Friend to the Commonwealth. Doubtless he will elaborate at some time on who he thinks would be suitable to make an address in the Royal Gallery. The Heads of State who are invited here for this accolade are relatively few. There have been about 10 during the past 20-odd years. The Government, of course, give the invitation, but they do so knowing that they speak for the British people at large. It would be a poor day if that proper degree of pomp and ceremony, which should be associated with Government were relegated because of schoolchildren's parties.

Mr. Williams: The right hon. Gentleman is missing the important point. Many hon. Members have experienced this problem showing parties around this year. It must be borne in mind that these groups of pensioners, schoolchildren and so on are coming on a once in a lifetime visit arranged months in advance and, in many cases, at considerable expense. They deserve some consideration. Because it seems that the only rooms that need to be closed are the Royal Robing Room the Royal Gallery and the Prince's Chamber, it is inconceivable that we cannot arrange these visits so as not to close the line of route for a full week in advance.

Mr. Biffen: That point is, of course, frequently considered by those who are responsible for looking after such visits *[Interruption.]* There are various serious responsibilities concerning security—a problem that has been compounded in recent years. I know that it is inconvenient that we must close down the line of route for about a week, but I do not belive that that period would reasonably be shortened without giving rise to other hazards, which I do not believe the House would wish to undertake.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Stipends

22. **Mr. Greenway** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what was the total amount paid out by the Church Commissioners in 1985 for the stipends of bishops and clergy; what information he has as to the amount contributed by church congregations for this purpose; how these figures compared in real terms with those for 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Sir William van Straubenzee (The Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing Church Commissioners): The total was £76·3 million in 1985. This included £33·9 million from church congregations. The figures for 1975 — when payment arrangements were different — were £21·3 million and £1·4 million respectively. That is an increase in real terms of 30 per cent. and 769 per cent.

Mr. Greenway: Are not those figures impressive? Will my hon. Friend give the comparative size of the congregations who contributed the sums mentioned in 1975? What was the average size of the congregation per ordained clergyman then compared with now? Does he think that the congregations get value for money?

Sir William van Straubenzee: The Church Commissioners do not keep statistics of the type requested, because they are not responsible for those matters. I was able to give only the broad figures for which my hon. Friend asked, and I am grateful to him, because they show two things. First, the gross figures are substantial. Secondly, the fact that contributions from church congregations have increased by 769 per cent. in that comparatively short period shows the enormous increase in voluntary giving that is willingly undertaken.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Do bishops get a secretarial allowance?

Sir William van Straubenzee: The Church Commissioners pay the salaries of secretarial help for bishops.

WALES

Foreign Languages (O-Level Results)

16. **Mr. Grist** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of 16-year-old school pupils in Wales achieve grades A to C at O-level in foreign languages.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): An answer cannot be given in the precise terms requested. In 1985 there were 13,566 16-year old pupils in Welsh schools. In the same year there were 4,141 passes at grades A to C in foreign languages. However, some pupils taking or re-taking O-levels were over 16, and some sat more than one foreign language examination.

Mr. Grist: Does my hon. Friend nevertheless agree that the overall figures for Wales, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, are deeply disturbing and quite extraordinarily poor in a European context? What will his Department do to try to persuade young people of the value of foreign languages in economic as well as in cultural terms?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend will know that my right hon. Friends have published a draft statement of policy on foreign languages in the school curriculum. I agree that there is plenty of scope for further teaching and learning of foreign languages. There is spare teaching capacity in foreign languages and new opportunities are presented by the advanced secondary courses. Further, many sixth forms undertaking foreign languages are comparatively empty.

Single Payments

3.30 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about single payments of supplementary benefit.

I first simply set some facts before the House. Between 1974 and 1979, under the previous Government, what were then called exceptional needs payments rose from 0·8 million to 1·1 million, and their cost from £11·5 million to £38 million. These numbers were already a matter of concern, and one of the objectives of the review carried out from 1976 to 1978 was better control of such payments.

In 1980 the present Government made changes which it was hoped would overcome the problem, and which indeed took account of the recommendations of that earlier review. Initially they appeared to have had some success, but by 1983 the number of payments was virtually double the 1979 figure, at nearly 2 million, and expenditure had almost quadrupled, to over £140 million. By 1985 both figures had more than doubled again—to more than 4 million payments at a cost of over £300 million—and the growth shows no sign of diminishing.

This trend cannot be explained by the increase in the number of claimants. The rate of payments per claimant has itself more than doubled since 1979. Nor can it be explained by changes in weekly benefit levels. The weekly scale rates rose in real terms by some 6 per cent. between November 1978 and November 1985. There have also been other significant improvements—for example, in some of the payments for children; in the amount and scope of regular additional heating payments, especially for pensioners; and in the rules concerning benefit for the long-term sick and disabled.

Against that background, our firm conclusion in the recent social security review was that the present system of single payments could be neither justified nor sustained. It is incompatible with sensible planning and efficient administration, as is shown by the fact that, although only some 5 per cent. of supplementary benefit expenditure goes into single payments, it accounts for nearly 50 per cent. of all supplementary benefit decisions and over 50 per cent. of appeal hearings.

More fundamentally, it is clearly not achieving what Parliament intended. Despite elaborate regulations and adjudication, wide discrepancies occur from one area to another. It is increasingly perceived as unfair by others on incomes little or no higher than supplementary benefit, to whom no comparable help is available. There is unacceptable scope for exploitation and abuse, yet at the same time insufficient flexibility to meet the real needs of genuine claimants.

As the House knows, it is for these reasons that the Government have brought forward in the current Social Security Bill proposals for an improved structure of regular weekly income support, coupled with a clearly distinct social fund designed to give appropriate help with genuine special occasional needs in a more practical, manageable and flexible way. We believe those proposals are essential to the proper working of the benefit system as a whole.

Meanwhile, however, the growing unworkability of the present single payments system could not simply be ignored. In February, therefore, we put for consultation to the Social Security Advisory Committee draft regulations making a number of changes within the existing structure, as an interim measure. The principal elements were to restrict furniture and bedding payments to more clearly defined categories of need; paying particular attention to the needs of pensioners, the sick and disabled, and those leaving hospital after a long stay; to introduce time rules for repeat claims for items of furniture; to set standard sums for specific items such as cookers, and standard amounts to cover a range of miscellaneous household items which can at present be individually listed; and to introduce a standard pattern of help with maternity needs.

We have now given very careful consideration to the committee's report, which is laid before Parliament today, together with my right hon. Friend's response. The report clearly recognises the difficulties to which the Government are seeking to respond. It also recognises the effort that has been made to take account of the needs of those thought to be most vulnerable, and welcomes in principle the introduction of standard payments and lump sums. While making it plain that the committee does not endorse the proposals as a whole, it nevertheless suggests a number of specific modifications which it would wish to see if the Government should decide to proceed.

For the reasons that I have given, the Government continue to believe that action is needed. Moreover, those considerations have been greatly strengthened by the continued escalation of single payments in recent months. The most recent figures, for the four weeks to 3 June, were equivalent to an annual rate of 5½ million payments and at least £400 million. Many local authorities and other bodies are mounting campaigns to stimulate further claims, for example by circulating leaflets containing extensive "tick lists" of items under some such slogan as "Closing Down Sale". Apart from anything else, the consequent growing burden on DHSS offices, despite the additional staff that we are making available, is seriously detrimental to the interests of claimants themselves.

The Government therefore propose to proceed with new regulations, but with a number of important modifications to meet detailed suggestions which the Committee has made. These include further steps to protect the position of refugees, women who have been subject to domestic violence, and young people leaving local authority care; a lengthening of the qualifying period for maternity payments; the extension of lump sum payments for miscellaneous items to childless claimants setting up home; and, perhaps most important, a doubling of that lump sum from £25 to £50 for each dependant. Regulations incorporating those changes have been laid today, with a view to bringing them into effect on 11 August.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Does it not indicate the extreme and justified embarrassment of the Government that they have for weeks put off laying this measure—one of the harshest in all their years in office—until after the Newcastle-under-Lyme by-election, and that they are now trying to rush it through in the last weeks before the recess? Indeed, I understand that they are proposing to table it for debate on Wednesday—the day of the royal wedding—in order, they hope, to minimise public awareness. Is it not characteristic of the Government that they have chosen a day of national festivities to hammer the poor with extra rates payments

of £300 million, and now cuts in single payments, which, on the figures that the Minister gave today, amount to no less than £180 million?

Will the Minister acknowledge that supplementary benefit levels are insufficient to pay for – and were never intended to pay for – major items such as furniture, bedding, blankets, cookers, fridges and clothes, and that the effect of these regulations must therefore be to push many families more deeply into poverty?

Does the Minister accept that cutting back expenditure on single payments to the 1984 level, as the Government intend, is wholly arbitrary and it fails to take account of the causes of the growth in demand for single payments, namely, the rise in unemployment, the growing number of long-term claimants, who inevitably have higher needs, and the steady erosion of claimants' other resources, such as savings or spouse's earnings?

Will the Minister acknowledge that the Government's SSAC said:

"The representations we received suggest that while some of this growth may be attributable to increasing awareness among claimants of their legal rights it may equally be accounted for by the existence of a reservoir of unmet need which is only now being recognised. The Government's response has been to propose much tighter conditions of eligibility and a greatly limited range of items. This response, because it seeks to attack the symptoms (increased public expenditure) without fully analysing the causes, must necessarily run the risk of causing widespread hardship amongst claimants who are already living at what is generally recognised as the poverty level."?

Those are the committee's words.

Will the Minister acknowledge that his criticism today of local authority take-up campaigns implies a lack of concern about the real problem of under-claiming that exists and shows that in the Government's view a high level of unmet need is acceptable? Will he confirm that the SSAC opposes these plans to reduce help for buying furniture, for meeting the costs of newly born babies and for making urgent payments to people in need? Will he confirm that the definition of chronically sick and physically, or mentally, disabled is being made much more restrictive in order to limit claims? Will the Minister confirm that the Government's revised list for help with furniture now omits tables, chairs, cupboards, floor coverings and carpets? Will he acknowledge that financing the repair or replacement of those items without assistance or recompense will chiefly hit lone-parents and unemployed people? Is he aware that scrapping regulation 28, by which back payments can be made where benefit has been underpaid, will have damaging effects, as will withdrawing protection from pensioners and many other vulnerable claimants during extremely cold weather?

Is the Minister aware that the modifications to the original draft regulations which he has made today, in the face of deep hostility from the SSAC are minuscule and cosmetic? Is he aware that these regulations will cause intense and widespread hardship? Is he aware that this is the latest and, perhaps, the harshest measure to be brought in by the Government, taking the country back to a restrictive and inadequately financed system of poor law support, which we in the Labour party unequivocally reject?

Mr. Newton: It will not surprise the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) to know that I accept little of what he said. We have made it clear that we expect about £100 million to be saved in a full year compared with the expenditure in 1985-86. However, it is difficult to make firm estimates in this area at present precisely because of the rapid escalation in expenditure that is going on.

I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's suggestions about the creation of intense and widespread hardship. As the Social Security Advisory Committee acknowledged I did not attempt to disguise the fact that it does not endorse the proposals as a whole – a deliberate and careful attempt has been made to protect those whom we see to be priority claimants and cases, to ensure that they continue to receive help.

Let me give the House one example to set against what the hon. Gentleman said. A lone-parent, with two children, setting up home after a marriage breakdown will still be able to get help of about £800 to assist in that connection. That is not unreasonable. It is a sensible provision for those most in need.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Government gave it all away to the rich last Thursday, on the Finance Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) must not interrupt from a sedentary position.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Government do not care.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Newton: In view of the glowing terms in which the hon. Member for Oldham, West referred to the take-up campaigns of local authorities, I should tell the House that I have in my hand the "tick list" that was submitted by a claimant in the Strathclyde region. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will listen for a moment, he may – *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Workington cannot contain himself, I shall have to ask him to leave, and I should not want to do that.

Mr. Newton: I have in my hand the "tick list" that was submitted by a claimant in the Strathclyde region, listing literally dozens of items for which she was making a claim, starting with four single beds, bedding for the whole family, three fires, three fire guards and four hot-water bottles. Also, I have the letter that that claimant wrote to the local DHSS office a few days later, which said that her social worker had been to visit her and told her that she could claim, had filled in the form, posted it and had given her a copy. The claimant wrote:

"Most of the things I don't need, so I am writing to let you know the items I do need, and could you ignore the letters he has sent?"

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, North): Does my hon. Friend not regard the multi-purpose forms to which he referred in his opening statement, which is similar to the one issued by the North British Housing Association, which begins

"Dear Manager, Pay me a grant for these things",

as a total abuse of the purpose of the single payment? Is it not a fact that this kind of leaflet and this kind of approach clog up the whole system of both the normal payment and the appeals procedure, to the detriment of the very people whom the system was designed to help? In the light of what has been happening during the last 12 months, is there not an unanswerable case for the new system that my hon. Friend is proposing?

Mr. Newton: I agree with my hon. Friend. I have some examples here, including the one that the Oldham social services department is circulating under the heading:

"Claim it while you can."

One local office in Sheffield, serving 21,000 claimants, recently received 4,000 claims for bedding within a few weeks and 2,500 claims for furniture within four days. What is happening is clogging up the system, is detrimental to the interests of claimants themselves and needs to be checked.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Does not this latest attempt to shift the benefit goal posts augur badly for the new family credit system, which will no doubt be abolished if too many claimants take it up? Does the Minister not agree that this is just grinding the poor further into the ground? How will the poor contrast this decision to save £100 million with the decision to give away £1·5 billion in tax cuts? How will the poor contrast this decision to try to pick up a few petty offences with the Government's failure to do anything about racketeers and profiteers who are abusing hundreds of millions of pounds of housing benefit?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman should be aware that family credit has nothing whatever to do with this, except in one sense, namely, that the object of family credit is to do more to help low-paid families in work and to create a fairer system between those in low-paid employment and those on benefit. That is part of our purpose with these proposals.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Is my hon. Friend aware that the state of affairs that he has described cannot be allowed to continue and that his proposals will be warmly welcomed on this side of the House? Does he not think that the abuse of the single payments system, as deomonstrated by the campaigns in the benefit shops that have been set up all over the country, illustrates the logic and the fairness of incorporating these resources into the proposed income support scheme? Would that not ensure that what is, after all, taxpayers' money goes to the people who are really in need and not to those who simply know how to manipulate the system?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree with every word that he has said.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): How does the Minister have the brass neck to come to the House and make this statement, thereby saving £100 million, which will rob the poor of money that they desperately need for items with which to exist, and blame the poor for claiming what is theirs by right? How many Treasury Ministers have attacked sleazy accountants for running seminars to advise people on how to save considerable sums of money through tax avoidance schemes? How many Ministers have blamed the rich for exerting their rights and claiming their rights by every legitimate means? Why does the hon. Gentleman come to the House to attack those who are properly advising the poor on their rights and how to claim them? Is it not a disgrace to come to the House with this statement which is robbing the poor of £100 million, when the Government have given millions upon millions to the richest people, who do not deserve it and do not need it?

Mr. Newton: I am saying no more than that the system is manifestly lending itself to manipulation and exploitation on a scale beyond what Parliament ever intended, and that is not in the interests of claimants and is leading to delays in the proper processing of genuinely urgent applications. I do not believe that any Government would continue to live with this situation.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Will my hon. Friend remind the Labour party that single payments do not drop off trees, and that the recipients rely on their neighbours to provide them?

Mr. Newton: I agree with my hon. Friend. One of the problems here is the perceived unfairness by those who cannot obtain these payments so readily. It is right to try to restore the balance between different groups in their claims on the taxpayer.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I represent an area where an increasing number of people are living on supplementary benefit, and where there has been a consistent rise in unemployment and all to do with it. Why are the Government not merely taking this £100 million from the poor people who need it, but not allowing an appeals procedure for the social fund so that an appeal can be made against any decisions taken?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman's question does not arise from the statement but will be the subject of debate in the House later this week.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): For all this synthetic excitement from the Labour Benches, is it not clear from the figures that my hon. Friend gave, showing that the number of claims has doubled in two years, that the taxpayer is being ripped off by this gross abuse of the system? What checks are carried out before claims are made, and afterwards to see that the money is properly spent?

Mr. Newton: Our staff attempt to carry out proper checks, but not the least of the difficulties with the growing exploitation of the system and the burden that it is placing on officers is that it becomes increasingly difficult to administer the system properly. We are not prepared to tolerate that.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): The Minister said that he had a circular from the social services department at Oldham, which has—correctly—been circulated to clients and those making claims for assistance. Why has the hon. Gentleman been so illogical as to claim that the system is clogged up—as it is, in Oldham—but not to deal with it properly by ensuring that there are sufficient staff to deal with the problem? Has not the lack of staff been pointed out time and again by the unions representing staff working in social service departments? Why has the hon. Gentleman sought instead to clear up the backlog by choking off those who are correctly asking for single payments, while, happily for him, by coincidence, reducing costs to the Government by taking £100 million from the poorest people?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that we are in the process of putting a substantial number of additional staff into the social security system—some 5,000 in all—compared with what had been planned, because of the pressures on that system. I say to the House in all seriousness, because I believe that, in the end, it would be the view that Ministers in another Government

would have had to take, that no system can sensibly cope with this kind of payment rising at the rate of 1 million payments a year.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Will my hon. Friend confirm that, in making these regrettable but necessary changes, he has followed the advice of the SSAC on many of the most salient points? Furthermore, if these changes are made in advance of the full implementation of the social fund, what will be the bridging arrangements between now and then?

Mr. Newton: As I made clear in the statement, the measures are seen as a means of ensuring the continued workability of the existing single payments system, pending the introduction of the social fund. That is a sensible approach, and it underlines the Government's proposals.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): Does the Minister accept that most applicants for such payments come from the areas of greatest deprivation, which have the highest numbers of long-term unemployed people? Does he not realise that they require certain items to furnish their houses? Does the hon. Gentleman not have any constituency experience of people coming to him for help? Would it not be better to deal with what is clogging up the system instead of abolishing it altogether?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman would be wrong to think that there is a clear correlation between deprivation and the number of applicants. One of the least satisfactory aspects of the system is the extraordinary variation to be found between areas when measured in payments per claimant. The rate of single payments per thousand claimants varies from 481 in one region to 1,540 in another. In Scotland, which will be of interest to the hon. Gentleman, the number of claimants per 100 unemployed varies from 38 in some offices to 291 elsewhere. Such variations must call into question the fairness of the present system and whether it is being operated sensibly.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Does my hon. Friend agree that an eightfold increase in the value of the payments between 1979 and today is wholly unacceptable? Does he further agree that, as a general rule, such payments should be used for unforeseeable and exceptional needs, and that there is considerable evidence that claims are being made that do not fall within the general purpose of the regulations?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is right. That is one reason why I am concerned that the interests of those claimants with genuine, unforeseeable, one-off needs are in danger of being swamped by some of the things that are happening throughout the country.

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow Provan): Many of us appreciate the fact that the regulations are to be debated on Wednesday, the day of the royal wedding. That must have been thought up by the Government's dirty tricks department, but may I ask a constructive question? I accept that there are abuses. The Minister referred to Strathclyde, and I should not be surprised if the letter referred to the office covering my constituency. Some of us recognise that there is a problem, but would it not be better to hold constructive talks with local authority representatives, with a view to looking at the take-up campaigns, which are legitimate, and at the abuses? One difficulty is that regional directors do not have the political know-how to deal with such situations.

Mr. Newton: We try to talk constructively to local authorities when they are considering take-up campaigns, to ensure that they are conducted responsibly and in a well targeted way, but that does not work with all local authorities, and some are easier to talk to than others.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Does my hon. Friend agree that voluntary insulation groups have done a good job in insulating annually about 500,000 homes of the most disadvantaged members of society, often with help from a single payment? In view of his statement, can he offer any reassurance about the future of voluntary insulation groups?

Mr. Newton: The regulations that have been laid today do not affect single payments for draught-proofing. I have made it clear several times that we would not wish to make changes in that respect without being assured that there were adequate alternative arrangements to ensure the continuation and, indeed, development of those very valuable groups. We are discussing that with the other Departments involved.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Instead of attacking local authorities and claimants' organisations which legitimately seek money from the DHSS, why does the Minster not improve the advice services of the DHSS? Is it not an abuse to say that those who are eligible to claim money, and legitimately do so, will henceforth be prevented from doing so for single payments? Will the Minister tell us when he last went through the indignity of trying to get a single payment to buy a secondhand cooker or an old bed or clothing or furniture? Has he been through that indignity? It is a disgrace that this week, when millions will be spent on the royal wedding, the Minister should come here to make the poor pay for the tax cuts and for the wedding that we are about to see.

Mr. Newton: We have significantly improved the DHSS advice services, and we attach great importance to that. Everyone recognises the value of the DHSS Freephone service, which is now operating throughout the country. One of the things welcomed by the Social Security Advisory Committee is the proposed introduction of standard lump sums for such items as cookers. That will improve the position of claimants.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Bearing in mind that this is an Opposition day, I shall allow questions to continue for a further five minutes, and then we must move on.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most welcome aspects of these regulations is the standardisation of payments? I hope he will agree that that will deal with a number of the racketeers who batten on to people who receive single payments. The effect of the regulations could be that more money will reach the people who need it.

Mr. Newton: I certainly agree. I think the Social Security Advisory Committee has recognised that our proposals are a real gain and will help to avoid some of the problems to which my hon. Friend has drawn attention.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the Minister recall that earlier this year, in the Select Committee on Social Services, he warned us when we were pressing for more money to help disabled people and to provide care for old people that that could be achieved only at the expense of other items? In view of the Government's climb down on invalid care allowance and the passing of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, are these regulations being rushed through so that the poor will have to pay for those two provisions? It is a matter of Peter paying Paul, and of the poor being clobbered on this occasion.

Mr. Newton: No, it is not. I know that the hon. Gentleman's anxiety is totally genuine, but I had hoped he would recognise the trouble that we have taken in the regulations to protect sick and disabled people, about whom he and we are concerned.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Can my hon. Friend tell the House what proportion of those who are eligible to make single payment claims are doing so, and of those what proportion are repeat payments? I assure my hon. Friend that his statement will be welcomed by a large number of people.

Mr. Newton: Off the cuff I cannot give my hon. Friend the figures that he requires. It is certainly the case that alongside the regional and local office variations about which I spoke there are some astonishing variations between the numbers of claimants who receive a single payment, the numbers who receive many single payments and those who receive no payments at all.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): The Minister said that refugees would not be affected by this robbery. Is he aware that in my area the vast majority affected by these cuts will be the industrial refugees, who are in that position because of the chaos inflicted by Government policies? Is he aware of the inquisition that people have to go through to get these single payments?

Mr. Newton: It is right that for single payments and for weekly payments of supplementary benefit local offices should seek to check that claims are genuine. I have not so far spoken about the removal of the so-called suitable alternative furnished accommodation rule, which has been generally welcomed. That rule was widely seen as disadvantaging many unemployed people who were trying to move out of board-and-lodging accommodation.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Does my hon. Friend accept that the careful and thrifty people in my constituency deeply resent these single payments, the absence of checks and the fact that beds are supplied every 18 months? Leicester city council has launched a scurrilous campaign aimed at giving more to just one section of society, while those who are entitled to more do not get it because the council does not care about them.

Mr. Newton: I note what my hon. Friend says, and I am not entirely surprised in view of the amount that Leicester city council must have expended in producing this "Closing Down Sale" leaflet, which is littered with massive "tick lists". I am sure that that will arouse in many people just the kind of resentment about which my hon. Friend has spoken.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): The regulations about which the Minister complains were introduced by this Government. Are we to assume that the upsurge in the number of single payment claims is a reflection of the social and economic policies that the Government are pursuing? Is the Minister asking the House to believe that the one example that he cited from Strathclyde—he did not tell us whether the person would have been eligible for the items claimed—convinced him to do what he is proposing?

Mr. Newton: If some social workers are filling in forms for people, getting the people to sign them and sending them off, and if it then emerges within a matter of hours that the claimants themselves did not perceive that they had those needs, that in itself is a form of manipulation of the poor. I do not suggest that all social workers do that.

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): Will the Minister accept that as unemployment stretches into years, inevitably household goods wear our and cannot be replaced on the amounts available through supplementary benefit? He is adding to the great hardship already suffered by some people. What happens when the cash limited social fund runs out part way through a financial year? Do people have to reapply at the beginning of the next financial year and hope that their names are further up the list?

Mr. Newton: As I have said, the social fund will be a matter for debate later in the week. The anxiety reflected in the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is precisely why we have more generous rules in these regulations for those who have been on benefit for more than a year.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Will the Minister accept that already many thousands of people do not get the single payments that they need because of the way in which the regulations operate? His statement is an appalling attack on the poorest and the most deprived sections of the community. The Government should accept that they are the guilty ones, because they created the unemployment and the deprivation. The Secretary of State for Social Services should use his influence in the Cabinet to deal with the real problems facing the country. The Government should not pursue this attack on poor and deprived people.

Mr. Newton: The statement means that as soon as the new regulations are in effect those claimants with genuine needs that ought to be met will have a better chance of getting them dealt with promptly and efficiently, because their claims will not be buried in this torrent of deliberately stimulated claims.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Will the Minister confirm the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen), that he, the Minister, voted for the regulations about which he is now so critical? Can the Minister explain to claimants the difference between those who take full advantage of the Chancellor's tax laws by employing a well-paid and well-heeled accountant, and social security claimants who are advised by well qualified social workers so that they can take advantage, of which they have more need, of these regulations?

Mr. Newton: It is appropriate for the Government to make sure that tax laws and social security laws operate

in the way that they were intended, and that they are not wide open to abuse. Successive Governments have done that. We are determined to tackle abuse on both fronts.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why does the Minister not listen to his own electorate? Does he not realise that millions of his supporters believe that by penalising poor people and giving money to the rich under Finance Bills the Government are wrong? They believe that that is wrong, and they object. Why do Government Back Benchers not stand up and represent middle-class opinion? Those people feel deeply ashamed of what the Government are doing. They know that the Government are wrong, and in all conscience they often write to their Members of Parliament and tell them that they object. They go to Conservative conferences to object, and yet the Government ignore them. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not make a speech.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Government ignore them because they do not care.

Mr. Newton: I shall confine myself to saying that I had not hitherto seen the hon. Gentleman as a classic representative of middle-class opinion.

Business of the House

4.10 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short statement about the business for Wednesday 23 July. The business for that day will now be as follows:

Consideration of any Lords amendments which may be received to the Social Security Bill.

Motion relating to the Supplementary Benefit (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations.

Consideration of any Lords amendments which may be received to the Wages Bill and the Agriculture Bill and Lords amendments to the Dockyard Services Bill.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I note the change of business that has just been announced, and I have three questions to ask the Leader of the House. First, is not his statement further evidence of the truly chaotic state of affairs in the planning of Government business? Although we welcome the Government's capitulation on the amendments proposed in the other place to the Dockyard Services Bill, does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that four Bills and an order on one day is an abuse of the legislative process?

Secondly, on the supplementary benefits order that we have just been discussing, which sharply limits single payments to the very poorest, does not the right hon. Gentleman understand how offensive it is that this squalid measure and the Social Services Bill that precedes it should be timed to coincide with a glittering state occasion, when the focus of the press will inevitably be not on the House of Commons but on Westminster abbey?

Thirdly, since the right hon. Gentleman obviously believes that all relevant business must be completed before the recess, will he reconsider the date of the summer recess so that the House can debate the major report from the Select Committee on Defence on the Westland affair, which is due to be published at 11 o'clock on Thursday?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman questions the nature of the business. I do not accept his strictures and I answer him in the same terms as I did the Leader of the Opposition.

As to the second point on the supplementary benefits order, given the nature of business for this week, Wednesday was the most convenient day to debate it. It is perverse constantly to draw attention to the royal wedding in relation to business which we should conduct anyway as a working Parliament.

Finally, I note the right hon. Gentleman's anxiety that Parliament should sit beyond this week and into the future. The motion for the recess will soon be tabled. It will be debatable, and the right hon. Gentleman can put his points then.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Am I right in thinking that the royal wedding is in the morning?

Mr. Biffen: Yes.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: If so, what is the difficulty for right hon. and hon. Members to attend and debate the business in this place?

Mr. Biffen: I have shrunk from making that monumentally simple observation because I hoped that hon. Members would conclude that this line of argument was farcical.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Given the continuing havoc in the Commonwealth following our failure to impose sanctions, does the Leader of the House agree that before the House rises on Friday there should be an urgent statement on the matter in the House? Would that not give Her Majesty's Government the opportunity to answer the serious allegations made yesterday in *The Sunday Times*?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of the hon. Gentleman's request and will pass it to the appropriate quarter.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): When my right hon. Friend considers the changes that may or may not be made in this week's business, will he remember that we would rather work late this week, finish on Friday and have our holidays with our children, who in Scotland have been on holiday for some weeks?

Mr. Biffen: That is a very good home-spun observation which will undoubtedly be put to the test when we debate the recess motion.

Mr. Robert Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Has the right hon. Gentleman had a chance to see the Channel 4 television broadcast which went out on Thursday night entitled, "All the Prime Minister's Men"——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are dealing with the business for this week.

Mr. Wareing: I am coming to that, Mr. Speaker. In view of the allegations made in that programme that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) issued a document to the Cabinet entitled, "It took a riot", following the Toxteth riot in Liverpool——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This widens the debate very much beyond the change of business for Wednesday.

Mr. Wareing: I shall come directly to the point. Is it not time that we had an urgent debate on the murder of Merseyside, which was opted for by the Government as a result of the response to that report in the Cabinet by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs?

Mr. Biffen: I did not see that television programme. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Government have enough business on for the remainder of this week. I cannot accommodate the debate that he suggests, but he will have the chance, as a private Member, to raise the matter on Thursday or Friday.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I again remind the House that this is an Opposition day and that such exchanges take time out of that period? I shall call those hon. Members who have been rising, provided that they keep their questions brief and to the point.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On the Dockyard Services Bill, will the Leader of the House do the penance of reading the speech of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) on Friday? Is it not a classic case of filibustering? Before he talks about my torpedoing myself, will he admit, uncynically, that the Government had continued——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is just what I was hoping would not happen. The hon. Gentleman's question has nothing to do with the business statement.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that he has responsibilities to the House as a whole, not simply to the Government of which he is a member? If there is a strong demand, certainly from the Opposition, for the report of the Select Committee on Defence on Westland to be debated, will he recognise the need for this to be seriously considered? Is it not scandalous that the House will go into recess for 10 or 11 weeks while a report will be published and widely debated in the media, yet hon. Members will have no opportunity to debate it in the House?

Mr. Biffen: It is because I have a responsibility to the House as a whole that I believe we should go into recess on Friday. If the hon. Gentleman genuinely disagrees with the proposition, doubtless he will vote against it, as will others.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I pre-empt further questions on that report, which is not due to be published until Thursday and so will not be affected by this statement.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the Home Secretary to make an early statement on the appalling conditions which many visitors at Heathrow are facing? Many men, women and children are being kept for up to 24 hours without food or drink. Others have been taken to police cells and to prisons. I remind the hon. Gentleman that they have committed no crimes. The position at Heathrow is a disgrace. It does great damage to our efforts to promote Britain as a tourist centre and it is an example of grotesque maladministration by the Home Office.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman raised the matter with me on Thursday, when I said that I would have the matter investigated. I stand by those words and I also stand by the comments I made then—that I disagreed with the premise on which the hon. Gentleman based his remarks.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): The right hon. Gentleman will be aware of the many attempts to secure a statement on the Stalker affair by the Home Secretary or the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Will he prevail upon either of those gentlemen to make such a statement so that the matter will not rest in abeyance until 21 October?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the inquiry is continuing and that, under United Kingdom practice, it would be improper for a statement to be made now.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Since on Wednesday the House will be debating the Social Security Bill, which prevents claimants from having access to tribunals and making appeals, which will cause those who have lost limbs in industrial accidents to lose anything up to 14 per cent. in compensation, and which is an all-out onslaught on working people and supplementary benefits, would it not be a good idea if, before the debate started, the Leader of the House encouraged the Minister responsible to tell the House what supplementary benefits and grants will be included in the Civil List for the royal family in the following year and give an estimate of the cost of the royal wedding on that day?

Mr. Biffen: That is a proposition which I note and which enables us all to understand that much further the political philosophy of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): May we have a statement on Wednesday on the grave situation that has developed in north Wales in relation to the radioactive lamb ban which, during the last few days, has shown that sheep will be stuck on the mountains in north Wales into the winter with no grazing and it is unlikely that they will be able to be moved? We have not yet had a statement from the Secretary of State for Wales on that matter and it will be appalling if the House goes into the summer recess without having had an opportunity to discuss that.

Mr. Biffen: I have a constituency interest in the sheep trade in north Wales and therefore I pay proper regard to what the hon. Gentleman has said. I am sorry that the matter could not be ventilated at Welsh questions today but I shall certainly take up the point with my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that an incident occurred last Friday which causes concern, and which certainly causes me concern, which affected a Member of Parliament, and which needs brief investigation and a report to the House? My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was followed outside the precincts of the House and his movements tracked by a non-Member. It seems that reports of his movements were made. That is the sort of thing that happens in Eastern Europe. Why was this? Why did it take place? To whom was the report made and why?

Mr. Biffen: I am not clear what responsibility I may have in this matter, but it would be appropriate if the right hon. Gentleman set all the details out in a letter and we could then decide who is the responsible recipient.

Westland plc

4.22 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I realise that this is a slightly unusual point of order and I equally realise, as the Leader of the House told us on Thursday, that the timing of the publication of the report of the Select Committee on Defence on the Westland scandal is a matter for the Committee's Chairman. However, I am convinced that the Chairman has done everything in his power to expedite the publication of that report and that is why I bring the matter to you.

I submit that for three reasons we are in a unique situation which requires your involvement, Mr. Speaker. After all, the House is going into recess for three months. Secondly, the Attorney-General, one of the most senior figures in our legal system, may find that he has to resign if it emerges that he, in his unique role, approved the charade of setting up a leak inquiry after having been told that that leak had been authorised by a senior fellow member of the Cabinet. Thirdly, it is unique because if the Attorney-General finds himself in such a situation, the Prime Minister becomes exposed and vulnerable.

Therefore, I submit that we cannot wait three months before the House determines the culpability of the Attorney-General and the Prime Minister, particularly as during those three months hon. Members will be deprived of the protection of the privileges of Parliament.

For those reasons, it is in everyone's interests that the House should have the maximum time to study all the evidence, not just to have the report in front of them, before Thursday's Prime Minister's questions and the debates on the motion for the summer Adjournment and the Consolidated Fund.

In that unusual combination of circumstances, and as you are the custodian of the interests of the House, Mr. Speaker, is there any way in which the weight of your office can assist the efforts that I know have already been made by the Chairman to secure the earliest possible publication of the report, possibly the day or even the evening before, so that hon. Members can study it overnight?

Mr. Speaker: The point of order really is not for me. As the right hon. Gentleman said, this is entirely a matter for the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence and I have no influence over when he decides to lay his report. If he wants to lay it before Thursday, presumably he can do so.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I raise briefly a matter about which you have shown some sympathy on previous occasions when matters have been debated outside, in broadcasting and the press? It goes without saying that the report of the Select Committee on Defence will receive extensive coverage. No doubt we shall switch on our television sets and see hon. Members debating with each other and so on. Yet for 10 or 11 weeks the House will not be able to debate the most important document on Government administration that has been published, which everyone recognises is virtually a time-bomb ticking away under the Government. Is not that a grotesque situation?

Mr. Speaker: The solution is in the hands of the House. The summer Adjournment motion will be debated on Thursday. The simple issue is whether the House adjourns or does not adjourn. If the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members feel strongly about this matter, the solution is in their hands. I cannot do anything about that.

Rate Support Grants Bill

4.24 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order, of which I have given you notice, concerns the Rate Support Grants Bill, which is due for its Report stage and Third Reading this evening. There is a distinct possibility that the Bill will be certified as a money Bill under the terms of the Parliament Act 1911, the practical effects of which would be to prevent the other place from detailed consideration of the Bill.

The fact of that possibility has come as a bolt from the blue. It was never anticipated by us. It is especially surprising since the Bill amends two other Acts, the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Local Government Finance Act 1982, neither of which was certified.

You well know, Mr. Speaker, that much of the work in Committee and on the Floor of the House on the details of Bills is about pressing Ministers to reconsider parts of measures and often seeking undertakings from Ministers that, if they cannot deal conclusively with a matter in this place, it will be dealt with in the other place when the Bill goes for its Committee stage there. That has been the assumption on which Labour Members have worked in Committee. In fairness, I believe that Ministers have also worked on that assumption and I think this is as much a surprise to them as to us. The Committee worked on the basis that the Bill would be fully debated in the other place. Had we not worked on that assumption, the whole tenor of its Committee stage would have been different.

My first point is that it is usually obvious from the start when a Bill is to be certified as a money Bill or one for aids and supplies. The most obvious example is the Finance Bill, which everyone accepts from the beginning is either a money Bill or one for aids and supplies. Where it is not obvious—it was not obvious either to us or to Ministers—would it not have been reasonable for the House and for members of the Committee to have been forewarned that the Bill was likely to be certified if it left the House of Commons in substantially the same form as it was introduced? A failure to give that information means that the proceedings upstairs and on the Floor of the House are prejudiced.

My second point concerns the merits of certifying the Bill. I realise that you, Mr. Speaker, will not make a decision on this matter until after Report and Third Reading, but I respectfully ask you take into account the following points. First, section 1(2) of the Parliament Act speaks of a Bill being certified when it deals with the imposition of charges out of funds provided by Parliament or their variation. The Bill does not deal with the imposition of charges, no money resolution was attached to it and in no way does it affect the amount paid out of funds levied by Parliament by way of rate support grant. It deal only with its detailed allocation and a narrow aspect of that—multipliers.

Secondly, the Parliament Act makes it clear that a Bill can be certified only if it deals with a matter of the imposition of charges out of funds voted by Parliament or certain other matters not relevant here. Even if you decide that the application of multipliers in the Bill does amount to an imposition of a charge, which seems to construe that provision of the Parliament Act very widely indeed, I submit that other matters are dealt with by the Bill which,

on any reading, are nothing whatever to do with the imposition of money provided by Parliament, nor are they subordinate to that.

I refer you particularly, Mr. Speaker, but not exclusively, to paragraphs 8, 9 and 13 of schedule 1. Those paragraphs affect generally the relationship between local government, central Government and Ministers, and the degree to which Ministers have to explain decisions that they have made by paragraphs 8 and 9. A duty on Ministers to provide Parliament and local government with the considerations leading to various determinations is substantially watered down so that the duty in future will be for the Secretary of State to provide information only "as he thinks desirable."

Under paragraph 13 the Secretary of State is given power to make assumptions about local authority budgets when he considers that information has not been provided by those authorities. Local government rates and taxes, and therefore their budgets, are specifically excluded from the operation of the Parliament Act.

The Bill was introduced retrospectively to overturn decisions by the courts and to deal with the possibility of other court actions. It was also introduced to establish certain numerals and multipliers and to change the nature of the information that the Secretary of State must give to the House.

I submit that the Bill cannot be certified as a money Bill. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider my submission that the House, and in particular members of the Committee, are put in a major difficulty because no advance information was given that there was even a remote possibility of the Bill being certifed as a money Bill.

Mr. Speaker: As the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said, the practice of my predecessors invariably has been to leave any certification of a money Bill until after the Bill has been given a Third Reading. If the House gives the Bill a Third Reading today, I shall decide the question of certification tomorrow. I shall, of course, carefully take into account the points raised by the hon. Member.

BILLS PRESENTED

SHOPS (NO. 3)

Sir Fergus Montgomery, supported by Sir Marcus Fox, Mr. Michael Brown, Mr. James Couchman, Mr. Nicholas Lyell, Mr. Jerry Hayes, Mr. Fred Silvester, Sir Reginald Eyre, Mr. Christopher Hawkins, Mr. Austin Mitchell, Mr. Clement Freud and Mr. Gerald Howarth, presented a Bill to relax the restrictions which apply to Sunday trading; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on 24 October and to be printed. [Bill 215.]

REPRESENTATION OF THE WORKPEOPLE

Mr. Tony Benn presented a Bill to provide for the election of the Boards of Directors on certain public limited companies by the workpeople employed in those companies; to make provision regarding the powers of those boards; and for connected purposes. And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 214.]

Opposition Day

[15TH ALLOTTED DAY] [2ND PART]

Fight Against Crime

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) to move the Opposition motion, I should announce that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.32 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I beg to move,

That this House, in the light of the collapse of the Government's policies on law and order, calls for the implementation of a national crime prevention programme, including crime prevention grants for owner occupiers and tenants and a safe estates programme, in order to ease the pressure on policing work and so increase levels of detection and therefore deter criminals; and further calls for properly funded Government support for a nationwide system of victim support schemes.

A black cloud of lawlessness hangs over Britain today. From Caithness to Cornwall, from Ceredigion to Kent, the country is suffering from the worst crime wave ever known. Last year 4,073,853 serious offences were reported in Great Britain. That was a 41 per cent. increase on 1978 the last full year before the present Prime Minister came to office.

In Thatcher's Britain theft has risen by 30 per cent., violence against the person has risen by 42 per cent., burglaries are up by 52 per cent. and criminal damage is up by 73 per cent. Thatcher's Britain is a Britain in which one crime of violence is committed every four minutes, in which one act of criminal damage is committed ever 51 seconds, in which one burglary is committed ever 32 seconds, in which one case of theft or of handling stolen goods is committed every 15 seconds and in which one serious crime is committed every 8 seconds.

In Thatcher's Britain every family has a 30 per cent. chance of being victims of a serious crime. The crime rate is not only high, but is getting higher. When the Government came to office, 330 serious crimes were being committed every hour. Now, in Thatcher's Britain, not 330 but 465 serious crimes are being committed every hour.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No. The Government took nearly an hour of our time with their disgraceful statement, and I cannot give way at this point in my speech.

In Thatcher's Britain the number of crimes of violence committed each day has gone up from 258 to 366. In Thatcher's Britain the number of acts of criminal damage has gone up from 979 a day to 1,695. In Thatcher's Britain the number of burglaries has gone up from 1,752 a day to 2,662. In Thatcher's Britain the number of thefts has gone up from 4,406 a day to 5,728. That was the grim position up to December 1985.

For England and Wales the figures for the first quarter of this year show yet another sharp rise, with total crime up 7 per cent., violence against the person up 5 per cent., theft up 5 per cent., burglary up 8 per cent., and criminal damage up 14 per cent.

[Mr. Kaufman]

Crime is not only costly to victims in terms of damage and injury, but it is a terrible financial drain on the nation. It is an enormous cost to the police, who spend an average of £2,350 on clearing up each crime that is solved. It is a cost to the courts, to the probation and after-care services, to the legal aid service, to the prison system and to the criminal injuries compensation system. The sums involved in the current year total £4,500 million—a 43 per cent. increase in real terms since this Government came to office.

There are also costs to the economy and to individuals of losses due to crime and to precautions against crime. Insurance payments to crime amounted to £320 million in 1984, and £40 million was spent on alarm systems. The Home Office estimates that in 1984 the total value of property stolen in offences of theft, burglary and robbery was over £1 billion. The cost of fraud is estimated at £3 billion. Much of that fraud is against the Inland Revenue —a highly appropriate crime against the Government, as it is the ultimate act of privatisation. All told it is probable that crime costs our country £10 billion every year. Year by year that cost is growing.

Those are the material costs, but we must add to those the costs to the security and tranquillity of our society. In addition to the facts of crime, there is the fear of crime. Every survey shows the extent of the fear of crime, even among people who may never become victims of crime. The recent Merseyside survey shows that 39 per cent. of respondents worry a lot about crime, 27 per cent. worry about being burgled, and 24 per cent. worry about vandalism. A total of 57 per cent. of women worry about going out on their own after dark. That is almost the same as the proportion of women in Islington who avoid going out after dark for fear of sexual attack or street robbery.

The Home Office study on the fear of crime published in 1984 showed that 52 per cent. of inner city dwellers seriously worry about becoming victims of crime. It showed that 41 per cent. of women in the inner cities feel very unsafe walking alone at night in their neighbourhoods. It showed that 12 per cent. of all inner city residents never go out at night because of crime. The "British Crime Survey", published by the Home Office last year, showed that 40 per cent. of women under 30 were worried about becoming rape victims. Half the women questioned said that they avoided going out unaccompanied after dark. In high crime areas, 18 per cent. of the elderly said that they never went out after dark, wholly or in part because of fear of crime.

Crime and the fear of crime destroy human rights. Every crime means individual suffering and a loss to the whole community. Every crime takes something away from its individual victims—their freedom, their peace of mind, their property, their health or even their lives. Crime of any sort also takes something away from society as a whole. We all lose when someone smashes a public telephone, burns or defaces a building or defrauds the Revenue. However, the fear of crime also diminishes both individuals and society. Parents grow fearful of letting their children out of their sight. The fear of crime changes people's habits and diminishes their freedom of movement and activity. As a Home Office researcher puts it, crime has

"the disabling consequence of restricting access to the social and cultural opportunities of society."

In this predicament, people rightly look to the police for safety and protection. The police do their very best, but far too often they know that that very best is nowhere near good enough. Clear-up rates for many crimes are low, and they are falling. Since the Government came into office the overall crime clear-up rate in England and Wales has fallen from 42 to 35 per cent.; the clear-up rate for theft has fallen from 40 to 35 per cent.; for burglaries from 32 to 29 per cent.; and for criminal damage from 30 to 23 per cent. Nearly three burglars in every four get clean away with the loot, while almost four vandals in every five evade detection and punishment.

There are more police, but the burden on them is greater than ever before. Under this Government the number of crimes committed per police officer has risen from 24 to 29 a year. If the Government reacted to the statistical success rate of the police in the same way as they treated the coal and shipbuilding industries, by now the Prime Minister would have put Sir Ian MacGregor in charge of closing down police stations throughout the country. That reaction to the police would be as unfair and as illogical as it was to other industries and services.

Much of the burden that hinders the police has been imposed by the Government or is the result of Government policy. Public order duties are increasingly distracting police from the priority job of fighting crime. That was made clear by the Comptroller and Auditor General in his report this year on the Metropolitan police. He said:

"There were . . . occasions when external demands (for example, for public order duties elsewhere) left insufficient numbers to maintain essential services."

The demands of training for the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and other onerous Government legislation are reducing the operational effectiveness of the police. In his report in 1985 the chief constable of Staffordshire said that training commitments for the Act has so far resulted "in the loss of over 2,000 man weeks of operational availability."

He complained:

"It is often difficult to find the time for training in new legislation without either having to curtail operational availability or cancelling other, equally important, forms of training."

At the Police Federation conference two months ago Mr. Tony Crowe, the chairman of the sergeants section, said that the Act had

"taken supervising ranks off the street, leaving inexperienced constables to fend for themselves."

He said that reduction in the first line of supervision would bring a generation of constables who had never had the necessary advice and guidance to develop skills.

A report in *The London Standard* of 10 July quoted police in Brixton as saying:

"Some detective work is now being done by telephone and residents are going to have to realise the choice we have. Do we take men away from a murder inquiry to investigate something like a stolen car radio? That's what staff shortages mean to us."

A parliamentary answer to a question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) last week gave the disturbing news that since this Government came to office the number of police in London and the City engaged in the investigation of company fraud has actually been reduced, at a time when fraud is soaring and is more dangerous a crime than it has ever been.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: I do not have time to give way. The Government took up an enormous amount of time with a disgraceful statement about social security. That has taken time away from the Opposition debate.

In the face of this alarming story of record crime rates, reduced clear-up rates and reduced police efficiency, what we get from this Government is a combination of shrill slogans and ineffable complacency. In their 1979 manifesto, the Conservatives proclaimed:

"Surer detection means surer deterrence."

Detection is less sure now than it was seven years ago. In their 1983 manifesto the Government said vainglorioously:

"already street crime is being reduced and public confidence improved in some of the worst inner-city areas."

Yet in those inner-city areas crime under this Government has risen by two thirds — half as much again as the depressing national average.

The Home Secretary said in a press release last March that the number of burglaries had fallen by 4 per cent. the previous year, which suggested that the crime prevention campaign might be beginning to bear fruit. He spoke too soon, because in the quarter that ended with the very month during which he made that boast burglaries rose by 8 per cent.

In this House two months ago the Home Secretary said:

"Local authorities can use the housing investment resources available to them for crime prevention and security measures."—[*Official Report*, 8 May 1986; Vol. 97, c. 281.]

The right hon. Gentleman seems to be completely unaware that under this Government those housing investment resources have been slashed by 70 per cent. Local authorities do not even have the cash to carry out their most basic housing responsibilities, let alone expand the necessary work of crime prevention.

On 13 March the Prime Minister said, in her most characteristic let-them-eat-cake frame of mind:

"Most people will and should be able to make their own provision for crime prevention." — [*Official Report*, 13 March 1986; Vol. 93, c. 1079.]

We know that that is exactly what the right hon. Lady is preparing to do for herself in her retreat to Fort Dulwich, but surveys such as that in Islington show that income is a major factor in determining whether security devices are installed and that many people who would like to take crime prevention measures cannot afford to do so. It is time for a nationally led and co-ordinated crime prevention campaign. It is clear from their ludicrous amendment to the Labour party motion that no such lead can be expected from this Government.

Already the Government's efforts to show what they are doing about crime prevention have taken on an air of pathos. Earlier this month the Home Secretary planted a question with the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) that had so little positive to claim about Government action on crime prevention that his answer was reduced to boasting about raising the profile of crime prevention and urging various organisations to identify crime prevention potential. Two seminars have been held at Downing street amid the kind of fanfares that Mr. Bernard Ingham usually reserves for vilifying a Cabinet Minister out of favour. Nothing positive has come from either seminar.

The Government's amendment goes through the usual motions of proclaiming

"additional resources . . . devoted to law and order".

In fact, expenditure on policing during the current financial year in real terms is due to fall slightly. The report on spending on law and order produced a few months ago by the partly Government funded National Institute of Economic and Social Research states:

"there is little ostensible association between police resources and recorded clear up rates."

The outcome of all the spending has been a 4 per cent. increase in serious crime

Cuts and spending ceilings imposed by the Government on local authorities — for example, £20,000 million less in rate support grant — mean fewer caretakers, park-keepers and attendants who look after public places and the people who use them. The loss of these public employees means more graffiti, vandalism and petty crime. It means also that public places stay vandalised or derelict for longer periods. That in turn reduces the character of the environment and stimulates further crime.

That is why the Labour Government will launch an immediate programme aimed at preventing crime and making neighbourhoods safer. We want to help city, town and rural areas, tenants and owner-occupiers. Some council estates have suffered especially high crime rates. The fear of crime is both deep and wide, especially in inner city estates, and it causes people to be trapped into their homes from dusk till dawn. They are fearful even of opening their doors to callers.

Many estates face intense problems because of bad design, inadequate maintenance, cuts in caretaking and other staff, insensitive and remote bureaucracy, inadequate provision for children and families, inadequate privacy and insulation, no opportunity for people to meet in safety and insufficient protection for ethnic minorities and other victims of harassment. All these problems can be reduced with the right approach from national Government and local government and from the community as a whole. The Labour party's policy towards crime prevention on local authority housing estates acknowledges that improving security and public safety and reducing crime are linked crucially to increased investment in public sector housing.

Labour will act to make tenants safer and more secure. We need more resident caretakers, tower-block receptionists and other estate staff who are properly trained, supervised and supported, in conjunction with physical security measures, a responsive repairs service, a sensitive allocation policy and effective neighbourhood policing. Such measures will be planned in accordance with the wishes of the local community. As we say in our motion, Labour will establish "a safe estates programme". With the increased allocations for housing expenditure that Labour will make available, local authorities will be encouraged to place more caretakers, including resident caretakers, and to strengthen front entrance doors, frames, locks and windows.

Mr. Tim Smith: How much will it all cost?

Mr. Kaufman: Much less than the £10 billion that the economy loses as a result of crime.

We shall improve lighting on streets, stairwells, corridors, balconies and walkways. We shall replace breakable fittings and materials with those that cannot be broken. We shall install entryphone systems and closed circuit television surveillance in medium and high-rise blocks. We shall adopt design changes to reduce crime and the fear of it——

Mr. Tim Smith: Unbreakable windows?

Mr. Kaufman: I bet that the Prime Minister has unbreakable windows at Dulwich.

We shall adopt design changes to reduce crime and the fear of it by reducing the number of escape routes for criminals, by removing connecting walkways and by partitioning large blocks. We shall establish carefully located and supervised play areas and introduce regular patrolling on foot by caretakers and other council employees. We shall establish more support for established tenants' and residents' associations.

The Labour Government will take measures also to prevent crime in private housing and in public places. We shall legislate in our first Session to make available crime prevention grants on application by both home owners and tenants. These grants will be available within the rateable value limits that apply to improvement grants and repair grants. Their cost will be contained within the increased housing investment allocations that will be provided to local authorities as part of the Labour Government's drive against bad housing and unemployment. Such grants will be extremely cost-effective. The average cost of clearing up a crime is nearly 50 times more than the cost of basic home security provision. Let it be known throughout the country that tonight Tory Members will be voting against a national system of crime prevention grants.

The Labour Government will ensure that local authorities involve residents in the planning of security and safety measures in homes and in the surrounding streets or courtyards. We shall encourage the provision of safer public transport. We believe that security should be improved by providing alarm buttons and closed-circuit TV at bus and train stations and by closing off little-used passageways, especially on Underground systems. We shall — *[Interruption.]* I am interested to note that Conservative Members should heckle so much. I am putting forward practical plans to deal with crime, and all we get from Conservative Members and the Government is waffle, seminars and slogans. There is no action and we have the worst crime rate that Britain has ever known.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: The needs of security and the fears of passengers on public transport—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] I shall not give way to the pathetic hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), who merely rises to toady to the Government on every possible opportunity.

The needs of security and the fears of passengers——

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) to refer to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) as a pathetic Member?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): There is nothing unparliamentary about that.

Mr. Kaufman: There can never be anything unparliamentary about the truth, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The needs of security and the fears of passengers on public transport should be taken into account in planning bus routes, bus stop location and crewing. We shall take measures to reduce the high level of car crime. We shall have discussions with manufacturers to produce design changes——

Mr. Wheeler: That is being done now.

Mr. Kaufman: But nothing is happening, even after seven years.

Mr. Wheeler: It will happen.

Mr. Kaufman: These design changes will be related, for example, to steering column locks and electronic locking and alarms.

Mr. Wheeler: That was done in 1979.

Mr. Kaufman: Are Conservative Members saying that the measures that I am suggesting have been in operation for seven years, bearing in mind the 41 per cent. increase in crime and the highest level of auto crime ever known?

The Government and Conservative Members generally now make many claims and all sorts of promises. They have had seven years in which to keep their promises and yet they have broken every one. Let it be clearly understood that when Conservative Members vote this evening they will be voting against the Labour party's safe estates and crime prevention campaigns.

Even with much more co-ordinated community action in defence of law and order, the Labour Government will still inherit a high level of crime. Many crimes mean many victims and it is time for much more positive action to be taken to support victims at their time of loss and injury. The Government have the impertinence in their amendment to claim credit for the development of victim support schemes, but the victim support movement tells a different story. Government support for the movement amounts to precisely to £286,000.

Mr. Tim Smith: That is more than the Labour Government provided.

Mr. Kaufman: That sum is small enough in itself and it is not even available in the long-term.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): How much did the Labour Government provide?

Mr. Kaufman: In his report, which was issued the week before last, the chairman of the National Association of Victims Support Schemes expressed concern that no Government allocation had been made to extend beyond 1987. He contrasted what he described as the Home Secretary's "fine words" with the absence of secure funding. He said:

"the last twelve months have been marked by a growing anger at the mis-match between official statements of support for victim support schemes and the level of financial assistance provided."

He warned against the Government abdicating their responsibility towards victims.

The association's annual report starkly stated:

"The precarious position of schemes' finances unquestionably limits their scope to develop a full service to the victims of crimes. Not only the shortage of funds, but also their lack of continuity, continue serving as grievous constraints on the work of many schemes."

The Association of Chief Police Officers made the accusation that the effectiveness of victims support schemes is

"constrained through inadequate and haphazard funding".

Set against those facts, today's Government amendment is the rankest hypocrisy. A Labour Government will act to ensure that victims support schemes are available throughout the country. Many parts of Britain entirely lack such schemes, yet the work carried out by those

schemes, to counsel, comfort and help crime victims, including abused children, battered wives and rape victims, is beyond price. We will discuss with the National Association of Victims Support Schemes what sums of money it needs to provide the services that it regards as essential. When we have costed them carefully, we will provide the money that is needed. Victim support on a much larger and wider scale calls for sums that are tiny within the national budget. We will enable that support to be provided. When Tory Members vote this evening, they will be voting against positive Government assistance for victim support.

Crime is a disease in our society. Every disease has its causes. The Government fail to address those causes. In fact, they are responsible for some of them. The National Institute of Economic and Social Research gives details of the links between social deprivation and crime. It points out that those authorities that have the highest recorded crime rates include those most densely populated, those with the worst overcrowding and those with high rates of unemployment.

The position was put even more bluntly in the annual report of the chief constable of Greater Manchester, which was published last week. In that report, Mr. James Anderton dealt directly with Greater Manchester, but it applies to the country as a whole. He said:

"Burdens on police in Greater Manchester have grown against a background of alarming unemployment generally averaging 15 per cent. for all age groups throughout the area, but with a much larger problem in the inner-city. Perhaps of more telling significance, from the standpoint of law and public order, is the fact that the figure for long-term unemployment among the crime-prone younger age groups in the worst affected parts of the conurbation, not just in the inner-city, ranges from 50 per cent. to a staggering 80 per cent. or more. Policing certainly has to be wise, caring and sensible in those distinctive localities where almost the entire population is out of work and living on 'social security.'"

High levels of crime tell us not only about the kinds of criminals at large in our society, but about the kind of society that creates the conditions that nurture such criminals. When confrontation is deliberately incited, when bitterness is provoked and envy is stirred up, when more and more people are frustrated, living without hope, and made to feel that society has rejected them, crimes of every kind are more likely to be committed.

Under this Government, Britain has become a family divided against itself. Division is deliberately stirred up between old and young, the retired and those still at work, employed and unemployed, north and south, black and white, inner city and suburbs. No family can prosper when some of its members feel neglected and despised. To have any hope of success, the fight against crime needs a new start. For that new start, we need a new Government.

5.4 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof,

'reaffirms its support for the Government's commitment to pursuing an honest, vigorous and coherent policy in the fight against crime; welcomes the additional resources the Government has devoted to law and order, the success of Government backed crime prevention initiatives such as Neighbourhood Watch and property marking schemes, the encouragement given to local crime prevention initiatives, and the development of victim support schemes; expresses support for the police in their efforts to build closer links with the community; and believes everybody has a responsibility to participate in the fight against crime.'.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) seems to believe that by repeating statistics he can make them less misleading. He repeated statistics that he has cited in the House. They are designed to show that the "black cloud", as he called it, settled over Britain — what he called "Thatcher's Britain" — in the years following 1979. If we are to have a serious discussion, I hope that we can start from the fact that recorded crime has risen steadily — between 5 and 7 per cent. — over the past 30 years.

One can toss about statistics. I could, if I wished to do so, show the right hon. Gentleman that violent crime, which is what concerns most people most of the time, rose substantially faster in what I suppose I must call Wilson's and Callaghan's Britain. Since 1979, that type of crime has slowed down in its rate of increase. Although the right hon. Gentleman spent at least 10 minutes tossing about such statistics, I do not think that it is sensible to do so. I am prepared to agree that the nation faces a major problem that has been mounting over 30 years, and that it requires a major and a national effort to deal with it.

The right hon. Gentleman's party has no credentials or credibility to allow it to join in such an effort. We heard nothing today from the right hon. Gentleman about attacks on the police and on most things that they do which have characterised past debates on the subject, especially the recent debate on policing in London. The right hon. Gentleman made an unfair and an inexact comment or two, especially about police training under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. When there is a major piece of new legislation, there must be a major and a once and for all development of police training. Hon. and right hon. Gentlemen would be the first to complain if the police were not adequately trained in the law of the land, especially in the safeguards for the citizen which the Act introduced.

Those safeguards were long debated by the right hon. Gentleman and me in Committee and on the Floor of the House. They are extensive and, in some respects, complicated. They would have been much more extensive and complicated if we had accepted the Opposition's amendments. During those debates we tried to keep the scheme and the safeguards as simple as we could, bearing in mind the burden on the police that would inevitably result.

Mr. Wheeler *rose*—

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way to my hon. Friend because he was grossly maltreated by the right hon. Member for Gorton.

Mr. Wheeler: Does my right hon. Friend recall that, when he and I spent 59 sittings on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, the Opposition pressed strongly for safeguards concerning liberty and the treatment of individuals, and that my right hon. Friend saw the wisdom of many of them? Does my right hon. Friend not find it curious that the Opposition should now criticise an Act that they played a part in developing for the obligations that it imposes on the police service?

Mr. Hurd: I agree. The right hon. Gentleman and Opposition Members generally thrive on a short memory, because if people had long memories, Labour's arguments would rapidly collapse.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned public order duties. I am worried about the way in which the argument

[Mr. Hurd]

is developing. I do not understand the Labour party's position on public order. It seems to boil down to saying that some people deserve protection and others do not, and that, for example, the electricians and others who choose to work at Wapping should be left out of account. I do not know whether the argument is that there should be no policing at Wapping, so that it is impossible for people to exercise their right to work, or whether there should be only enough police to ensure that they are outdone and outnumbered by the pickets. The right hon. Gentleman did not develop that argument. It is an absolutely crucial argument if we are to get the balance right.

The question of the balance in the use of resources inside any police force, including the Metropolitan police, must be left to the chief officer of police. I am deeply concerned that the Labour party's proposals would lead to the politicisation of police forces and political decisions as to who should be protected by the law and the police and who should not. No doubt, there will be occasions on which Labour Members can develop their points.

The subject of the Opposition's motion is crime prevention and victim support, and I welcome that. Strenuous efforts in crime prevention were begun by my predecessor, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan). Of course, that work had been going on before but he placed new emphasis on it and put new resources into it. Since then, we have always been missionaries in this respect. If the right hon. Member for Gorton and his colleagues are to join in the efforts and activities that are afoot throughout the country, they are welcome. The fact that they have lagged a little behind in the past makes their joining no less welcome now.

Of course, there is a difference in approach, which is illustrated by the Opposition's motion and the Government's amendment. The main difference between us is not on the need for crime prevention but on the attitudes to public spending in relation to it. I could not understand the point made by the right hon. Member for Gorton. Presumably, he was at the gathering at the weekend at Bishop's Stortford and knows what the instructions are. They are clear—that Labour will tax the very rich, which means those on £27,000 a year, which will yield £3·6 billion. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has told us that that money will be used for just four provisions—pensions, child benefit, long-term unemployment pay and tax allowances for low-paid couples, and nothing else. Opposition spokesmen are enjoined not to promise anything else during the first two years in government. That is the distinction—famous in the Labour party—between the pledge and the lightly given promise. We have pledges, which fall within the £3·6 billion, and lightly given promises, which are the rest of the £24 billion so far promised. The schemes of the right hon. Member for Gorton, including those announced today, clearly fall into the category of the lightly given promises. They will not be undertaken in those two years, although the right hon. Gentleman said something very different today. I do not understand therefore how, after what we have heard about the Labour party's priorities, the right hon. Gentleman can pretend that he is giving priority to crime prevention or to victim support.

Once again, by pretending to give priority to everything, the Opposition are clearly showing that they give priority to nothing and that they have not thought matters through. One must therefore turn to the past to see where their real priorities are likely to lie in the future. When one considers the disgraceful state in which my predecessors in 1979 found the prisons and the police, it seems unlikely that the type of activities that the right hon. Member for Gorton now praises will find any decent priority in a Labour Government's programme.

I should like to consider what is being done. I hope that the House will forgive me if I dwell on this, but the main thesis of the right hon. Member for Gorton was that we were doing nothing, except making a few speeches and sermons. I should like to start with the work of the police in crime prevention. I am anxious that this work should be stressed because I am concerned that, in recent weeks, much publicity has been attached to the police and their equipment for use in the last resort if there was a breakdown in public order. It is high time that a little more attention was paid to what the police are doing day by day to prevent crime.

Police work with young people in schools is obviously crucial in view of the peak age of offending — 15 for boys and 14 for girls. Undoubtedly, it is an advantage to have 43 different local police forces, almost all of which are experimenting and innovating. The Staffordshire scheme for young people — SPACE — occupies some 23,000 secondary school pupils for the whole of August each year in more than 2,500 different activities. The signs are that it has contributed to a decrease in offending by youngsters. The West Midlands police have initiated an ambitious project in the Ladywood and Handsworth district of Birmingham — the Ladworth project — in which local agencies work together with community groups to provide recreation and employment opportunities for young people in the inner city.

The Lancashire police run a scheme in the Lake District, which is fully used most weekends of the year in youth activities. The Cumbria and Northamptonshire police forces run more specifically work-orientated schemes to give young people some work experience with the police. The Leicestershire police, whom I recently visited, hope to mount an even more ambitious scheme in the Highfields area of Leicester to give selected youngsters a chance to try a variety of jobs in co-operation with local police.

Those are all police schemes which show how foolish it is to argue that the police neglect this aspect and are interested only in equipment and new powers.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the right hon. Gentleman recollect that I have written to him about forensic science problems and the advantage of developing forensic science, especially under Brian Caddy of the university of Strathclyde? Is there not a case for having a forensic department to which defence counsel can turn for second opinions, in view of all the difficulties of the Birmingham six?

Mr. Hurd: Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister of State could deal with that point in detail. Although it is a serious suggestion, it does not flow immediately from the points I was developing. As regards the Birmingham six, the hon. Gentleman, who takes a serious interest in this

matter, knows that I am deliberately taking time to examine whether there is fresh evidence in Mr. Mullins' book.

I shall move now to the activity of other Government agencies involved in the subject which the Opposition chose for their motion and about which the right hon. Member for Gorton said that nothing was being done. We have a programme of measures designed to improve the security of owner — occupiers and tenants. Some of those measures are financial. The Department of the Environment has set aside £50 million of housing capital resources in this financial year for allocation by the urban housing renewal unit to run-down local authority estates. In the 33 cases approved to date, one third of the resources has been spent on crime prevention measures — exactly the sort of point about which the Opposition talk.

The right hon. Member for Gorton may not know about the priority estates programme of the Department of the Environment but it is relevant to his points. That programme is working on measures which help to reduce crime, with special emphasis on the participation of residents — another point made by the right hon. Gentleman. Many of the projects funded through the urban programme contribute to crime prevention. Last year, some £6 million was spent on projects directly concerned with crime. Community programmes involve a substantial commitment of resources to crime prevention projects on housing estates.

Under the national initiative, announced earlier this year, more than 5,000 community programme cases have been approved for crime prevention work. These resources represent a substantial Government investment in safer estates. We are also considering ways of improving the design of estates to deter crime. The Department of the Environment is commissioning consultants to prepare a handbook on improving dwellings and the environmental features of local authority estates with special attention being paid to security and crime prevention. I do not rule out the possibility of developing further action along those lines.

I turn to one aspect which I do not think the right hon. Member for Gorton mentioned but which is crucial in effective crime prevention — the neighbourhood watch scheme. There are now 14,500 schemes in England and Wales — an increase of more than 75 per cent. over the past six months. Properly designed neighbourhood watch schemes can reduce local crime, improve relations between police and the community, reduce the fear of crime — about which the right hon. Member for Gorton is quite right — and provide a new impetus for neighbours to meet and work together.

I suppose, following on from the analysis of the right hon. Member for Gorton, that the right hon. Gentleman is in favour of all that. But what is happening, for example, in Manchester under the new leadership of the city council? Far from forging the type of efforts about which the right hon. Member for Gorton made a speech, it is deliberately holding them back. It is making it more difficult for residents to come together with the police to make their streets "safer and more secure", to quote the right hon. Gentleman's objective.

The right hon. Member for Gorton says that more money should be given to local authorities for this purpose. If more money were given to Manchester city council, what would it spend it on? I bet that it would spend the money on producing even glossier and more vicious editions of its disgraceful publication "Police Watch". I say that plucking just one example from the several others that could be used, and there are others in London. If the Labour party is to be taken seriously in the attitude that it has expressed today, it will have to do something to restrain and reverse the policies of those Labour authorities — fortunately, a minority — which are taking exactly the opposite line to that taken by the Labour Front Bench.

We intend to maintain and boost the momentum behind the neighbourhood watch schemes and we shall be launching a new national magazine in co-operation with the private sector. [HON. MEMBERS: "Will it be a glossy one?"] The difference between what we propose and the behaviour of Manchester city council is that we are helping communities to work with the police to protect their property, whereas Manchester city council is undermining those efforts.

To continue with the list of actions that we are taking, no doubt the right hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends have told him of the five local schemes that the Home Office is now operating in Swansea, Wellingborough, Croydon, Tyneside and Bolton. A two-week autocrime campaign in Wellingborough concentrating on the major car parks produced a 10 per cent. reduction in thefts of cars in May compared with the same period last year and compared with a 5½ per cent. increase for the Wellingborough subdivision as a whole. Autocrime in the car parks targeted was halved. That is just one small practical example of what is being done through our crime prevention programmes.

The two seminars, which the right hon. Gentleman lightly mocked but which I am glad to say were fully supported by the trade union movement, have produced a whole series of new ventures for preventing crime in both the public sector and the private sector. I hope that we shall be making further announcements about actual decisions in the coming months, but they cover insurance, increased protection against residential burglary and increased security in the design of cars.

The right hon. Gentleman was quite correct to stress that victim support is crucial and that for too long victims have been the forgotten parties in the criminal justice system. The Government have accepted the need to provide the movement with some support from public funds and we have trebled the grant to the National Association of Victims Support Schemes in the past two years, enabling it to increase its staff, to move to larger premises and substantially to expand its work. Contrary to the impression given by the right hon. Gentleman, a survey of 200 local schemes in 1985-86 showed that half were receiving grants from central Government totalling £750,000. This was by far the main source of funds for local schemes, the same 200 receiving £250,000 from local authorities and only £88,000 from private sources such as trusts and charities and their own fund-raising initiatives. There is great scope for expanding and further varying the sources of income for victim support schemes. Nevertheless, this year we are for the first time providing some direct funding for local schemes. We have provided £136,000 to establish a contingency fund administered by the national association to help hard-pressed schemes and 68 schemes have already received grants from that source, which, according to the national association, will serve as a lifeline for many schemes.

[Mr. Hurd]

The first schemes of this kind were established in Bristol in 1974. There were 30 local schemes when we came to office. There are now 300. In 1985-86, nearly 4,000 trained volunteers dealt with 185,000 victims, mostly referred to them by the police — a sixfold increase. I thoroughly agree with the right hon. Gentleman that we should put emphasis on this aspect and we are doing so in this and several other ways. As a further development, we propose to introduce provisions next Session requiring the courts either to make a compensation order when sentencing an offender or to give specific reasons for not doing so, thus shifting the onus and putting a responsibility on the court to make an order or to explain why it is not doing so. We are preparing comprehensive guidelines to help the courts to assess realistic amounts of compensation in personal injury cases.

I hope that I have said enough to show that in the two areas singled out by the Opposition — crime prevention and victim support — major efforts are already in progress, employing not just the resources of the Home Office but the efforts of police, local authorities and a wide range of Government agencies. This should be a national effort and if today's debate, despite the right hon. Gentleman's perverse speech, means that the Opposition now intend to be constructive and put behind them the kind of activity of which I complained in relation to Manchester city council, I welcome them aboard.

In our last debate on these matters I had a rather odd experience. I was chided by the right hon. Gentleman for uttering homilies, but later in his speech he started talking about the need for partnership. For a moment I genuinely thought that he was quoting a speech of mine that I had forgotten so as to mock me further, but he then sat down — having used exactly the type of formulation about partnership that I had used. The Labour party has a long way to go before its credentials in this area are established, but if the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends wish to join in a national effort, despite the perversity of their specific proposals, I believe that that will be helpful.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his written answer to my question about the neighbourhood watch scheme in Southampton. I am especially sad that only one of the city's 15 wards has such a scheme and that only four members of the police are currently organising such schemes. Does my right hon. Friend think that there could be a little more publicity and television time devoted to the scheme, as I understand that there is a great deal of literature at the police stations just waiting for people to come forward?

Mr. Hurd: I shall certainly look at the position in Southampton. I think that many cities, having watched the rapid growth of the schemes elsewhere, will now be looking to their laurels to ensure that they compete. The material is certainly readily available from the Home Office. My hon. Friend the Minister of State may be able to say a little more about Southampton when he winds up, following that useful intervention which illustrates the impetus behind the whole effort. I hope that today's debate will add to that impetus.

5.27 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) referred to a black cloud of lawlessness hanging over the country. The assumption is that crime stems from unemployment, the fragmentation of the family, the glorification of violence on television and, in my view, the example set by the state. I wish to draw attention to one example of that.

On 7 June on the George Negus interview programme on Radio 2UE in Sydney and Radio 3AK in Melbourne, Australia, Mr. Richard Victor Hall made a number of statements about a book by Mr. Peter Wright, a former employee of M15, referring to lawlessness and law breaking in Britain. According to the Australian media, Mr. Peter Wright claimed that M15 had attempted to bug the French and West German embassies in London, placed microphones behind the cipher machines in the Greek and Indonesian embassies, bugged diplomatic conferences at Lancaster house in the 1950s and 1960s and the Zimbabwe independence negotiations in 1979. Mr. Wright alleges that M15 entered Russian consulates abroad, plotted against Mr. Harold Wilson during his 1974-76 premiership and diverted resources to investigate Left-wing groups in Britain instead of setting its own house in order. He is also believed to have details of a plot to assassinate President Nasser during the Suez crisis and details of meetings between officials from American intelligence agencies, the National Security Agency, the CIA, the FBI, GCHQ and M15. He alleges that M15 was involved in the testing of poison on sheep and in switching number plates on vehicles in this country. He also alleges Nikita Khrushchev's suite at Claridges was bugged during his visit in the 1950s and refers to the opening of diplomatic bags by M15 and other forms of law breaking in Britain.

Mr. Wright, who left M15 in 1976 and lives in Tasmania, cannot be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act. Instead, our Government are seeking an injunction to prevent Heinemann's Australian subsidiary from publishing his memoirs by bringing a civil suit for breach of confidence. Sir Robert Armstrong, the Cabinet Secretary, has argued in an affidavit that publication would lose confidence in M15's ability to protect classified information. The Government have refused to tell Mr. Wright's lawyers which extract of the memoirs he has written they believe should remain confidential.

That is law breaking in Britain, and we now see our Government involved in a cover up. The proposition in the Government's amendment, which stands in the Prime Minister's name, is rubbish. The Prime Minister does not believe in containing law and order or in reasonable policies on law and order. She believes that it is right for the state to break the law, and that is why the Attorney-General is using the courts in the way that he is at present. He is hiding the breaking of the law by British civil servants.

5.31 pm

Mr. Julian Critchley (Aldershot): We are witnessing a splendid irony. At the same moment as the Shadow Home Secretary discovers crime, the chairman of the Conservative party stumbles across sin. We shall not be short of sermons!

The relish which the Labour party has brought to the problems of crime — the legacy of the Thatcher years, and so on — is matched only by the relish with which the chairman of the Conservative party upbraids the British

people and attacks the "permissive society". It appears that when it comes to crime, it is everyone's fault but our own.

Faced with the question that from time to time our constituents still put to us—"Why can politicians do nothing about crime?"—we politicians are, for a moment at least, lost for words. The Labour party and the Prince of Wales together are inclined to blame the figures for rising crime on rising unemployment, especially among young people. Who am I to quarrel with the Prince of Wales? There is a good deal in that argument. On the other hand, the chairman of the Conservative party goes into the pulpit and blames the so-called permissive society. Working on the assumption that the Conservative party needs all the friends that it can get, he is enlisting the so-called moral majority—salvationists who are no longer interested in the next world, only in this one. May God preserve us from them!

We all know only too well how the argument runs. The moralists say that rising crime is due to kids staying up late at night and watching the telly; to the BBC for showing so much sex and violence; to easier divorce; to married women going out to work; to the fact that homosexual behaviour between adults is no longer a criminal offence; to the fact that a play in the West End is no longer censored; and to the fact that robbers are no longer flogged and murderers no longer swing.

That is nonsense, or worse. It is worse because, as far as I know, the Conservative party is not committed to doing anything about it. Conservatives are not pledged in any manifesto to reverse any of the social legislation that has been passed by this House over the last 15 to 20 years—in which case it is hypocritical as well. However, it is well known that humbug is the essential lubricant of life—certainly of our life in this place.

There is in fact an answer to the question that our constituents are for ever asking—"What can the politicians do about rising crime?". It is quite simple. We should increase the price of drink. I beg of hon. Members to stay with me. I have no wish to lose all my friends. Let me explain. In 1946, notifiable offences against the person in England and Wales were 4,062, and the real cost of a bottle of whisky at 1985 prices was £16·30. By 1956, under Sir Anthony Eden, the real cost of a bottle of whisky had fallen to £14·60 and violent crime figures had risen to nearly 8,000. I beg hon. Members to stay with me because the story gets better.

In 1961, in the golden days of Lord Stockton, violent crime rose to 15,000, and by 1965, under Lord Wilson, it went up to nearly 30,000. In 1970, under my right hon. Friend the Member for Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)—the old Pretender—the real cost of the hard stuff had fallen to £12·60 and violent crime against the person had risen to 41,000. By 1975, under the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) and Lord Wilson, the cost of a bottle of whisky had fallen to £9·15, and violent crime soared to 71,000. By 1980, the first year of the "counter revolution," the cost of a bottle of Scotch had fallen to £7·70 and the figures for violent crime rose to 97,000. In 1985, whisky still cost £7·70 and violent crime rose to a record 119,000 offences.

I have left the Scots until last. If anything, they have been prepared to take an even more handsome advantage of a 60 per cent. fall in the real cost of whisky over the past 40 years—patriots to a man and woman.

I am no statistician. I know the old joke about statistics, drunks and lamp-posts. But there must be a relationship between drink—particularly the hard stuff—and, violent crime. Ask David Lloyd George or, if he cannot be found, John Grigg. Ask the Russians, the Swedes, the Icelanders or the Finns. Ask anyone. If the Government are really concerned to do something about the remorseless rise in crime—this applies equally to the Opposition—why not increase the tax on booze? I appeal to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker: was not sobriety a Victorian virtue?

5.38 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): During the first 55 minutes of the debate I was reminded of one of the favourite stories of my children—how the elephant got his trunk. But in the version to which we listened it was difficult to ascertain who was the elephant and who was the crocodile.

On the one hand, the Home Secretary claimed at least some measure of success in his criminal justice policy and the fight against crime which he said the Government were putting up. However, we heard ample evidence of the failure of that policy, in the waterfall of correct statistics that were produced by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman).

On the other hand, the right hon. Member for Gorton claimed that the Labour party had the recipe for preventing crime; but that comes from a party whose credibility is perhaps not of the highest in this area. It comes from a party that is apparently prepared to palliate the consequences of criminal conviction for miners who were convicted of criminal offences—some of violence—against individuals. It comes from a party that in some areas is not prepared to allow often the most popular visitor—the uniformed police constable who comes as a crime prevention officer—into primary schools. It comes from a party that is not prepared to give the sort of encouragement to responsible neighbourhood watch schemes—and, of course, they need careful control—that it ought to be giving. It comes from a party that even in the city that includes the constituency of the right hon. Member for Gorton—and I saw a copy of this waved at the right hon. Gentleman at a fringe meeting at the Police Federation conference to which he referred—has been issuing a newsletter to the population which frequently contains clear attacks upon the police.

Both the Government and the Labour party seem to have lost sight of the fundamental priorities of which we should be speaking when we discuss the prevention of crime. I hope that the whole House will agree that the priorities of a successful criminal justice and crime prevention policy within a fair system of legal checks and balances are, first, to ensure that people can live in their homes without the fear of those homes being ravaged and looted by burglars and vandals and, secondly, to ensure that people, whether they be young or old, male or female, black or white, can walk the streets without the fear of their peace being disturbed. As we approach the conclusion of the debate, we should be able to show the public that politicians regard those as the fundamental priorities and that they are looking for solutions which will enable those priorities to succeed.

The Labour party motion is commendable so far as it goes. I particularly congratulate the right hon. Member for Gorton on his reference to victim support schemes. I agreed with him wholeheartedly when he criticised the

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

Government for talking humbug in pretending that they had given proper support to those schemes. But the right hon. Gentleman presented the House with a bizzare form of salesmanship of double glazing. In his society of closed-circuit televisions in every public place, of double-glazed houses so that it is harder to break windows, of smash-proof windows, of more caretakers, of strengthened car locks and more cars with alarms, what will the Labour party do to attack the underlying causes of crime?

It is not good enough and it will not satisfy the public to talk about a policy which tinkers around the superficialities of making homes and cars more secure without addressing the more fundamental realities of the crime problem and thus of crime prevention. The Labour party motion does not refer to that. The proposals made by the Labour party, albeit rather gift-wrapped by the right hon. Gentleman, but even in their unwrapped form, obviously go some way towards easing the burden on police officers, although it is questionable whether the programme can be delivered economically. But those proposals do nothing to improve the quality and nature of the attack which we must make on crime.

It is far more important for us to look at the structure, organisation, and accountability of the police to ascertain whether, through promoting and increasing the efficiency of our police forces, we can tackle the wave of crime of which the right hon. Gentleman spoke. We could swamp the country with police officers, but that would be unacceptable. We must strike a balance between increasing the numbers of police officers on the streets and overpolicing with consequent reduction of the quality of our police forces.

When we compare the sort of proposals made by the Labour party in its motion with what can be done through conventional policing and enhancing the efficiency of police forces, let us not forget the cost-effectiveness of the ordinary bobby. If all a police constable on the beat achieves in one year is to keep one person out of prison for one year, he has paid his salary and is cost-effective. The fight against crime is being lost because we are not making use of our police officers cost effectively and because we do not have sufficient police officers where they are needed. The Home Secretary shakes his head, but he will know that if the Thames Valley police area, which includes his constituency of Witney, were to have sufficient police officers to meet the average policing rate for England and Wales, its manpower would have to be increased by 25 per cent. The Home Secretary knows that fact, and he knows that the chief constable of the Thames Valley police believes that he should be given more officers in order to be able to mount proper squads of detectives and a full effort in the prevention of crime. It is impossible to understand the Home Secretary's reasons for depriving Thames Valley police of the manpower that it needs merely to be an average sized police force in proportion to the population of its enormous area.

The fight against crime is being lost both in the number of crimes and in the seriousness of the crimes committed. I shall not weary the House by repeating the statistics given by the right hon. Member for Gorton. At times some forces claim an improvement in clear-up rates, or at least evidence of improvement. The Home Secretary will be aware that in *The Observer* of 13 July 1986 certain allegations were made by PC Ronald Walker of the Kent constabulary about the genuineness of those clear-up rates at least for part of Kent. He will be aware that that was not a new complaint but was already under investigation. I hope that he will agree that it is in the public interest, and certainly in the interests of the police, that genuine clear-up rates should always be available. I trust that he will take steps to ensure that guidelines are issued to police forces so that there is some uniformity in the way in which clear-up rates are prepared, and so that the public and the House are not misled into believing that the police are having greater success in clearing up crime than is the case. I refer in particular to the so-called system of write-offs, in which statements are prepared either by or purporting to be by people in prison convicted of crimes, who accept that they committed many other crimes.

In the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister there is yet another claim by the Government which suggests that the Conservative party has some sort of proprietary interest in law and order, and that it is the only party which is remotely capable of delivering law and order. We have already heard the statistics. It is particularly alarming to see a reference in the amendment to

"the Government's commitment to pursuing an honest, vigorous and coherent policy in the fight against crime."

Does the Home Secretary believe that the 25 per cent. undermanning in the Thames Valley police is evidence of vigour?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. and learned Gentleman is falling into the increasingly prevalent trick, or trap, of describing as a cut or deprivation an increase which is somewhat smaller than those concerned would like. He will know that among the increases in police forces announced this year are a 73 post increase for Merseyside, a 50 post increase for Thames Valley, a 40 post increase for Norfolk, a 29 post increase for Warwickshire, and an 18 post increase for Devon and Cornwall. Those are the first results of the further increase, on top of the already massive increase, which we propose for the police forces of England and Wales outside London.

Mr. Carlile: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving those figures. He has reminded the House that for the Thames Valley police force, including his own constituency, 50 extra officers are being allowed this year; but he knows perfectly well that in order for Thames Valley to have the same ratio of police to population as the average police force in England and Wales, he should have given it not 50 but 750 extra police officers this year. I do not believe that the Home Secretary can satisfactorily deny that figure. It is indeed a deprivation. Thames Valley is entitled to the same rate of policing as any other part of the country. It is a deprivation of which there is evidence in other areas. Manchester was quoted earlier as another example.

Does the Home Secretary suggest that that kind of deprivation is evidence of a commitment to a vigorous policy of crime prevention? Is it really evidence of a coherent policy on crime prevention? Above all, is it honest for the Government to come to the House and say, "We are making all these efforts to prevent crime," but at the same time to hide in the statistics the fact that they are not giving the chief constables, who know how many police officers they need to have just an average sized force, that size of force? That is what is happening in many police forces, including Thames Valley.

The reality is that it does not need the right hon. Member for Gorton, the Home Secretary, me, or any other hon. Member to tell the Government what policing is needed. The good British public will tell the Government what policing is needed. Not even the wisdom of Lord Scarman is required to tell the Government what is needed to improve policing and prevent crime.

If you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were to ask the public of this country what they believe is needed to improve crime prevention, they would give you the right answer, and it would be along these lines: that it is as important for a member of the public to know who is his local police officer as it is for him to know the name of his newsagent, doctor, milkman and chemist; that it is absolutely vital that there should be restored to the streets of this country something which many people of a generation older than I remember well — the local police officer from the local whole-time or part-time police station, according to the needs of his area; that it is absolutely necessary, not only in the inner cities but in the smaller towns and villages of this country, to ensure that the people can see their police in action — not whizzing past in panda cars but, wherever possible, policing on foot. That is not happening now.

In their amendment, the Government express support for the police. Of course the Government

"expresses support for the police in their efforts to build closer links with the community".

Nobody could doubt the truth of those words in the Government's amendment. However, they do not give the support that the police need

"in their efforts to build closer links with the community".

The result is that the morale of the public, as they face increasing crime, and the morale of the police, as they do their best to swim against the tide of increasing crime, is being sapped.

Connected with all this is the problem of the police authorities. Even those who are on police authorities barely know — indeed, some of them do not know — what are their rights and responsibilities. The system of police authorities is in chaos. I shall not dwell on the Stalker case because we have had plenty of opportunities to raise that issue, but the Manchester police authority quite plainly has not understood the responsibilities placed upon it under section 86 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 in relation to Mr. Stalker. However, it is not surprising that it has not understood its responsibilities, because they are almost completely incomprehensible.

More than 20 years after the last Royal Commission on the police there is a great need to look once again—in a society that has changed so much and, in the context of policing, in a society that has changed so dramatically—at the role and structure of the police and police authorities. What has been said by the two Front Bench spokesmen in the debate is symptomatic of the fact that neither the Government nor the Labour party are going to the root causes of the malaise in the policy towards policing and, to an extent, in the police themselves. They are simply looking at ways of trying to treat the symptoms as quickly as possible, though superficially.

I ask the Home Secretary to institute a deep and far-ranging, though not a lingering, inquiry into the police along the lines of a Royal Commission. It is quite clear from reading the Scarman report on the Brixton disturbances that there are many aspects of policing that we ought to look at from scratch.

I should like to make two other brief points to the Home Secretary, which I am sure he will accept are important. The first relates to our prisons. I was pleased to read that slopping out is to end in Wormwood Scrubs prison. I wish that we could say the same about many other prisons where slopping out still takes place. There is an abundance of evidence that savage or insanitary prisons do not prevent crime; they simply harden criminals. We have all heard and read about the Government's prison building programme. However, I ask the Home Secretary to look once again at that programme to ensure, even if he remains committed to building additional spaces into the prison system, which I believe is wrong, that there are far greater and far quicker improvements in local prisons, where many of the insanitary places are to be found, so that soon we may have at least a moderately civilised prison system.

The other specific point that I wish to mention to the Home Secretary, which I hope that the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw), will be able to deal with, relates to forensic science services. There was a time when, if the police went to the scene of a crime and wanted to call in forensic, as they called them, forensic came to the scene and took their samples, and within a couple of weeks, at the most, the basics of a forensic report were available for the investigating officers. Those reports could form, and often have formed, the basis of further interviews of suspects.

One cannot underestimate the importance of forensic evidence in the investigation of a crime. Sometimes it seems to be thought that it is important only in the presentation of the case to the court, but that is not correct. When murders are committed in England and Wales and when the police inevitably have to call for forensic evidence, the fact is that nowadays they are having to wait for weeks and weeks for reports, that forensic inquiries into murder cases and other serious crimes are being stockpiled at the laboratories and that there are insufficient Home Office forensic scientists of sufficient seniority and experience to deal with all the inquiries that are made of them by the police alone.

I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) who believes that forensic science laboratories should be truly independent and fully available to both prosecution and defence. At the moment, those laboratories cannot begin to deal properly with prosecution, let alone defence. This is a scandal, because it is affecting detection rates and thus the prevention of crime. I hope that the Minister will give us some real evidence of the Government's determination to deal with the problem.

6 pm

Mr. Mike Woodcock (Ellesmere Port and Neston): This debate is of necessity brief, and I shall conform by being as brief as I can in my speech. The debate is about putting people first, and all kinds of people are involved in the judicial process. I share with Opposition Members a great concern about the rise in crime. However, I believe that the Government have done a great deal to strengthen and support the police, to give at least some relief to the victims of crime and to make life more difficult for the offenders.

[Mr. Mike Woodcock]

I hope that all of us are concerned about the rise in crime, and more concerned with solving the problem than in scoring political points.

The administration of justice involves more than the police, the victim and the offender. The police alone cannot prevent crime. They cannot observe every house, factory or shop, or even every motoring offence. They need the help of the public, and the success of the various home watch schemes demonstrates the potential pay-off. Justice requires the active co-operation of the public, and that demands a public that is ready and willing to help, not one that prefers to look the other way. A great deal more could be done to secure such co-operation.

I have five simple suggestions about what to do to secure more co-operation from the general public in the fight against crime. The first is the way in which we treat our civilian witnesses in the courts. Many hon. Members may have been witnesses in criminal or even civil cases and may have had experience of the treatment that we hand out to those who are giving their time to help the judicial process. Usually, witnesses are told to arrive at a court at 10 o'clock in the morning, although they may not be required by the court for hours. Often, there are no decent facilities in which to wait. They share over-crowded waiting rooms with offenders, chain smokers, and screaming children. There is nowhere comfortable to sit and coffee or tea is not made available. There is little information, even about when they will be required to give evidence to the court.

After they have waited for so long, cases are brought on largely for the convenience of the court and the professional lawyers, with little or no regard for the convenience of those who are giving their time in the fight against crime. If such witnesses are unfortunate enough to be there at lunchtime, they find that, while the prisoners go back to their cells and are given a free meal, the police retire to their staff canteens and the lawyers go back to their offices, they are left behind to fend for themselves, usually without the simplest form of guidance on where they can obtain a quick meal.

Eventually, when witnesses are called, many of them frightened, even petrified, by the experience of giving evidence, they face rigorous cross-examination, which often makes them feel that they are the criminals rather than those who are being tried. At the end, when they put in a relatively modest claim for expenses, which almost certainly will not cover their full costs, again they may be faced with cross-examination and made to feel that they are claiming something to which they are not entitled. When that ordeal is over, as Mr. Average Citizen walks out of the court, he says, "Never again. The next time I see a crime or suspicious circumstances, I shall look the other way." Witnesses in our judicial system need to feel that they are valued, well-treated and according society a privilege. All too often, the feelings engendered are the reverse.

Secondly, the public needs to have much more confidence in punishments fitting the crime. Too often offenders walk away from our courts laughing about the leniency of the sentences that are handed out. After 15 years as a magistrate, I can confidently say that this is not always the fault of the courts. Magistrates need much more freedom in selecting appropriate punishments. The short, sharp, shock treatment of detention centres for young offenders needs to be used much earlier in the hierarchy of punishment. Community service, which is excellent in concept, needs much more rigorous supervision, and, if necessary, administration by police rather than the probation service, which is often more reluctant to apply proper standards of discipline. The Home Office may believe that community service orders are alternatives to custodial sentences, but the number of hours recommended and the supervision of these schemes mean that they are no effective alternative.

Probation orders need to be more tightly supervised by a probation service that recognises that, while help is the substance of probation orders, punishment is also important. We need to move much further towards offenders paying the full cost of their crimes, particularly with vandalism, with parents being responsible for the full cost of restitution for damage by children.

Thirdly, we need, as many people have suggested, independent investigation of serious complaints against the police. I have nothing but admiration for our excellent police service. It is deservedly the envy of the world, but where corruption is involved, the public needs to have confidence that complaints are being independently investigated. Justice must be seen to be done, and that is as true in the police force as it is in the wider community.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): Does my hon. Friend accept that the independent Police Complaints Authority is already able to oversee any investigation of any crime alleged against any police officer, and must be satisfied that the investigation is being conducted properly or else it can order another one?

Mr. Woodcock: I understand that that is the case. However, my hon. Friend knows that that process is not seen to be independent by members of the public. There is a great deal of support within the police force for an independent investigation system.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Police Federation — which I thought that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds represented in the House —is in favour of his views?

Mr. Woodcock: I was not aware of that fact, but I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) will make himself aware of that fact, if he was not already so aware. However, time is short and I do not want this to turn into a debate about the pros and cons of the investigation of police complaints.

My fourth point is that I believe that there should be a separation of police traffic duties from other duties. Nothing alienates the public more from the police than their involvement in minor traffic offences and nothing alienates the public from the courts more than the perceived disparity in fines that are handed out for minor motoring offences and those handed out for what the public perceives as the much more serious offences of dishonesty, violence and vandalism. I do not know how that division could be brought about, but the Home Secretary should examine this carefully, because it would greatly raise the standing of the police in the eyes of the public.

Fifthly, there is a need for much better feedback from the police to those assisting and those reporting crime. Too often offences are reported by the public, who gain the impression, probably wrongly, that the police are not

interested, particularly in cases of neighbourhood disputes, vandalism and nuisance. When the police take further action, there is a lack of information on what action has been taken. A short letter to those who report crimes, after the event, telling them the outcome of the investigations and thanking them for their help would be a simple matter of good public relations.

Our judicial system is the envy of the world. Our police force is second to none. But the whole judicial process demands the public's active co-operation. Much more must be done to assure the public that their help is needed and valued, and, perhaps even more importantly, that, if they give it, they will be treated with the consideration and respect that is due to them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It may help the House if I say that the first Front-Bench speaker hopes to catch my eye at 6.40 pm.

6.10 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I happened to believe that the Home Secretary, the Minister of State and senior officials at the Home Office take the difficult problems of the Birmingham six extremely seriously and conscientiously. Can they say when they hope to give any response to Chris Mullin's well thought out case?

I and others have been asking questions about the forensic side of that story and about Dr. Frank Skuse. There is also the basic question whether the defence should have access to forensic science advice and expertise. I agree with the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) in asking for a comment, particularly in the light of the constructive proposals put forward by Dr. Brian Caddy and the University of Strathclyde for a centre in Glasgow that would meet some of these requirements. If no response is made during questions to the Home Office, when is there likely to be one?

Some of us would be interested to hear the Home Office's view not only on the costs of the suggestions made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) but on the many savings that could result if some of them were put into practice. We often forget that the cost of crime is simply enormous.

I turn to a case that involved the knowing waste of police time. Detective Superintendent Ron Hardy and Detective Sergeant Mike Ashdown were dispatched to the West Indies to try to find out about the log book of HMS Conqueror at the time of the Ponting trial. For the sake of conciseness, I refer to the *Official Report* for 24 October 1985. I asked the Attorney-General:

"what was the cost of Detective Superintendent Hardy's visit to the West Indies with a colleague on the investigation relating to the loss of HMS Conqueror's log book." —[*Official Report*, 24 October 1985; Vol. 84, c. *191*.]

The Solicitor-General replied that it was £6,940·82. That might have been justified if the Government had not known full well that the man whom they were investigating had left the Navy in July 1982, and if the then Secretary of State for Defence had not said, in reply to the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower):

"I regret to announce that our inquiries so far have failed to locate the missing logs or to identify a proven explanation for their disappearance. It is clear that the logs were compiled and probably remained on board the submarine until October or November 1982."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1984; Vol. 68, c. *593*.]

The logs were all bound so they could not possibly have been missing until September 1982 at the very earliest. I happen to believe that no log went missing from that submarine, but the point is that the Ministry of Defence knew that the man whom it was investigating, the supplies officer of HMS Conqueror, Lieutenant Mahendra Sethia, had left the Navy in July 1982. In September 1982 he was known to be sailing round the coast of Europe in a yacht. Will the Home Office and those responsible for the police find out who authorised such a visit? Those policemen were knowingly sent on a wild-goose chase. I shall not detain the House by saying why the Government, or certain Ministers, wanted that. I merely want to know on what authority Detective Superintendent Hardy and Detective Sergeant Mike Ashdown went to the West Indies. Was it direct ministerial authority?

My last point will take a little longer. In any discussion of the fight against crime it is common ground that Ministers must be seen to be beyond reproach. Charges have been made against the Attorney-General, the Government chief Law Officer, that he knew that the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) had authorised the leak of a letter from the Solicitor-General even before the inquiry had been formally set up. I shall quote from "The Attorney General, Politics and the Public Interest" by Professor John Edwards. Professor Edwards said:

"The Attorney General, whoever he may be, is not only the legal adviser to the Crown and to the government. He is also a servant of this House. It is, from time to time, his duty to advise the House on legal matters—a duty going beyond his responsibility to this government and the Crown".

The charges are said to emanate from a Select Committee. I regard the Attorney-General as an honourable man who has given truthful answers. In fairness to him, I should be interested to know why the Select Committee did not call him if it contemplated making such accusations——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going into details that have nothing to do with the motion before us.

Mr. Dalyell: The problem is that such charges or slurs cannot be allowed to rest in limbo when a senior Minister is involved. I say——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That may be so, but this is not the time for going into details on the work of the Select Committee or on the charges that may have been made.

Mr. Dalyell: In that case, I have a question about the circumstances in which indemnity is granted. I speak as the Member of Parliament who, rightly or wrongly, named Collette Bowe in the House. The fact is that indemnity was given before 16 January. It may have been given on 13, 14 or 15 January, but it was certainly before 16 January. On 30 January the Attorney-General said:

"On 22 January, when I was given a summary shortly before receiving the report of the inquiry carried out by the head of the Civil Service."—[*Official Report*, 30 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. *586*.]

That is when the right hon. and learned Gentleman was first informed of the direct involvement of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks.

In what circumstances does an Attorney-General give indemnity to civil servants, however senior, when Ministers, however exhalted, are involved? It seems

[Mr. Dalyell]

extraordinary that indemnity was given by a senior Minister when he apparently did not know the details of the circumstances in which he gave it. Yet the right hon. and learned Gentleman told the House that it was not until 22 January that he knew the full circumstances. I happen to think that when I questioned the Attorney-General last Monday about whether he was consulted about the——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Once again the hon. Gentleman is going into details that are not relevant to the motion about crime which is before us. He can indulge in generalities, but he should not go into such detail.

Mr. Dalyell: This is part of the trouble. When a Member of Parliament wants to ask a senior Law Officer to make a statement to the House that involves his honour, he had better be very clear about the details before doing so. Consequently, I do not apologise for going into the details. In the light of all this, there is a solemn obligation on the Attorney-General to give his side of the story in a statement before we go into recess. I have never meant anything more than that which I have just said. I do not doubt that there is a side to the story that he can give. I do not think that he was consulted, and referring to last Monday's question——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman persists in pursuing the detail. There are ample opportunities in the House for raising details at Question Time and so on, but this is not the occasion for the hon. Gentleman to pursue this matter.

Mr. Dalyell: I shall have opportunities, and I look forward to making use of them.

6.20 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): The hon. Baronet and Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will appreciate that I cannot follow his comments but I shall speak about the Opposition motion and the Government amendment. When I first read the Opposition motion I was much encouraged because there seemed to be in all parts of the House a genuine commitment towards the objective of crime prevention.

The Opposition motion refers to a crime prevention programme, crime prevention grants, a safe estates programme and victim support schemes. The Government are already pursuing these objectives. Since the 1970s the potential for crime prevention has become increasingly apparent, especially to the Home Office, and in 1983 my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) set up the crime prevention unit which is enthusiastically supported by my right hon. Friend the present Home Secretary.

The contribution towards crime prevention in various and necessary forms has been extensive. The Department of the Environment is making £50 million available, much of it through the run-down and priority estates programme. The Manpower Services Commission is making £42 million available for various initiatives in the field of crime prevention measures. That is welcome and important because, as the House knows, 95 per cent. of crime relates to property and is controllable, if not preventable, by the interaction of local authorities, the community and the police working together.

The plausibility of the Opposition comes into question when one examines the activities of the Labour party outside the House. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has left the Chamber. He does not want to hear this or to answer the accusations that I shall make. It is extraordinary that his own local authority in the city of Manchester, which is not responsible for the police, should be so against the police service that it spends large sums of ratepayers' money on anti-police campaigns. It is against the creation of police neighbourhood watch schemes that are designed to prevent crime. Why is it that in recent years the Labour party in London has spent million of pounds on anti-police propaganda? Why do many of the London boroughs still spend large sums of money on the publication of literature against the police and do not encourage them to police council estates or to visit local authority schools?

If the Opposition motion is to have any credibility, the Opposition must address themselves to those points. They cannot escape their responsibilities, and equally if they want to see, as they suggest in their motion, an easement of pressure on the police so that they can be deployed to help the community they should say to their own supporters that the resources of the police should not have to be used at places like Wapping and should not have had to be used during the miners' dispute or today in demonstrations. The Opposition cannot have it both ways and those points must be considered in some detail and answered.

The Government have a remarkable record on the prevention of crime. That record is being sustained and increasingly the fruits are being seen. Because of the work done by and through the Department of the Environment and by many local authorities, we have seen a transformation in some of our inner city estates. In my own city of Westminster the local housing department has removed walkways and has created blocks of flats as individual homes. It has provided gardens and has cut off blocks of flats from the general neighbourhood. As a result, it is able to report a dramatic downturn in property crime such as residential burglaries. In some instances crime has been eliminated. If it can be done in the city of Westminster and elsewhere in London through the priority estate schemes, some of them in Labour boroughs, that clearly must be the way forward. Allied to that is the need to ensure that the local authority properly manages its estate. It must collect the rents and not allow arrears to accumulate, giving the impression that lawlessness is acceptable. The money must be collected so that there can be a proper maintenance and caretaker service. Where local authorities do that there is a marked downturn in crime and that benefits the community. If the Opposition believe in crime prevention, they must say to the local authorities that are Labour-controlled that this is the way forward.

The House will recall that in the Criminal Justice Act 1982 the centuries-old priority for fines to be paid by the courts to the Crown in the first instance was reversed and priority was placed upon the money collected from offenders being used in favour of victims through orders that were given absolute priority. In that instance the Government reversed the centuries-old tradition and they have also supported the National Association of Victims Support Schemes with fairly generous funding. We would all like to see more being done, but we do not want to see another form of bureaucracy being created. I urge upon my right hon. Friend the need to look at the way in which

the head office of the association makes its disbursements to ensure that we do not promote bureaucracy but provide adequate funding to ensure that in the key inner city areas such schemes can be created.

I also welcome the news about the neighbourhood watch schemes. They are an undoubted success story and are to be further encouraged by the availability of a neighbourhood watch newspaper. That must be good news.

Autocrime makes up some 30 per cent. of all crime in Britain. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders is working with the Home Office to improve the design of motor vehicles to design out crime and that must be the way forward, just as the steering column lock that was introduced in the 1960s contributed substantially to the reduction in autocrime. It is via such strategies that we shall tackle that great block of crime.

I find it curious that in their statements the Opposition should ignore their own commitment to repeal the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. We ought to know what the Opposition will replace it with because that Act also provides for crime prevention and sets out the police powers throughout England and Wales. What is to be done about the prevention of terrorism if the Opposition succeed in their ambition to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984? That Act makes a major contribution to the prevention of crime of serious violence.

All those questions remain to be answered and if the Opposition motion is to be credible, they will have to deal with those points. I hope when their spokesman winds up. The way forward is through the crime prevention strategies of the Government and I have no hesitation in supporting the Government amendment.

6.29 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I apologise for not being here at the beginning of the debate, but I am acutely conscious of the importance of the subject and I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate.

Earlier this year, the London borough of Islington carried out a comprehensive study of about 2,000 households in its area. The results were published in preliminary form some months ago and are due to be published next month as a book, to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has provided a preface.

The results of that survey demonstrate clearly how important crime and the fear of crime are to many thousands of people in my constituency. They showed, for example, that about 70 per cent. of the population of my constituency regard crime as a problem second only in the scale of problems to unemployment — 87 per cent. of people said that unemployment was the worst problem. That shows how seriously people take the problem of crime in their areas.

Here I must take issue with the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), who criticised the Labour party and said that we would treat the symptoms, not the underlying causes. I listened carefully to his speech to see whether it contained anything about the underlying causes, and of course it did not. He mentioned only one of the symptoms—the different forms of policing. I shall return to that in a moment, because it is an important point. It ill-behoves him to criticise either of the two other parties which participated in this debate for not addressing the underlying causes when he put forward nothing that would tackle the underlying causes of crime and the genuine fear of crime among millions of people.

One answer to the problem of crime is good policing. Indeed, it is the only answer that the Government give. But the police must have, above all, the confidence of the community that they serve because that is the key to effective policing. In my constituency, the tenants on many estates meet their neighbourhood police officers and members and officers of the local authority on a close and regular basis to work out how their areas should be policed and what should happen to their estates to improve policing in the area.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) criticised Labour-controlled local authorities. I would have accepted that criticism readily had he, in the same breath, praised Labour-controlled local authorities such as the one that I represent, which has sat down with the police, wished to work closely with the police, invited the police on to the council estates and engineered the close co-operation that can lead to good policing. If that credit is given, perhaps we can have a more effective and constructive dialogue about the way in which local authorities and communities interact with the police in their areas.

However, when discussing crime, we must talk about much more than policing. Even more important than policing, which tries to deter and to catch criminals after the event, is crime prevention. During the past seven years, the Government have let the country down badly on crime prevention. No endless series of seminars at 10 Downing street will make up for the fact that, through the withdrawal of rate support grant, the operation of rate capping and the savage reductions in housing expenditure which the Government have inflicted on Britain, the ability of local authorities and of the agencies in the areas where crime prevention is desperately needed to carry out proper, full crime prevention measures has been destroyed.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North mentioned the improvements on some estates in his area. Of course, some local authorities of all political colours have made valiant efforts to improve conditions, including the provision of better lighting, the removal of dark corners and better security on the estates. But most local authorities have been hampered by the withdrawal of funds by the Government. During the past seven years, the Government have increased public expenditure on the forces of control after the event—the police, the judicial system and the prisons—by about 30 per cent. in real terms. In the same period, they reduced expenditure on housing by 70 per cent. in real terms. The Government's priorities are completely wrong.

To tackle the root causes of the crime wave which so many people fear and have experienced will mean tackling the deprivation, poverty and unemployment that are the generating forces behind the increase in crime and lawlessness. There is no evidence that the Government will provide constructive measures to tackle those root causes, and we shall not get them from the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery and the Liberal party either.

6.36 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): The hyperbole, exaggeration, malice and sheer abuse from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was nothing new.

[Mr. Ivan Lawrence]

It was vintage right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton. What is new is the Labour party's new-found concern for law and order.

When in power, the Labour party presided over the loss of 9,000 policemen, the lowering of morale to the stage where there was almost a police strike, and the withdrawal of police officers from the beat. In opposition, they have advocated political interference with policing, denigrated the police to an enormous extent, especially in London, voted against the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which probably did more than anything to stop the summer bombing campaign of the IRA, voted against the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which has equipped the police with more sensible powers to fight crime, and voted against the Public Order Bill, which will protect the elderly and other vulnerable people, whom they always say they want to protect, from violence in the street. If one adds to that their demonstrations against the rate-capping legislation, the miners' strike and the occasional utterances in favour of terrorists from some representatives of the Labour party, the public will come to the conclusion that the speech of the right hon. Member for Gorton was nothing but a pathetic joke.

What really rattles the Labour party is the fact that the Government have done so much about crime. Hardly a day goes by without some constructive action being taken. They include 14,000 more policemen; more civilian staff; a 30 per cent. increase in police resources; the implementation of most of the Scarman recommendations; the independent Police Complaints Authority; the overhaul of police training; more deterrent sentences for firearms offences, drugs traffickers, murderers of police and prison officers, child murderers and sexual offenders; the wider armoury for magistrates' courts to deal with juvenile offenders; the biggest prison building programme in history, with three new prisons built and 15 to go; the major refurbishment of 100 other prisons; the Police and Criminal Evidence Act; the Public Order Bill; the Prevention of Terrorism Act; and the subject of this debate — crime prevention — where the Government have involved the public with great success and where they have taken steps to help victims of crime, which are long overdue, with victim support schemes and extended compensation.

To say that the Government have not taken positive and effective measures against crime is nonsense. But the fact is that crime is still growing and we must face that unpleasant fact. Although there has been a most welcome reduction in some areas, such as burglary, a lot more needs to be done. The fight against crime is not being lost but it is being won too slowly. It would be won more quickly if our trials were more efficient and if we had tape-recorded interviews. What has happened to that proposal?

But there is one step which, more quickly than any other, would change the climate of crime, particularly violent crime, a step which would meet with the support of the overwhelming majority of the nation — the restoration of capital punishment. When will the Government take that important, urgent and long overdue step?

6.40 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The Government's amendment to the Labour party's motion is incredible. For a start, they now refer to an "honest policy". But what did they have before the Home Secretary did an about-turn on crime — a dishonest policy? Is that what the previous Home Secretary had? The Government's policy is supposed to be well-funded, "vigorous and coherent". It is neither. What we have had from the Government is a rapid about-turn when the present Home Secretary took over. That was done in a fit of desperation because the Government knew that they were losing the argument, and losing it badly. The tragedy is that they are continuing to lose it because the Government's underlying social and economic policies are guaranteed to make a difficult situation far worse.

The Home Secretary said that crime has been going up for some 30 years. The Labour party, inside and outside the House, has agreed that there is a problem for any Government of any political colour in Britain precisely because of structural changes, particularly in the inner city areas. What the Government did which was so bad and counter-productive was to rip off the sticking plaster of public expenditure, to create long-term mass youth unemployment and to introduce a series of other policies, some of which were referred to a few moments ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and many of which were referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), of general cuts in local authority expenditure which have such a profound effect on crime prevention.

I am even more amazed at the Liberal party's amendment. It calls upon the Government to set up a committee to look into the functioning and structure of the police. At last, the Liberal party is acknowledging that something is wrong with policing in Britain, but it does not have the courage to come forward and say what needs to be done. The Labour party has been saying that for some years and some years ago it was not very popular. Now we know that a majority of British people support better police accountability. We know that a majority of people, including the Police Federation, which did an about-turn, support an independent police complaints system. We have won two of the most crucial arguments.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), unusually for him, said the Labour party would not produce resources, but what do we read in the Liberal amendment? The Liberal party will provide immediately

"the resources necessary for an effective nationwide system of community based policing."

If a party's second task in government is to decide who will lead it, it will need a good system of community policing before trying to sort that out.

What have the Government done that has been such a failure? They talk about crime prevention. The cuts to the housing programme, pinpointed so specifically by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, are crucial. If renovation, repair and rebuild are cut out, not only can the changing population of the inner cities not be dealt with, but the older properties, which abound in our inner cities because so many of them were built in the last century, are allowed to deteriorate. That makes it easier for burglars to enter them and for them to become run-down and vandalised. Because of the Government cuts, many local authorities have had to remove people such as caretakers, public toilet attendants, park keepers and

people in public transport, who not only help to prevent crime by their presence but also help to clear up the effects of vandalism and crime. The Government have cut the lot.

The Labour party is in favour of putting cameras, security locks and so on on doors, but if we only do that, as we have pointed out on many occasions, we simply create the drawbridge behind which people retreat into their own houses and take no notice of what goes on outside because there is fear outside. Those areas with a particularly high and frightening level of crime, particularly some of our high-rise blocks, need resident caretakers. That is the sort of sophisticated structure for which we are looking.

Look at what the Government have done to education. Nursery education, one o'clock clubs, polytechnics, universities and training colleges have all been cut by the Government. It is now much more difficult to enter those education structures than it was before. Now that we have long-term youth unemployment it is impossible to get those young unemployed people the places that they need.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South) *rose*——

Mr. Soley: No, I am sorry, I am not giving way at this time. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman had been here throughout the debate he would know that we have been short of time and I want to give the Minister time to reply. He can deal with the matter if he wishes. However, if the right hon. and learned Gentleman was about to say that there have not been cuts in education, we know that there have, right the way down the line, and that has affected everything from nursery education through to the polytechnics and the universities. Cuts have also had an effect on leisure and recreation generally.

If we want to see what the Government have done to make the crime situation worse, we can take no better example than the increase in the board and lodging allowance. In doing that, the Government have increased homelessness among young people. There is a direct link between crime and homelessness, alcohol abuse and homelessness and drug abuse and homelessness. Yet the Government have introduced a board and lodging scheme which is guaranteed to make homelessness worse. In doing so, they will push more young people into crime, drug addiction and alcohol abuse.

The hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) talked about the problem of alcohol abuse. Again, the Government have no coherent policy on alcohol or drug abuse. They have no policy on fraud either for that matter, yet the impact of fraud on Britain is terrifying. The double standards of the Government can be seen by looking at the rates of imprisonment for people caught fiddling their social security claims and those people caught fiddling their income tax. There is a terrible discrepancy in the amount of money involved and between those who go to prison and those who do not.

We have heard nothing from the Government about how, in six short years, they have managed to turn the British police force, once the pride of the world, into a semi-paramilitary police force. Conservative Members talk about Wapping, but no other post-war Government would have allowed Rupert Murdoch to go on being protected by the police at the expense of the ratepayer while no effort was made to force him to negotiate. Indeed, no other Government would have looked happily on the way that he has turned his monopoly powers in the press into such an important and powerful base at the same time as being an overseas citizen.

One of the Labour party's fundamental criticisms — indeed it is one that is growing in the police force — is that the Government, more than any other, have tried to use the police as though they were their own private army. They have done that in industrial relations and the inner cities, where they hope the police will cope with the consequences of their social and economic policies.

Sir Eldon Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Soley: What about the training of police officers? We know from the Metropolitan police commissioner's report that training has suffered. People have been taken off training courses concerned with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, for which, in some cases, police are given only one or two days' training, yet the Labour party is recommending a minimum of six months' training as soon as possible, eventually aiming for much longer—I hope two years.

The Government lack a policy on community policing. They will often say how marvellous community policing is, but what resources do they put into it? What are the incentives for a young officer to stay on as a community police officer? They are almost non-existent. If a police officer wants to improve his income or be promoted he must move out into car driving, to the courts, the police station or even the House of Commons. Despite that, the Government say that community policing is all-important. Let us see the colour of their money.

What about the lack of a strong inspectorate? We read the other week allegations concerning the clear-up rates in Kent. Anyone involved in the legal system knows what happens and yet we do not have an independent and strong police inspectorate to deal with it.

It is no good the Government saying that we must back the police because the public are worried, not because of one bad apple in the barrel, but because an officer who chooses to do something about what is happening cannot use the system without being made vulnerable. That has happened in the Kent constabulary and elsewhere. Until we have a strong police inspectorate, backed by a strong ombudsman, there will be trouble.

An effective system of accountability completes the package. The Government claim that neighbourhood watch, property marking and victim support are all that is needed. I am not against those schemes, but the Government know that neighbourhood watch does not work well in high crime areas. It can help to build up the community a little, but that can be successful only in conjunction with all the other schemes. Until the Government reverse their social and economic policies it will not be sufficient to wheel out a Home Secretary to deal with the faults of the previous Home Secretary.

The Government must reverse their policies and put resources into our inner cities and crime prevention. They must introduce proper police accountability, police training and an independent Police Complaints Authority. Then we might begin to reverse the damage that the Government have done to the fabric of our society.

6.52 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) exceeded

[Mr. Giles Shaw]

the time agreed, but I thought it worthwhile for the House to hear the threadbare nature of the Opposition's case. The hon. Gentleman wants more accountability, a different Police Complaints Authority, more control over the police, more bureaucracy and less effort for those really concerned. The Opposition have the temerity to talk about putting the people first. They do not want to put people first, but they do want political control over the police. Let no one be under any illusion about that.

We were grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) for his modest sermon. I assure him that we are worried about the connection between alcohol and crime. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has already taken an initiative and the issue is being examined by one of the working groups that we have set up in the crime prevention standing conference.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) referred to the forensic science service, as did the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). I accept that the forensic science service is under great stress because of the demands upon it. There are staff vacancies. I have visited some forensic science establishments to see what might be done. Our intention is to provide the service required and to maintain the high standards of skill for which it has a high reputation.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow also mentioned other matters in connection with correspondence with my right hon. Friend. The Home Secretary has replied to him today about the forensic science service. He will also respond to the hon. Gentleman's queries about the Birmingham six. That is a complicated issue, which might require more evaluation than is involved in a mere letter sent within such a short time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Woodcock) has apologised because he has to be elsewhere at this time. He mentioned court buildings and facilities for witnesses. I shall write to him. I recognise that such issues pose major problems in handling court work sensitively and sensibly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) presented a robust view of crime prevention and of the wide range of activities in which we are engaged.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) referred to the importance of the consultative groups. Today I met Islington's consultative group and had an interesting exchange of views. I gave it substantial support for its work. With full police agreement it has set out on a range of issues which will be wholly beneficial to the community.

I cannot deal with all the issues in the few minutes remaining to me. I must deal with the main thrust of the Opposition case. They claim that the Government have failed to take any initiative to improve the climate in which crime and the fear of crime can be dealt with. This Government have virtually revolutionised the attitude towards crime prevention. Crime prevention as a policy did not exist when we came to office.

As my hon. Friends the Members for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) and for Westminster, North reminded the House, this Government set up the crime prevention unit and in a relatively short period a massive range of initiatives have been taken, which even the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) should understand. We have established an evaluation of crime patterns. We have done research into individual criminal activity, into the background of crime and into particular aspects of criminal activity such as shop crime, theft and autocrime. We have changed the standing committee on crime prevention to a standing conference. Working groups are examining the whole range of criminal activity to cover autocrime, licensed premises, crimes of violence, crime on transport and so on. We have agreed with the Association of Chief Police Officers that it should set up a sub-committee on crime prevention to be chaired by the current president, Sir Stanley Bailey. The secretary will be James Anderton, the chief constable of Greater Manchester.

I trust that the right hon. Gentleman will recognise the strong input from Greater Manchester in our crime prevention initiatives. They will certainly help to offset the deleterious activities of the right hon. Gentleman's own police committee which seems to do little else but provide outrageous documentation and to undermine crime prevention.

Two national seminars have taken place at No. 10 Downing street, the first of which was run by the Prime Minister and the second of which was chaired by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. A range of agencies participated. This has already resulted in a number of new initiatives which will significantly affect criminal activity.

Mr. Kaufman: Such as?

Mr. Shaw: It is no good the right hon. Gentleman saying that. I am thinking of the decision by the British motor industry to accept a new standard for car security, the decision by the insurance industry to agree to examine reduced premiums and the decision by local authorities to take a greater interest in the provision of security systems in housing estates. I accept that Councillor Layden of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities made a contribution and we shall examine his proposition with care in the hope that we can do something akin to it.

Most crime prevention activities do not involve local authorities spending large amounts. I visited a large block of flats at Swansea recently. Caretakers have been brought back at a cost to the tenants of 40p per week, which the tenants pay willingly so that their homes are better protected and kept in better order. The environment of that estate in Swansea is an eloquent testimony to what can be done.

I visited the crime prevention project at Wellingborough. A major improvement has been made to the town centre car park there by employing staff to look after it, at a charge. We need such projects so that crime prevention activities are rooted in the community and people are helped to help themselves. We believe in putting people first.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 194, Noes 286.

Division No. 268] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo	Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Alton, David	Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Anderson, Donald	Barnett, Guy
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Barron, Kevin
Ashdown, Paddy	Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Beith, A. J.
Ashton, Joe	Bell, Stuart
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Benn, Rt Hon Tony

Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'll)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Chris Smith and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey

Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gerald Malone and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House reaffirms its support for the Government's commitment to pursuing an honest, vigorous and coherent policy in the fight against crime; welcomes the additional resources the Government has devoted to law and order, the success of Government backed crime prevention initiatives such as Neighbourhood Watch and property marking schemes, the encouragement given to local crime prevention initiatives, and the development of victim support schemes; expresses support for the police in their efforts to build closer links with the community; and believes everybody has a responsibility to participate in the fight against crime.

Gas Bill (Allocation of Time)

7.13 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): I beg to move,

That the Order [17th February] be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1.—(1) The proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and, subject to the provisions of the Order [17th February], those proceedings shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion two hours after the commencement of the proceedings on the Motion for this Order.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the Amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment to the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment, as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or as the case may be, in their Amendment, as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to each Amendment designated by Mr. Speaker which has not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Amendment; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3.—(1) The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill shall be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of the proceedings.

(2) For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

4.—(1) In this paragraph 'the proceedings' means proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of the Message or, as the case may be, for the appointment and quorum of the Committee.

(3) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

(4) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(5) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(6) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration), a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

We have debated the Gas Bill at considerable length on the Floor of the House and in Committee, and it has been debated in another place as well. Both Houses have spent about 260 hours debating the Bill. In this place we debated 370 amendments, and some 630 amendments were considered in another place. Altogether, about 1,000 amendments have been debated. Tonight we have 32 amendments before us from another place, the majority of which are of a drafting or technical nature. The few that are of substance are very much in response to views that have been expressed in the House and in another place. I am glad that the Government have been able to respond.

In these circumstances, I believe that the terms of the motion should be adequate for our consideration of the Lords amendments.

7.14 pm

Mr. Stan Orme (Salford, East): First, I inform the House that, because of the shortage of time, we shall not divide the House when the Question is put on the motion. None the less, we think that the provision of time is outrageously short, especially when we bear in mind the debates that have taken place in another place.

I have been informed that the Government, according to the Denning amendment, would have to inform trade unions of the legal, economic and social implications of the transfer and that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employees) Regulations 1981 provide that the Government have to disclose how many men would be redundant and what alternative work would be obtained for them. That issue was debated in another place last Thursday. This afternoon the Leader of the House told us that the Dockyard Services Bill, which is affected by the Denning amendment and which the Government were unable to proceed with last Friday, will be introduced on Wednesday. I understand that negotiations are still taking place with Lord Denning. We claim that there is an analogy with the Gas Bill.

I have been informed by the trade unions that in the light of a statement made last week in another place the

[Mr. Stan Orme]

British Gas Corporation has done all that it can to comply with the TUPE '81 regulations. The trade unions, however, are of the opinion that there has not been adequate or sufficient consultation about the intended transfer and that all the information required by the regulations to be made available has not been supplied. This includes the legal, economic and social implications of the transfer for all affected employees.

I understand that the trade unions are prepared to take any necessary legal action to protect the rights which the regulations give to their members who are employed by the British Gas Corporation. The Secretary of State laughs, but if the issue goes to court he might end up laughing on the other side of his face. I ask the Minister of State to explain whether the issue that I have outlined will have an effect on the Bill and will delay the sale of the shares of British Gas. The House is entitled to an answer to an extremely important question which has arisen during the passage of the Bill in another place. I ask the Minister to respond.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I shall respond to the right hon. Gentleman's question, but I think that he is making a great deal out of very little. Last week in another place it was explained that the policy of British Gas from the outset has been to comply with all the requirements of the regulations to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. Such are management-employee relations within British Gas that, as was made clear last week, the corporation has taken great care, which it always does, to go beyond merely fulfilling the letter of the obligations that it has to its employees. British Gas has already done all that it can do to comply with the requirements set out in the regulations and to inform and consult the trade unions.

There is one exception, to which reference was made last week, and that is the actual date of transfer from the corporation to the plc. Once the Bill becomes law and the Government are able to announce the timetable leading up to privatisation and the sale of shares, British Gas will immediately inform the unions of the transfer date. I hope that the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) realises that British Gas has fully informed and consulted the trade unions. In addition, my right hon. Friend and I have always made ourselves available during the passage of the Bill to discuss the matter with the trade unions. We had two meetings with the Gas Unions Against Retail Denationalisation organisation that represents the unions involved in British Gas. At the end of both those meetings, my right hon. Friend invited representatives of the organisation to refer to him at any time any matter for clarification.

My right hon. Friend and I also had a meeting with the energy committee of the TUC. My right hon. Friend replied in detail to a submission that it put to us on a number of points. I have amplified the consultations that Ministers have had with the unions concerned. I assure the right hon. Gentleman and the House that the unions have been fully informed and consulted at all stages.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Order [17th February] be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1.—(1) The proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and, subject to the provisions of the Order [17th February], those proceedings shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion two hours after the commencement of the proceedings on the Motion for this Order.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the Amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment to the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment, as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or as the case may be, in their Amendment, as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to each Amendment designated by Mr. Speaker which has not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Amendment; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3.—(1) The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill shall be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of the proceedings.

(2) For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

4.—(1) In this paragraph 'the proceedings' means

proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of the Message or, as the case may be, for the appointment and quorum of the Committee.

(3) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

(4) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(5) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(6) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration), a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

Orders of the Day

Gas Bill

Lords amendments considered

Clause 1

THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF GAS SUPPLY

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 6, leave out "notice in writing" and insert "reasonable notice".

7.21 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments:

No. 6, in clause 11, page 11, line 28, leave out "in writing".

No. 12, in clause 38, page 40, line 37, leave out "in writing".

No. 22, in schedule 5, page 77, line 18, leave out "in writing".

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The House is aware that concern was expressed in another place that the director might, under certain circumstances, resign at short notice, whereby there would be insufficient time to find a suitable replacement. The suggestion was made that if a formulation could be found requiring reasonable notice, a suitable constraint would be introduced. The amendment put forward by the Government in another place achieved precisely that effect but it also removed the words "in writing", which we think are redundant. They are already included in the definition of notice in clause 48. That is also the effect of amendments Nos. 6, 12 and 22, which leave out the redundant words "in writing". I hope that the House will have no difficulty with the amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 2

THE GAS CONSUMERS' COUNCIL

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 2, line 22, leave out from "shall" to end of line 25 and insert

"so far as practicable, ensure—

(a) that the members of the Council include members who, by reason of their familiarity with the special requirements and circumstances of the different areas of Great Britain or of small businesses, are able together to represent the interests of consumers of gas supplied through pipes in all those areas and of such businesses; and

(b) that the interests of consumers of gas supplied through pipes in different areas are represented by different members wherever that appears to the Secretary of State to be appropriate having regard to the manner in which the various parts of the gas supply industry in Great Britain organise themselves."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, in line 6, after 'businesses', insert 'or of trade unions'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: amendment (b) to the proposed Lords amendment, in line 12, after 'members', insert

'who shall be nominated by County and District authorities'.

Lords amendment No. 10, in clause 26, in page 31, line 22, at end insert "and to the Council".

Lords amendment No. 18, in schedule 2, page 65, line 23, at end insert—

"(2A) For the purpose of ensuring that there are persons available in particular localities to assist the Council in the performance in those localities of its functions under this Act, the Council may, without any such approval as is required by subparagraph (1) above, appoint such persons to be so available as it may determine.

(2B) Persons appointed under sub-paragraph (2A) above shall not be paid any sums by the Council for or in resepect of their services except sums reimbursing them for their travelling expenses and such of their other out-of-pocket expenses as do not relate to loss of remuneration."

Mr. Orme: The amendments deal with trade union and local authority representation on consumer councils. This is linked directly to consumer representation. As we have seen from the history of Oftel, Professor Carsberg and the problems that have arisen from the British Telecommunications Bill, we believe that stronger representation is needed for consumer protection when the British Gas Corporation is transferred to a private monopoly as opposed to a public monopoly. At the moment the corporation is subject to parliamentary and ministerial accountability. The Secretary of State has been pleased to tell us on many occasions that that accountability will be removed when the corporation becomes a plc and a private monopoly.

Although there will be an office in all but one of the regions, that is no substitute for a full regional structure with sustained lay involvement. The abolition of the regional councils means that the regional offices will be rudderless. They are likely to become transmitters of policy from above instead of acting as independent representatives of their regions.

The inclusion of one regional member on a national council is hardly an adequate replacement for a full regional council. There can be no informed discussion of the issues and the problems relevant to a particular area. The Government have included in that representation country and small businesses. Local voluntary representatives will also be appointed. We are not opposed to that, but it is not sufficient. There ought to be more representation. We recommend that trade unions and local authorities should have statutory representation. That is the core of our argument.

In another place Lord Belstead talked about a rigid, regionalised structure that could be improved. How can the reduction in consumer council staff by 40 per cent., and the downgrading of the status of regional secretaries, coupled with the abolition of the councils and lay representation in favour of one centralised structure, be said to be an improvement in consumer representation? We raised this issue consistently in Committee, and it has been raised in another place. On both occasions, we have not had satisfactory answers from the Government.

Paid regional managers are not the answer to consumer representation. Because of the limited time, I shall keep my remarks fairly brief. We think that the amendments are important. We believe that the Government could accept them. They would broaden the base of consumer representation.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I am glad that the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) has moved amendment (a). I am not sure about amendment (b), since advertently, or deliberately, he has contrived to miss out Scottish regional councils.

Mr. Orme: I am sure that that is an error.

Mr. Wilson: I am sure, from the look on the right hon. Gentleman's face, that he is truly penitent, but I did not know that it was Labour party policy to go for single units in local government in Scotland. If it is, it will be an improvement.

We see in the Bill the onward march of centralisation. Prior to 1972, there were autonomous gas boards in different areas of the United Kingdom. The Scottish gas board was an independent unit and was able to take full decisions. It had control over management functions and consumer operations in Scotland. The Gas Act 1972 absorbed the Scottish gas board into the British Gas Corporation. Incidentally, that was at the same time as gas was discovered off the shore of Scotland. I have often wondered whether that was a coincidence. In due fullness of time, I have come to the conclusion that it was foreseen and that it would have been undesirable to have a Scottish gas board in possession of large quantities of natural gas exclusive of London. The Scottish gas board became a division of the British Gas Corporation. No sooner was the Bill published than we saw the encroachment of centralisation. Scottish Gas, a hallowed name in the energy field, to be was obliterated and would become British Gas (Scotland). In addition, the Bill proposed to abolish consumer councils in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

We are seeing the creation of a huge private monopoly which will not be accountable in any way to consumers. There will be no watchdog body left in Scotland, Wales or in other areas to bark if British Gas plc acts out of turn. It is highly desirable that there should be such a watchdog separate from the consumers council in Scotland which can look at policy considerations and raise matters on behalf of consumers with the Director General of Gas Supply.

7.30 pm

It is a pity that the Lords amendment does not go far enough. It provides that

"the members of the Council include members who, by reason of their familiarity with the special requirements and circumstances of the different areas of Great Britain".

They are lumped together with people who represent other interests. I am not satisfied with the formula that has been approved by the other place or with what the Government initially came up with.

We are failing to take account of the full importance of the regional factor and of the need for decentralisation of policy making, management and consultation. Since the Bill was first considered, in Scotland we have noticed that the Law Lords have allowed the TSB to become privatised and Guinness has taken over Distillers. In Committee Ministers said, "We can all trust British Gas because the management will be the same." Some of us were inclined not fully to agree with that statement. The ink on the takeover document was hardly dry when it was decided cavalierly to throw overboard the Scottish dimension—the promise had been made to maintain it—by Mr. Ernest Saunders, the chairman designate of the amalgamated company. That shows what will happen to

British Gas in the self-regulated atmosphere of the City of London. It could run amok as Guinness has done. Who will be able to halt it?

I do not believe that the consumers council in Scotland will have sufficient powers to control British Gas. That is why I should have preferred British Gas to be dismembered so that regional and national companies could operate in each autonomous area of the United Kingdom. But such a formula is not available.

I welcome the Lords amendments, which are slight, but I believe that the Government have taken leave of their senses in abolishing the Gas Consumers Council for Scotland.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I am glad to be able to follow the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) who made a number of points on the creeping centralisation which has been inflicted on us by the Government and on the demise of the recognition of regional status in Britain. The Lords amendment goes some way towards recognising a regional dimension. It must be welcomed, although I believe that it was a reluctant measure by the Government and that the hon. Member for Dundee, East accepted it without much enthusiasm. The recommendations are as vague and weak as possible. We should have come to expect that from this Government. They have provided the minimum possible that they can get away with. This is a strange departure by a Government who, when they came to power, committed themselves to giving local people and areas much more responsibility and a greater say in their affairs. Instead, the amendment is minimalistic, referring to different areas without defining what they should be.

I believe that a regional structure for Britain is the right and sensible way to proceed. With such a structure, we would know precisely what we mean by different areas. The structure would be defined in the Bill and given some form of expression. I look forward to the day when that happens.

I welcome the inclusion in Lords amendment No. 2 of small businesses, although, again, there is no definition of how they shall be drawn up and who shall represent them. Close reading of the Bill has led me to believe that the people who represent the different areas of Great Britain and the representatives of small businesses must be one and the same people. I feel certain that that is not the Government's intention. I hope that the Minister will clarify that technical point and make it clear that the Government see them as being different people.

My noble Friend Lord Diamond asked the Government to reveal the overall size of the council. It was important for us to know whether those who represented the different areas of Great Britain would be swamped by the Government's nominees who represented the centralised view, which the Government put forward with such effect whenever they have the opportunity. I understand that the response in the other place was that the expected overall size of the council would be about 25 members. It will be helpful if the Minister can clarify that statement.

I welcome the Labour party's amendments. The key point is that the consumer's interest should be represented. Insofar as the trade unions have a voice which should be expressed in this regard, their representation would be welcome. However, I do not wish the council to become so overburdened with other representatives that the ordinary consumer is not properly represented.

Mr. Orme: When we talk about the trade unions, we are talking not just about the trade unions within the industry but in the wider context.

Mr. Ashdown: I am grateful for that clarification. I assumed that that was the case but it is useful to have it on the record.

Amendment (b), which refers to nomination by county and district authorities, does something to clarify an otherwise ridiculously vague definition, and I welcome it. I hope that, in the execution of the amendment, attention will be concentrated on those members "nominated by", rather than representatives of, county and district authorities. No doubt, local councillors have important views to put forward and a scattering of them should be members of the council, but I hope that county and district authorities will be prepared to nominate people other than local councillors. I welcome the amendments and hope that the Minister sees fit to accept them because they strengthen the Bill.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I support the two amendments tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme). Throughout the passage of the Bill, Labour Members have recognised, despite their opposition to the principle of the Bill, that the Government with their majority would force the Bill through regardless of whether it was a good Bill for energy and for consumers. We have always sought to protect consumers' interests. That is why, even at this late stage, we put forward two amendments. The Government have repeatedly assured us that they believe that the consumers have been given the best ever deal with this Bill. We totally reject that view and believe that there is insufficient protection for the consumer in the Bill. It is vital to improve the role of consumers, especially once we have moved from a public to a private monopoly.

We have never argued that the present protection and safeguards for consumers are perfect, but we believe that now is the right time to improve them. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) referred to the words "nominated by" in our second amendment. He was right to take the wider interpretation. It was not intended that they should necessarily be district or county councillors, although some might be. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) was right to make the point about Scotland and about the miswording of the amendment. Even last week the Bill was still being debated in the House of Lords, so the amendment had to be drafted at very short notice.

Both our amendments are important. The one seeks to involve trade unionists, giving them a voice on the Gas Consumers Council and the other seeks to ensure that representatives are nominated by county and district councils. We recognise that the Lords amendment is a slight improvement on the wording of the Bill when it left this House but even at this late stage it would be further improved by our amendments.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): We hope that the House will support the amendments as they would considerably improve the Bill. Throughout the Committee stage we were extremely concerned at the lack of input in the

[Mr. Allan Rogers]

control of the gas industry from people other than the poodles appointed by the Secretary of State. Throughout the passage of the Bill Ministers have taken a Stalinist attitude, increasingly gathering all power to the centre, which is so much a feature of Government policy and of the Bill. Our views will not find much support from the alliance, which did not provide much support in Committee. Nevertheless, it is nice to see the alliance achieving some kind of presence today.

It is important for district and county councils to participate, especially at regional level, because nominations will otherwise be entirely in the hands of the Secretary of State, which is a negation of democracy and democratic accountability to the consumer. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) made heavy weather of consumer interests and the alliance being the party of the consumer, but my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) argued that point strongly in Committee. That is why we have put down these amendments. We want greater participation in the control of the industry.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I wish briefly to support the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and others who have spoken in this short debate. Our opposition to the Bill since it began its passage through the House has been based on the inability of the consumer to make a major impact on this privatised monopoly. We are totally dissatisfied with the Ofgas proposal and the proposal for the Gas Consumers Council. We want a much more powerful regulatory body and function and a much stronger consumer voice than is proposed in the Bill.

The Lords amendment is welcome, but it is extremely modest. The Labour party's amendments strengthen it somewhat and are thus also welcome. Nevertheless, we should go much further. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) pointed out that regional representation and national representation of the regions had been considerably weakened. The Northern Gas Consumers Council has made strong representations to me. It also made proposals to the Government about ways in which it could be much better integrated into the system proposed in the Bill, but those proposals fell on deaf ears, as have all other proposals to give the consumer a stronger voice than the Bill at present proposes.

7.45 pm

The cost of Ofgas and the Gas Consumers Council will be about £2 million, which is only two thirds of the cost of Oftel, the organisation that regulates British Telecom. We see no reason why the functions of Ofgas and the Gas Consumers Council should be less necessary than those of Oftel. We want a pledge from the Government substantially to increase the powers and resources of the regulatory body and of the council. We therefore support the Labour party's amendments and look forward to proper regulation of this privatised monopoly at some time in the future.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): We are grateful for the support of the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth). If he had followed the detailed consideration of the Bill, he would know that the arguments that he has advanced today were put time and again in Committee. Had the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) been present today, he could have confirmed that he joined us in our efforts to secure the very improvements that the hon. Member for Stockton, South seeks.

Mr. Ashdown: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will inform his hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) of that. My hon. Friend was assiduous in his attendance in Committee. I am told by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson), and the record shows, that my hon. Friend also voted assiduously throughout proceedings on the Bill. The criticism advanced by the hon. Member for Rhondda was therefore mean spirited, unnatural and unreasonable.

Mr. Hardy: I confirm that on those occasions when the hon. Member for Gordon was present he generally supported us. That is the most generous gesture that I am prepared to make as I have great sympathy with the view advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers). Nevertheless, we are grateful for the support, modest though it may be and modest though our proposals are—modest because there is no chance of the Government accepting anything better.

We recognise the importance of small businesses, and our amendment neither denies nor decries them. There are many small businesses in Britain, perhaps many more than there were a few years ago. That is inevitable as people try to escape crippling dependency and to find an occupation after unemployment. Moreover, many businesses have contracted so much that they are small businesses now when a little while ago they were quite substantial. We appreciate that one of the hopes for Britain lies in the growth of small businesses and we do not depart from the change made in the other place, but, just as we believe that the voice of the small business should be heard, we believe that the voice of the consumer, too, must be heeded.

There is no organisation of greater significance than the trade union movement representing consumers in Great Britain. Many millions of consumers are members of trade unions and both lay and full-time officials are perhaps more familiar with the concerns and anxieties of ordinary people than any other organisation in Britain. We are not asking a great deal. The Minister said that he was eager and grateful — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) should pay attention as there are many trade union members in his constituency.

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): There are only seven other Labour Members in the Chamber.

Mr. Hardy: We seek to give those trade union members the opportunity to voice the anxieties of the hon. Gentleman's constituents as well as our own. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene, I shall be glad to give way. If not, perhaps he will recognise that we are putting forward a valid and reasonable argument. *[Interruption.]* I can only suppose that the hon. Gentleman enjoyed his weekend enormously.

The Government recognised the importance of trade unions when they said that the door was open and that they were always willing to see them to discuss the Bill. If that was so while the Bill was under consideration, it is reasonable to suggest that the trade unions should have some recognition as proposed in one of the two amendments.

The trade union movement is in need of a gesture. I learnt the other day—when this is generally known, I believe that it will cause considerable resentment in the industry — that the firm of Young and Rubicam, advertising agents in New York, is being paid £15 million to advertise the flotation of British Gas in the United States. That is perhaps a slightly larger amount than the value of the free shares that will accrue to the near 100,000 employees of British Gas. Therefore, the Government will be demonstrating how little regard they have for those who have made the British gas industry so successful. The employees are to receive the same value in shares as will be paid in fees to the advertising agents in New York. That serious comparison illustrates how appalling the Government's attitude is to those trade unionists in the gas industry who have helped to ensure that it is one of the most successful undertakings in Britain. The gesture for which we are asking is more than justified when we think of the fee that will be paid to the advertising agents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), who played a pertinacious part in our debates in Committee, echoed the point that was rightly made by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson). Amendment (b) is drafted as it is in the interests of brevity, but we took it that, if the Government were to accept it, they could not ignore Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Wilson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hardy: I would rather not, in the interests of brevity.

The Government have made a reluctant, creeping and modest change. If the Minister is to be consistent, he should accept both our amendments. Let me illustrate the value of amendment (b). The Minister has been in the House for a long time, and during our proceedings on the Bill he frequently referred to his constituency. As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary represents a marginal seat, he will understand that people often complain to Members of Parliament and to their local authorities. Both Ministers will recognise that the local authority charged with responsibility for personal social services is perhaps extremely familiar with the difficulties and problems that people encounter in their domestic environment. Such a local authority will know who is likely to be affected by fuel poverty or who is likely to have difficulty paying the gas bill. Given the expertise that exists within local authorities, it is perfectly reasonable that amendment (b) should be proposed.

As the Minister will be aware, local authorities and the gas undertakings at present have a very good, close contact and decent relationship. Whether that relationship can remain the same when faced with a privatised monopoly is open to question. Many experienced local government officers with day-to-day responsibility in this area have some anxiety about the maintenance of that relationship. It is important for local authorities to be in contact and have dialogue with the gas undertakings. For that reason, we should enhance the prospect of the maintenance of a decent dialogue by accepting amendment (b) to allow local authority representation on the Gas Consumers Council.

I do not know how many people will serve on the council, but I gather that the Minister has about two dozen people in mind. There is surely a need for one or more of those two dozen to be serving on local authorities. The same argument applies to the trade union movement. It would be appropriate and decent to accept amendment (a) as well. Given what has happened today, that would also be a responsible gesture.

We should like to have had several hours to debate these matters, but we do not have such time. Out of the wretched two hours that have been allocated we shall be unable to vote on both the amendments. The Minister could save us the bother of voting and allow us to concentrate on the subsequent amendments if he accepted both these proposals. If he does not, I propose that we vote on amendment (b).

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am glad that the Opposition have welcomed the amendments that were made in the other place, although I appreciate that both Opposition amendments to not go as far as some hon. Members would wish.

There has never been any doubt about the value of what people with local interests can contribute to a body such as a consumers council. It was always the intention that the different areas of British Gas should be represented on the Gas Consumers Council. The amendments that were agreed in the other place, and which I commend to the House, spell that out more clearly and give effect to what hon. Members have said on earlier occasions.

No reference has been made to Lords amendment No. 18, which is also important. It provides for local representatives on an expenses-paid basis to be maintained, as is the position at present. That is something in which the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) will be particularly interested. He said that his wife had performed that useful task, and I accept that a useful job has been done by British Gas in liaison with consumers when complaints have arisen. That is another improvement to the Bill which I am glad to commend to the House.

I must refute what was said by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson). During our earlier discussions he uttered many generalities. He said that we had an integrated gas industry, that all the gas in Scotland could be taken to London and that there was centralisation. The hon. Gentleman overdoes it. I remind him that more gas is produced south of the border than is produced north of the border. I also remind him that we as a nation are enormous importers of gas. We export gas from Scotland to south of the border, but if the hon. Gentleman looks at my Department's Brown Book he will see that our main gas reserves are in the southern basin of the North sea. However, I do not intend to be drawn into an argument about where a dividing line might be drawn.

Mr. Wilson: Is the Minister not aware that it took years for the gas network to reach Scotland, and that consequently many Scottish people were prevented from obtaining supplies of cheap gas? But no sooner had the gas reached those parts of Scotland than the Government began driving up the price.

I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to the parliamentary answer that he gave me today, which shows that north of 55° 50′—the Scottish jurisdiction sector—12·4 billion cu m of gas were produced from the Scottish fields. For a country of 5 million people we have no supply problems, but will the United Kingdom not have supply problems in the future because of the Government's failure to go ahead with the importation of Norwegian gas?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am not withdrawing the answer that I gave the hon. Gentleman, but I wish that he would

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

listen to me. He should look to see where our main reserves lie in the long term. I know the hon. Gentleman's views on importation, but to go to the length of drawing a parallel with Guinness and DCL is to go too far.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) also made some general points about centralisation, and I shall deal with them in the same way. There is not over-centralisation, and we have ensured area representation, particularly through these amendments. The hon. Gentleman asked specifically about the drafting, and I can assure him that it is not defective. Those representing the particular interests of an area and the interests of a small business need not be one and the same person. I am assured that the drafting is clear on that.

The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) asked about the size of the Gas Consumers Council. We expect there to be 20 representatives on it, 12 representatives from British Gas areas and eight who are appointed for other reasons.

8 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Will the Minister confirm that the trade unions and county and district councils will have no part to play on that body?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I shall come to that in a moment.

Mr. Ashdown: May I return to centralisation, which the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) also raised once he had got over his fit of pique at the result of the Newcastle-under-Lyme by-election? According to any rational judgment, the Bill amounts to a move towards centralisation. As the GCC is ultimately accountable to the House, there is a safeguard on that centralisation. However, we all know that the Government's ultimate intention is to have a more centralised body accountable, not to the House, but to the market place and the needs of commerce. Therefore, it is important to enshrine in the Bill a degree of accountability through local authorities. Surely the Minister must realise that.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The hon. Gentleman neglects the role of the Director of Ofgas, and I deny what the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) said. We have introduced an extremely rigorous regulatory system. I accept that the system does not cover as wide an area of gas supply as the alliance party may have liked, but I do not intend to debate that again tonight. We have introduced tight regulation for the areas where we believe there is a risk of monopoly power. It is interesting that a party which has been liberal in the short traditions that it has set should want greater regulation. That demonstrates the background from which alliance Members come.

The hon. Member for Yeovil should study and consult the industry. There is not a monopoly in other areas. The hon. Gentleman did not serve in Committee on the Bill, which was not his fault, but, as we have explained, we consulted other interests such as the small business sector of the CBI and it did not want regulation in the areas into which alliance Members would like to extend it. I hope that the public will take note that the alliance wishes to extend regulation, which would mean an extension of central control. That runs counter to some of the hon. Gentleman's arguments, but perhaps we should not be too unaccustomed to such inconsistencies.

I shall not go over all the arguments, because time is short. In the Bill we have attempted to introduce a completely new Gas Consumers Council structure which is partly based on experiences from the workings of the old structure. The regional structure, with the autonomous regional councils and a central council, was top heavy in terms of administration and cost effectiveness. That is why, after a careful study of that previous machinery, we have introduced a new structure. The new organisation will be smaller and more streamlined, and so long as attention is paid to the importance of the different areas of British Gas it will be equally effective on a regional level.

The amendments seek to add trade union representatives and representatives of persons nominated by county and district authorities. They are based on the Gas Act 1972, but I remind the House that those representatives were appointed to regional councils, not to the central council. When we move to the single council, the Gas Consumers Council, the basis will be different, for the reasons I gave earlier.

It is true that I have recommended the acceptance of an amendment which takes account of the needs of small businesses, but small businesses are in the consumer section of the community. Therefore, they are different from trade unions and it is not necessary to write in specific representation from that relatively small sector.

There was a very much more positive role for the direct involvement of local authorities in a regional council, as the 1972 Act recognised, but now we are talking of representatives, not to regional bodies, but to a central body, so the role of local authorities has changed. That is not to say that there is no longer a role for them, but I do not recommend writing it formally into the Bill, as these amendments suggest. The organising committee, which is setting up the Gas Consumers Council, is now considering appointments to that council and is having consultations with the various local authority associations. I should prefer to leave the provision as it stands—that is, for a national body representing consumers. It is not in anyone's best interests to write in specific representation from one sector of the community or another. For that reason, I ask the House to reject the two amendments.

Amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 2 negatived.

Amendment proposed to the Lords amendment (b), in line 12, after 'members', insert

'who shall be nominated by County and District authorities'.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 173, Noes 241.

Division No. 269] [8.08 pm

AYES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry

Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McTaggart, Robert
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Derek Fatchett.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'lh E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh

Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 4

General duties of Secretary of State and Director

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 3, line 28, at end insert—

"(3) In performing his duty under subsection (2) above to exercise functions assigned to him in the manner which he considers is best calculated to protect the interests of consumers of gas supplied through pipes in respect of the quality of the gas supply services provided, the Secretary of State or, as the case may be, the Director shall take into account, in particular, the interests of those who are disabled or of pensionable age."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, at end add

'or who are in receipt of any social security benefit'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 5, in page 5, line 44, at end insert—

'"*(aa)* such conditions requiring arrangements to be made with respect to the provision of special services for meeting the needs of consumers of gas supplied through pipes who are disabled or of pensionable age as appear to the Secretary of State to be requisite or expedient having regard to those duties;"

and, as an amendment to the proposed amendment, after 'age', insert

'or who are in receipt of any social security benefit'.

Mr. Rowlands: These amendments amend interesting and important amendments made in the other place. Lords amendments Nos. 3 and 5 go some way to meet the demands made from all parts of the House from the beginning of our proceedings on the Bill that we should seek ways and means to improve the safeguards for the most disadvantaged consumers and to protect their interests wherever possible after privatisation. Therefore, we welcome the Lords amendments, but believe that they can go a lot further.

We also welcome one or two other amendments made in the other place, particularly the letter of assurance that was published in answer to the planted written question on 17 July about the various assurances given by the chairman of British Gas. I notice that all these assurances —it is important that they be clearly stated—last only as long as certain conditions in the licence. If those were removed, the assurances would fall. It is rather important that we remind ourselves of that point.

Opposition Members welcome the Government's climbdown on standing charges. The original draft proposals were revealed in *The Guardian* just before publication of the Bill. They suggested that standing charges, under the code, could be raised by the RPI plus. There was some alteration later with the substitution of the famous phrase "best endeavours" to maintain standing charges. I recall with interest the Under-Secretary defending those words, using his law books to tell us that they were just as good as "must", "have to be" or "essential". We are relieved to see that he has cast aside his law books and replaced them by plain, good, English.

We have at least a concession from the Government, and one for which we fought in Committee. The Committee stage would have been shorter and less arduous if those modest concessions had been made then. We are relieved that gone from the conditions on standing charges are the weasel words "best endeavours". Now, British Gas will have to ensure that any increase is no higher than the RPI.

These amendments help and assist the most disadvantaged gas consumers — the elderly, the poorest consumers and the disabled—although the best way to do so is to keep gas prices down as much as possible. It is worthwhile reminding the House of the aim of the Bill. It is paving the way for the sale of British Gas. We have discovered that the Government will raid the accounts of British Gas to the tune of £2·5 billion, after having taken nearly £500 million from the gas consumers through the gas levy, but the company will still be presented to the stock market with a huge and healthy profit.

The best way to help the poorest consumers is not by offering discount shares to some customers but by offering a lower gas tariff to all customers. Given the money that is available, which can be taken out of the British Gas Corporation, the levy and the dividend raid on the company's account before privatisation, there is a strong case for an alternative to discount share buying. We recognise that the argument is not only about tariffs and prices but about the service provided. These amendments deal with such services.

We welcome amendments Nos. 3 and 5 amending clauses 4 and 7 to take into account

"the interests of those who are disabled or of pensionable age."

The case that was argued both here and in the other place by Lord Stoddard of Swindon and others was that we should ensure that there are special provisions for the elderly, the poor and the disabled, not only on gas tariffs and prices but on services. The additional provisions

offered in amendments Nos. 3 and 5, particularly in the new conditions attached to the licence, could go further and be extended to at least one other category of consumer —those in receipt of social security benefit.

The words in amendments Nos. 3 and 5 to take into account

"the interests of those who are disabled or of pensionable age"

would be of a general character if there were not the benefit of a new draft condition attached to the licence which spells out specifically what they mean. I ask the House to take the amendments with the new conditions that have been proposed.

To give meaning to the new provisions in clauses 4 and 7, four special services will be offered as a condition of the licence. I have with me the form that sets them out. They include:

"examining free of charge . . . the safety of gas appliances . . . providing where practicable special controls and adaptors . . . and prepayment meters . . . providing special means of identifying officers authorised by the Supplier; and giving advice on the use of gas fittings."

Those special services will be placed in the new conditions, thereby giving meaning to amendments Nos. 3 and 5. I hope that the Minister will, in a spirit of generosity, accept our case that at least two of those four special categories could and should apply to those in receipt of social security benefit.

8.30 pm

The two that apply are those that offer the opportunity of examining free of charge the safety of gas appliances and of giving advice on the use of gas and gas fittings. The amendment paves the way for additional changes to the draft condition, which is being introduced by the Government, in order to extend some of the provisions and special services to the poorest customers who do not fall into the two specific categories of being elderly or disabled. Two of the recommendations in the conditions apply specifically to the elderly and disabled, and could and should be extended to the poorest gas consumers.

We know that neglecting the safety of gas appliances is a function not just of age or disability but often of finance. If one cannot afford to call out a gas fitter or to have a gas appliance examined, the dangers can be devastating. Thus, that is one of the four draft conditions that could easily apply to those in receipt of social security benefit, who are among the poorest of gas consumers.

Advice on the use of gas and gas fittings is as of much significance to the poorest gas consumer in our society as to the elderly or disabled. I do not detract from the value and importance of those special services to those two categories of customers, but I cannot understand the logic of not extending them to those poorest consumers who are neither elderly nor disabled.

I shall be interested to hear the Minister's reply to those points. I anticipate that he may say that a provision covering the efficient use of appliances has already been laid down in general terms in condition 13. But that could also apply to the elderly and the disabled. However, the Government have rightly and understandably sought to specify some special services which, although covered by the generic provisions of condition 13, should also be highlighted in an additional condition. We believe that the best way of assisting the poorest customer, whether elderly, disabled or simply poor, is by maintaining the lowest possible tariffs and, most importantly, by offering a range of special services to the poorest of customers. It is in that spirit of generosity that we urge the Minister to respond and to join us in supporting the amendment.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I rise to support the amendments, although I do so without much heart, because throughout our lengthy discussions on the Bill in Committee the Government turned a deaf ear to our pleas on behalf of some of the poorest consumers in our society. It became especially clear throughout our discussions on the Bill that the Government's plan to sell off British Gas to pay for tax cuts is a gigantic financial swindle. The public will undoubtedly be the losers and only the rich will benefit. Having said that, we must, even at this late stage, hope that the Government will be swayed by our arguments to try to protect some of those who will be most affected by some of the things that we predict will happen as a result of privatisation.

During the past decade the poor have suffered most from increases in fuel costs. They tend to live in bad housing, often with poor insulation. They often have damp houses that suffer from condensation. They can seldom choose the heating that they would like, and they often land up with expensive and inefficient systems. Those who can least afford it are thus forced to pay the most to keep warm. That leads to a failure to pay bills and to misery. In Committee, we gave the Government many examples of acute cases of poverty. I quoted at some length from the many reports carried out by welfare organisations on the effect of fuel poverty on people in Britain.

From the Government's own figures it seems that 60 per cent. of all people on supplementary benefit and 90 per cent. of pensioners on supplementary benefit now receive a heating addition. That makes the case for the amendments. Every winter, especially last winter, people have died from hypothermia. An increasing number of elderly people and young children die. They are often the children of families living on social security benefit. All of them are at risk, because they or their families cannot afford the fuel necessary to keep warm. Government policies, as enunciated today, will undoubtedly increase that possibility.

The causes of fuel poverty must be tackled by other changes in policy, such as housing and income support as well as fuel pricing policies. Many people simply do not have the financial resources to heat their homes properly. Fuel poverty is a real and growing problem, and the Government cannot get away from that. If the Government make special provision for the elderly and the disabled, whom we know need increased heating because of their problems, how can they exclude people on social security benefit?

From evidence produced in 1982, it seems that more than 50 per cent. of disconnections occurred in households with children under 10 years old. Of the households disconnected, two-fifths had a head of family unemployed and more than 10 per cent. had a head of family who was sick or disabled. We have been given much evidence from welfare organisations, which has shown clearly that there is a vital need for proper regulation of the relationship between the fuel supplier and its customers. Therefore, I support the amendment.

Mr. Ashdown: I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) whose work on fuel poverty

[Mr. Ashdown]

is respected on both sides of the House and whose contribution to the Bill in that respect is valuable, and is recognised as such by all hon. Members. The hon. Lady made some points about hypothermia to which I shall return shortly. I shall put a slightly different emphasis on those points, but I agree that the amendment and clauses 3 and 5 are worth supporting. We shall certainly support them tonight. That was the only major concession that was wrung out of the Government. They gave it unwillingly, and struggled until the last moment. It is an official indictment of the Government that they gave it unwillingly and were forced to do so only because they recognised the argument in the last analysis.

I join the hon. Member for Cynon Valley in welcoming clauses 3 and 5. I do so unenthusiastically for two reasons. First, I believe strongly that the appropriate mechanism for assisting the disadvantaged in a civilised nation is so to construct things that they do not need any charitable or special provision. People should be able to live ordinary lives on an ordinary and dignified basis.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) made an important point when he said that the best way to assist the aged, the disabled and those who were disadvantaged for other reasons would be to provide a sufficiently low gas tariff. Overall that is the best way to assist. Another way would be to pay a decent pension so that people would not have to rely on charity, on special clauses in Bills or the hand out of free bus passes. There is a psychological attitude towards our elderly and disadvantaged people which unhappily ghettoises large numbers of people according to their disadvantages and age. That prevents them from taking their full part as members of society. That is my first reason for being unenthusiastic about the way in which we have arrived at this point.

My second reason is that once again the Government amendment is as minimal as they can allow. It uses phrases such as "take into account". One wonders why the Government were not able to include phrases such as "the needs of old-age pensioners or the disabled". Goodness knows that need is powerful and well enough established. I pay tribute to my predecessor the former Liberal candidate in the Yeovil constituency because he placed me in a position to win that seat. Much more importantly, he and his wife discovered the phenomenon which we now know as hypothermia. Many thousands of people owe him a great debt for discovering that phenomenon.

As the hon. Member for Cynon Valley has said, since 1975 some 12,000 people in Britain have died from hypothermia, an average of 1,230 a year. I disagree with the hon. Member for Cynon Valley only on the matter of emphasis, because, while there is no doubt that there are well known and documented cases of young children in that tragic and awful litany of unnecessary deaths, the vast preponderance of those cases is among the aged. Four died in my constituency, not last winter mercifully but the winter before. That is a disgrace in a civilised society. However, all these points were made at length in Committee and I have no wish to delay proceedings now. Suffice it to say that, because the vast preponderance of that disgraceful total of 12,000 dying from hypothermia are the aged and among that total are a number of disabled, it is incumbent on us to recognise that there ought to be a specific recognition of the special needs of the aged.

The clause should recognise the needs of the aged and the disabled and ought to take into account the needs of those on supplementary benefit. The Government will not do that. Because the Opposition amendment would strengthen the clause, I have no objection to it. I support it perhaps more enthusiastically in clause 7 than in clause 4, but we shall vote in favour of both amendments because at least they broaden the scope, recognise the problem and strengthen the clause.

I turn now to the matter of recognition which is not voluntary but mandatory. In another place Lord Diamond, on behalf of the alliance, tried to introduce an amendment with almost exactly the same wording in line 38, page 5. This amendment is in line 44. That amendment would have made the requirements mandatory. Some of us believe that the amendment at present allows it to apply on a rather more voluntary basis. I was reassured to read in the report of the proceedings in the other place that the Government said that in their view this amendment, together with other amendments, make this requirement mandatory. It would be of benefit to the House if the Minister would confirm that point. I repeat that this amendment lays down a duty which is not voluntary but mandatory. If he will give us precisely the argument for that, it will go on the record and then there can be no doubt.

8.45 pm

Mr. Pike: I support the amendment because it is probably one of the most important improvements of the Bill. However, it could go a little further. That is why we are moving our amendment and a similar one to a later clause in the Bill. People on social security benefit are among the most deprived and poorest in Britain. Some people who are unable to go out because of poverty require more heat in their homes than people who are able to go out during the day. That also applies to the unemployed, especially in winter because they find it difficult to go out in bad weather.

We all know that any form of heating is expensive. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and others of my hon. Friends amply illustrated in Committee the fact that many people in the categories that we are discussing often had a choice between food and heating. It is atrocious that in 1986 people should have to choose between those two basic necessities of life. An announcement made in the House earlier today will worsen the situation. Last year, one of my constituents had to make a choice every weekend between food and heat.

The complications of the exceptionally severe weather payments make it far too difficult for many people to acquire the benefit to which they are entitled. Many people dare not run their heating systems at a sufficient level because they are terrified about having to obtain the benefit to which they might be entitled under the scheme. In many instances they do not know about the scheme until it is too late. We are talking not just about the elderly or the disabled, although I recognise and fully support the needs of those two categories.

At the moment I am dealing with the family whose gas was cut off last winter. They owe about £340 and the gas board has made it clear that, unless the family pays off the arrears at £10 a week until the debt is repaid, the gas

supply will not be reconnected. There are children in that family which is on supplementary benefit. It means that, with repayments of £10 a week for 34 weeks, that family will not have gas heating next winter. The amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) is an important addition to the Bill. If the Government care or have any sympathy for the poorest members in our society, they will accept it.

Mr. Wilson: I support the amendment because it is a valuable reflection of the importance that the Opposition parties at least attach to fuel poverty. It is recognised that many people die because of a lack of adequate income with which to buy heat, and that is compounded by the fact that many such people live in houses with inbuilt ventilation. The blocks are porous and the windows do not fit and heat cannot be contained in the building. Compared with Scandinavia, we treat the matter of heating for our people in a scandalous fashion.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is not just hypothermia, but the fear and dread of the expense of heating from which old people suffer?

Mr. Wilson: I agree with the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth). I have had discussions with the Department of Health and Social Security about the possibilities of establishing a cold climate allowance. One of the answers is that spending does not necessarily reflect the severity of climate. Indeed, some family surveys show that. What it means is that, in many areas, the elderly simply do not use fuel. They are frightened to use fuel and, therefore, live in a colder environment. That has been documented many times by medical people who admit that hypothermia exists.

I commend the Lords amendment and hope that, even at the last moment, the Government will accept it. The Labour party's amendment to it recognises the need to cater for the vast numbers of people who receive supplementary benefit. A fuel poverty document that I received today said that 5 million people receive supplementary benefit. I am not sure whether the family of four is still the unit, but, even with families of three, that means that 15 million people live or depend upon supplementary benefit. They have insufficient money on which to live.

In considering the privatisation of British Gas, we must examine what can be done. Since I have commended the Labour party, perhaps I should criticise it for what the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said about a winter premium of £5 a week. Of course, that is a flat rate. Whether people live at the Oval or in Shetland, regardless of climate, they will receive the same sum. If they must die because the payment is not related to climate, that is just too bad. I hope that those Labour Members present will recognise the justice of the case for climatically adjusted allowances and press the hon. Member for Oldham, West into action.

If we change the way in which British Gas is financed and run, problems could arise in relation to gas supply. I have a copy of the 1985-86 annual report of the Gas Consumers Council for Scotland, which the Government will have found uncomfortable reading. Perhaps that is one reason why the consumers councils are being abolished. It states:

"One of the most worrying trends in the past year has been the steep increase in the number of people being cut off because they could not pay their gas bills. Disconnections have risen from 2,249 to 2,843, an increase of nearly 21 per cent. over 1984-85. We have continued to examine a sample of cases each month."

The council exonerates British Gas on the matter because it has followed the code of practice. However, the council says that the code of practice is probably at fault and must be amended. It says that there is

"no satisfactory explanation for this increase other than the prevailing economic climate."

For many families without an adequate income, fuel debt will increase or they will be cut off.

In those circumstances, does the Bill do enough, even if amended by the Lords, to take account of that fact? I do not believe that it does, in two respects. First, in relation to maintenance, the Government have announced that they intend to restrict the number of single payments that can be made, sometimes for the purchase and sometimes for the maintenance of equipment. There is a danger factor associated with gas which is not necessarily associated with electricity. Danger could arise if people bought stoves that were not properly maintained and could not afford to get them repaired because of a lack of single payments. If heating allowances are phased out, as they will be, there will be more poverty and more likelihood of danger.

In the latter circumstances, it would be useful if British Gas made available an advisory service that would allow those in receipt of supplementary benefit to obtain help and advice without having to pay through the nose for it. Frequently, they get no help or advice at all. Advice on heating, combined with the payments for insulation which, thankfully, the Government intend to retain, could save many families from hypothermia and from being cut off. It would be easy to set up such an advisory service and maintenance checks.

I hope that the Government will accept the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) calling for the inclusion of those on supplementary benefit.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As with the previous group of amendments, I am grateful to the House for welcoming the changes that were made in the House of Lords — changes and amendments which I shall commend to the House. But we are now debating the two amendments tabled by the Opposition.

The remarks of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) were strange. He paid respect, fairly, to the amendment and to the need to help those in receipt of social security, but he addressed almost all his remarks to the problems of the elderly. I refer him to amendment No. 5, which contains words almost identical to the ones that he used about meeting the needs of consumers who are elderly and disabled. He might have showed some graciousness and accepted that we have incorporated precisely what he wants.

The hon. Gentleman also asked me whether the provision is mandatory. Given the responsibility that is laid on the Secretary of State, I cannot envisage circumstances in which he could properly omit a condition in the licence on special services to the elderly and the disabled. Once that is included in the licence, if the public gas supplier breaches the conditions of the licence it will be extremely serious, as the hon. Gentleman will know from other parts of the Bill, and various matters will flow

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

from it. The licence can be enforced and certain steps taken if the public gas supplier is in breach of the licence. The real power lies in ensuring that that is done.

The main reason why the Lords amendments concentrated on the elderly and the disabled is that those categories are unlikely to be able to examine their appliances in the same way as a fit and able-bodied person could. That is why we decided to offer those special services only to the elderly and disabled. The provision will not relate to financial means. We are much more concerned with the physical ability of particular classes of consumer to be able to perform tasks that are necessary in the interests of safety — for example, the problems that an elderly or disabled person has in being able to go for advice to a gas showroom. Such people may be confined to the home. It is on that that the amendments from the other place concentrate. Other services are available, but people who want to take advantage of them do have to go to a showroom. Thus, we have limited the amendments from the other place to those who are old, which may mean they are immobile, and who have problems with understanding how appliances work — problems which those in receipt of social security payments will not necessarily suffer from.

9 pm

Mr. Rowlands: I am worried about the drift of the Minister's argument. It is not only the old and disabled who should not be tampering with appliances in order to decide whether they are safe. Safety is not just a problem for the old and disabled; it is a matter of knowledge. If the Minister is making the point that we are specialising in giving advice to the elderly and disabled at home, he should amend the draft condition.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The draft condition is adequate and covers advice to be given. That can be understood from any reasonable reading. That is something that British Gas has done up to now for the elderly.

I understand a great deal of what Opposition Members have said about financial help, although they sometimes overdramatise. Financial help is in a different category from what we are seeking to do relating to services. I remind the House that for pensioners the weekly scale rates for help for heating have increased by more than 6 per cent. in real terms since 1978.

For those who require more general help for heating we have increased the size of the heating additions and their availability. It is significant that they are now worth £140 million more in real terms than they were in 1979. Therefore, the Government have taken positive action to give financial help where it is needed, to which so much reference has been made. The Government need no lectures from the Opposition on the problems of those on lower incomes who need help for heating additions and in answering those needs. We have done that on a scale far greater than at any time when the Labour party had responsibility for that.

The services available to the two categories of consumers to whom the amendments from the other place apply, which I commend to the House, meet our objectives. The Government not only recognise the need for financial help but have responded to it in a real way, which the Labour party never did when it had the power to do so. I ask the House to reject the amendments to the amendments.

Mr. Rowlands: We shall be pressing our amendments, first, because the Minister ended on a controversial note. It is little wonder that the Government have had to pay more out in heating allowances when the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as Secretary of State for Energy, for three successive years, demanded that gas prices should rise by 10 per cent. above the rate of inflation—an increase of 100 per cent. in domestic gas prices.

Secondly, I did not find convincing his arguments against extending the special provisions for those of state pensionable age and the disabled—which we welcome—to the poorest customers in our communities, in particular, advice and assistance on the safety of gas appliances and on the use of gas. Both are vital to the poorest consumers as well as to the elderly and disabled. It is for those reasons that we shall press our amendments tonight.

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 198, Noes 245.

Division No. 270] **[9.4 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy

Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Derek Fatchett.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Staml'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George

Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Mr. Gerald Malone

Question accordingly negatived.

It being more than two hours after the commencement of the proceedings on the motion relating to the Gas Bill (Allocation of Time), MR. SPEAKER *proposed, pursuant to the order this day, to put forthwith the Questions necessary to bring the proceedings on the Lords amendment to a conclusion.*

Lords amendment No. 3 agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to. [Some with Special Entry.]

Rate Support Grants Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

ADJUSTMENTS OF DISTRIBUTION OF BLOCK GRANT

'In relation to block grant for any year beginning on or after 1st July 1987, section 59(6)*(cc)* of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 and section 8(3) *(C)* of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 shall cease to have effect'.—*[Mr. Straw.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

9.20 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 30, in schedule 1, page 5, line 47, at end insert—

'14.—(1) Section 8 of the said Act of 1982 shall be amended as follows:

(2) In subsection (4) after the words "in that paragra, ." there shall be inserted "and where he does not so provide he shall give reasons for not doing so to the association of local authorities or local authority by whom representations were made".

(3) After subsection (3) there shall be inserted—

"(3A) Expenditure of any description specified in subsection (3B) below shall be disregarded for the purposes of paragraph (CC) of subsection (6) of the said section 59 and in determining whether the extent to which local authorities have or have not complied (or have or have not taken steps to comply) with the guidance referred to in that paragraph.

(3B) (i) Expenditure grant aided by the Secretary of State under the Local Government Grants (Social Need) Act 1969;

(ii) Expenditure incurred or grants or loans made under section 138 of the Local Government Act 1972.".'.

Mr. Straw: Earlier today, Mr. Speaker, you listened to a point of order from me on the fact that the Bill might be the subject of a certificate as a money Bill. I place on record my thanks to the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government for his courtesy in letting me know about that possibility.

The purpose of new clause 1 is to remove the powers of the Secretary of State to use multipliers for the purpose of abating the grant to authorities whose expenditure exceeds their target figures. This is a useful occasion on which to debate the new clause, as it comes just a day, I understand, before the provisional announcement of the rate support grant settlement for 1987-88. We are informed by a number of newspapers that Ministers are to come to the House bearing gifts of £1 billion or so in anticipation of the general election next year.

I have always thought that we should beware of Conservative Ministers bearing gifts, especially of the size of £1 billion, even if an election is on the way. It is our intention, when we see the detail of the rate support grant settlement, to examine the small print in the greatest of detail. I shall be delighted if there is a U-turn on the issue of rate support grants. However, I suspect that there will be a small catch somewhere. If Ministers recognise the error of their ways, there is no better way to acknowledge that than by accepting new clause 1. If the Minister were

to say straightaway that he accepts new clause 1, I should be happy to terminate the debate without a Division. It seems that I shall have no such luck.

The Local Government Finance Act 1982 gave the Secretary of State the power to issue—in the newspeak of the Government—expenditure guidance—the type of guidance that one receives when one's arm is forced behind one's back and which allows one to go in only one direction—or "targets", as they were commonly known, by which authorities were fined large sums of money if they exceeded the expenditure levels set by the Government. The penalties included a reduction in the grants that would have been payable by the mechanism of multipliers. The system of targets operated for the years 1981-82 to 1985-86. It was abandoned for the current year.

By the time the order was moved on 20 January this year the then Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), had been elevated from the position of Minister to that of Secretary of State. One can scarcely keep pace with his promotions. He said:

"The most important feature of the settlement next year is that we have got rid of targets. That decision has been commended by the Public Accounts Committee in its valuable report published last week. I believe that Members on both sides of the House welcome the abandonment of targets and penalties. I was repeatedly pressed by all authorities, not just the shire counties, to do that." — [*Official Report*, 20 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 42.]

That was welcomed by Members on both sides of the House. However, the question that we shall tease out tonight is whether that abandonment applies for only one year or for every year. We shall ask whether Ministers intend to keep the weapon of targetry in their locker so that they can have a go at local authorities as and when they please.

I hope that the Government will accept the new clause. The reason why all hon. Members welcomed the abandonment of targets and penalties was that the system had become desperately unfair and virtually unworkable. It meant that decisions on levels of expenditure were being taken centrally and not by democratically elected councillors. It meant that Ministers had to stand in the shoes of councillors to determine what was a reasonable level of spending. The consequence was wholly to distort authorities' accountability to their ratepayers, because marginal increases in expenditure resulted in a disproportionate increase in rates.

I know this as a ratepayer in Lambeth. During the last local elections we heard all the time about how wonderful Wandsworth was and how terrible Lambeth was, but we were never told that 85 per cent. of expenditure in Wandsworth was paid for by central Government, compared to only 20 per cent. in Lambeth, whereas the disparities in levels of spending were nothing like that. Over a number of years the Inner London education authority, Camden borough council and the Greater London council faced a situation in which they received no grant as a result of targetry, despite the fact that their areas covered some of the most deprived parts of the United Kingdom.

Another objection to targets was that the 1981-82 targets were based on authorities' 1979-80 budgets. The 1979-80 budgets were frozen and simply uprated roughly in line with inflation, which caused enormous distortions for low-spending and high-spending authorities.

The construction of targets changed from year to year. No authority was caught more than Birmingham. In one year, in expectation of the elections which the Conservatives were likely to lose, and indeed lost, Birmingham was brazenly assisted by changes in target and in another year was forced to put up its rates by about 43 per cent.

Above all, the equalisation objectives of the block grant system were frustrated by targets and penalties. The reason why the rate support grant system as a whole has been brought into disrepute by the Government is fundamentally to do with the target system. If targets were not operated, there could have been a consensus on the system of block grant which the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) introduced in 1980.

Amendment No. 30 does two things. It requires the Secretary of State to give his reasons for not granting disregards for the purpose of measuring local authorities' compliance with targets. It requires him to disregard altogether certain items of expenditure when measuring local authority compliance with those targets. Those issues are by no means a matter of history. The amount that individual authorities may earn by way of grant in previous years — certainly including 1983-84 and onwards — has yet to be decided because we still have not received the supplementary report for 1983-84 and subsequent years.

In most parts of the local government finance legislation under which Ministers make decisions affecting authorities Ministers are required to give reasons. They are not required to give reasons when it comes to disregard. We believe that it is only fair that authorities should know why applications for disregard have been refused. After all, they soon discover if an application for disregard has been accepted. By definition, they should know why it has been refused.

We have provided for disregards of certain items of expenditure and have given two examples: first, where expenditure has been grant-aided under the urban programme, and, secondly, where it has been incurred under section 138 of the Local Government Act 1972. By definition, where expenditure has been incurred under the urban programme, the Government have accepted that the project has a substantial priority, otherwise they would not have agreed to fund it. It is ludicrous that the Government agree to fund part of the urban programme, yet expenditure incurred by the authority can be the subject of penalty. Expenditure under section 138 is for expenditure on emergencies and disasters such as the Bradford fire, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) will confirm, and the Handsworth riots — both of which were entirely legitimate items for disregard.

9.30 pm

The fundamental issue raised in this debate is the good faith of the Government. On 20 January the then Secretary of State used words which were florid even by his standards, referring not to a decision temporarily to set targets aside but to their "abandonment". If the Government have made such a decision, it is entirely justified that that abandonment should be put into law by new clause 1.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I support new clause 1 and amendment No. 30. My hon. Friend the Member for

[Ms. Harriet Harman]

Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has said that the system is unfair and unworkable. I wish to give just one illustration of that unfairness in relation to Southwark council.

Southwark council is threatened with a loss of £6·84 million in rate support grant between 1985-86 and 1986-87. That is 10 per cent. of the Government's contribution, which has also already shrunk by almost half — from £83,300,000 in 1978-79 to £42,532,000 in 1985-86. I hope that the Government will think again and not make that further 10 per cent. cut in an already greatly shrunken contribution.

The proposed cut is inconsistent because the Paymaster General himself has recognised the problems of Southwark by sending in a task force which is supposed to sort out the problems of deprivation. He said that he had picked as task force areas

"eight areas which are diverse in character but whose residents all share problems of deprivation and lack of opportunities".—[*Official Report*, 6 February 1986; Vol. 91, c. 446.]

He said that all the areas suffered from a wide range of long-standing problems.

A Minister from the Department of the Environment has also recognised the problems of deprivation in Southwark. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), wrote to the council saying that he recognised that the deprivation was such that Southwark qualified as one of a handful of areas whose needs compared with those of neighbouring programme status authorities.

The inconsistency of the Government's attitude is heightened by the fact that the then Secretary of State, now Secretary of State for Education and Science, told local authorities as recently as March this year that they should actually spend more. Yet Southwark is now to have 10 per cent. lopped off the Government's rate support grant contribution.

Ironically, the task force was supposed to be an example of co-operation among different Departments working together to meet the needs of one deprived area. Yet Government Departments are not only failing to co-operate but seem actually to be working against one another. One Department is lopping off £6·84 million while another gives back £1 million. That makes no sense at all.

Not only is there no co-operation between Departments, but there is not even consistency within Departments. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State recognises the deprivation in Southwark and, as he says in his letter of 19 August 1985,

"the determination of the Council to make good use of whatever resources are made available,"

while the Secretary of State seeks to penalise the authority by taking money away from it.

I hope that the Government will realise the effect that the threatened cut would have on jobs and services in Southwark, reconsider the amount to be taken by their curious system which they call multipliers and which really is a system of subtraction, accept the new clause and the amendment, and think again about the proposed cut in rate support grant to Southwark.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Local authorities are entitled to be given reasons for decisions that affect their budget and services. The changes made to local government finance by this Government—and they have been fast and furious over the past few years — often mean that local authorities are caught out and are therefore disadvantaged through no fault of their own. That is what happened to the city of Newcastle upon Tyne.

In 1982-83, Newcastle city council decided to amend its accounting practice for the treatment of income from other local education authorities in respect of students attending advanced further education courses in Newcastle. Prior to 1982-83, the income taken into account in respect of any one financial year related to the previous academic year. For example, in the financial year 1981-82, income was taken into account for the academic year September 1980 to August 1981.

This change in practice meant that for 1982-83 onwards the income related to the financial year. For example, in 1985-86, income taken into account was for the summer term of the academic year 1984-85 and the winter and spring terms of the academic year 1985-86. For one year only — 1982-83 — the income for five terms was taken into account due to the change in practice. That was for the academic year 1981-82 and two terms in 1982-83. That led to a one-off gain of £2 million which, in accordance with standard accounting practice, was treated in the accounts as a prior year adjustment. In other words, the previous year's figures were changed rather than those in 1982-83.

The budget return for 1982-83 included this income, which has had the effect of reducing total expenditure for block grant purposes and, because the city was subject to negative grant rates, of increasing grant entitlement. It was generally understood that this was the correct treatment of prior year adjustments for block grant purposes. Subsequently, the budget for 1982-83 formed the basis of the city's target for 1983-84, which itself formed the basis of the targets for 1984-85 and 1985-86. As a result, the city's targets were understated in each of these years, and that lost the city several million pounds in block grant.

The city did not complain at the time because it was believed that the budget had been returned on the correct basis and that, when the prior year adjustment was made, that would gain the city grant, partly but by no means completely offsetting the effect of the reduced target.

In February 1985, the Department of the Environment informed local authorities that prior year adjustments were neutral for block grant. That was intended to be helpful to local authorities, but it was probably not envisaged that it would have the kind of effect that it had on Newcastle — that income items such as the city's adjustment would not attract grant. The Department of the Environment invited authorities to amend block grant claims going back to 1982-83 to take advantage of this interpretation. Accordingly, the city amended its grant claims but also requested the Department to accept an amended budget return and to recalculate the city's grant entitlement on the basis of revised targets.

The council wrote in May 1985—three Secretaries of State for the Environment ago — asking for its block grant to be recalculated on the basis of the amended forms. In July 1985 — two Secretaries of State for the Environment ago — it was told that the Secretary of State

"would carefully consider their representations for disregards as soon as possible, but anyway before final decisions on

grant abatement for relevant years, and that only initial consideration had been given before making and laying the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report 1985-86."

The council was also told that

"the Secretary of State had always recognised that the reference to 1982-83 budgets carried a risk that anomalous features could be perpetuated but that he thought in most cases authorities should be expected to live with them, though if there were a truly exceptional case, that could be dealt with by way of a disregard under section 8(4) of the 1982 Act."

On 19 December the Department wrote to say that the Secretary of State had considered the representations but decided not to make any provision for such a disregard. No reasons were given. The council thought that it was a harsh, unjustified decision, particularly in view of the injustice of penalties, and it was surprised that there was no explanation. It pointed out that there were precedents for granting such disregards and directed the Secretary of State's attention to the supplementary report of 1982-83 and asked why he had not followed that precedent. The response to that letter was simply to say that it was not the Secretary of State's practice to give his reasons for refusing to grant a disregard.

The council was and is entitled to a full explanation. It wrote to the Members of Parliament for the city, and I wrote on their behalf to the Secretary of State, asking for information on at least two occasions, and then I tabled a parliamentary question. The reply I received was:

"The Secretary of State does not consider that he is under any duty to explain his reasons for refusing to grant Newcastle a disregard."

One man has the power to affect extremely damagingly the finances of major cities, with all the consequences that that will have on their citizens. Yet he does not have to explain why he has made his decisions, even to the House. That cannot be right. Amendment No. 30 attempts to rectify and restore the rights of Members of Parliament to get answers to questions, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I wish to speak briefly on a question pertaining to my constituents. Contrary to some of the generally accepted conventional wisdom which we hear from the Opposition, some Labour-controlled county councils, including Staffordshire, have benefited enormously from Government policies on rate support grant. They do not use that money wisely. In April Staffordshire county council received a £9·2 million guarantee, followed by an uplift to about £11 million, and the money for the Stoke-on-Trent garden festival, which is about £30 million. Yet the borough of Stafford has not increased the rates significantly or at all for the past four years, and the whole weight and burden of the county's financial affairs fall heavily on my constituents.

Education takes up 70 per cent. of the entire budget and the district auditor has criticised the county council for the way in which it has arrived at its figures, so one is left feeling extremely worried about education and the appalling way in which the county council's finances are being run. Indeed, it has reached the point when the Bishop of Stafford, the young farmers' clubs and others have had to run a campaign, reminding Staffordshire county council of its 1985 election manifesto, in which it gave a specific commitment to maintain the level of expenditure on voluntary organisations. Since then the council has closed a special school, despite a petition signed by 15,000 people, many of whom came from the lower socio-economic grouping of Stoke-on-Trent, against the closure. Furthermore, the council has been parsimonious and miserly in dealing with citizens advice bureaux. Staffordshire is about the only county in England and Wales which made no contribution to the CAB. I had to fight to ensure that the money was paid by the county council.

Furthermore, more recently, the schools letting policy has caused great problems for the scouts and other voluntary organisations. Finally, the Marriage Guidance Council came to me recently and said that it had merely received £165 at a time when divorce rates are high and when the opportunities that should be made available through moneys from the county council are not forthcoming. The chairman of the Marriage Guidance Council is extremely worried about whether it could continue. The Opposition parrot on about cuts and cuts. I invite the Minister to look at the amount of money that has gone to Staffordshire and then to consider the amount that has been paid out by my constituents. They pay more money into the coffers of Staffordshire county council than any other party, yet the county council is imposing swingeing cuts on education and proposes to close a huge number of schools. I am fighting that proposal for reasons I have already given — the money has been made available by this Government to Staffordshire county council, yet all that it does is to complain and whinge about the amount of money that it would like to have.

Staffordshire people are enterprising. They run many small businesses and also highly sophisticated and well-run companies such as GEC, Evode, Lotus and others. They are contributing to the wealth of this country and they are providing opportunities for my constituents. It is hypocritical in the extreme for the Opposition to complain about the amount of money that is made available to county councils when the Staffordshire county council in particular receives so much but regrettably spends it so badly.

9.45 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): My main contribution will be on another amendment. However, I should like to put a question to the Minister on this clause. Nottinghamshire county council went to court in March to get a judgment against the Minister. The case is now to be heard in October. The sum involved is £18 million. Will the Minister confirm that the county council will still be able to go to court if the Bill is passed, or will this retrospective legislation put a stop to that?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): As the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) pointed out, the effect of the new clause would be to render inoperative the Secretary of State's current powers to use both targets and hold back to influence local government expenditure in the years beginning on or after 1 April 1987. As he rightly pointed out, for the year 1986-87 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State decided not to issue expenditure guidance, as we term it, and therefore did not use either the operation of targets or hold back. However, we do not believe that it would be a good idea to take these provisions off the statute book. We profoundly hope that it will be unnecessary to introduce targets in subsequent years, but that depends upon the level at which local authorities spend. Furthermore, at some future stage there may be general economic circumstances or conditions which could require local authorities to be subjected to some form of control.

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) for his clear exposition of the great difficulties in which Staffordshire county council has placed his constituents.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must ask for only one hon. Member at a time.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans, as far as I know, to reintroduce targets and holdback.

The Opposition have made a number of points in support of amendment No. 30. I refer in particular to the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland). He said that the Secretary of State should be required by law to say why he has turned down requests for disregard under section 8(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1982. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is not required to give reasons. His general policy is that he does not wish to do so, and he does not.

The hon. Member for Tyne Bridge gave a long list of the difficulties in which Newcastle finds itself, but the House will appreciate that an enormous volume of work would be involved if the Secretary of State were to give reasons in the case of each application for disregard. Each local authority has the right to ask for disregards under section 8(4). In addition, local authority associations can ask for disregards. Over the past three years, about 200 requests for disregards from local authorities and associations have been received. Giving reasons for decisions on all these would have amounted to a great deal of work for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The House will appreciate that many authorities have asked for several separate disregards, and these range from the most general categories of expenditure to specific local issues such as compensation for payments to the local mushroom farm.

Mr. Clelland: How many authorities asked for reasons why they were turned down?

Mrs. Rumbold: If every authority asked for specific reasons, we would have to do an enormous amount of work. Therefore, as a general policy, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is able to exercise under the legislation, he has decided not give reasons.

Mr. Straw: When applications for disregards are made, Ministers always say that they will consider them seriously. That means that in every case where an application for disregard is made officials in the Department will make a submission to Ministers as to whether it should be accepted. The Minister is acknowledging that that is the case. If so, it should not involve considerable work for the Secretary of State to tell local authorities the reasons, in the submission from officials to Ministers, with which Ministers have concurred.

Mrs. Rumbold: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. It is true that all applications for disregards are given extremely careful consideration by my right hon. Friend, but it is equally true that, were reasons specifically given, it would lead almost inevitably to endless requests for further considerations and reasons. Therefore, as the present legislation allows my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State not to give general reasons, he wishes to continue with that policy.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The Minister's answer will not be acceptable to many people, given that there will at least be some guidelines that apply consistency between one decision and another. If that is the case, would it not be possible to show which of the guidelines render an application for disregard unacceptable?

Mrs. Rumbold: It is clear that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) did not listen to what I said. The policy of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is to give careful consideration to requests for disregards, but he does not wish to give his reasons for granting or refusing disregards. That is an allowable policy under the legislation.

The second part of the new clause would introduce an automatic disregard for all expenditure grants under the urban programme and all expenditure on emergencies under section 138 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) mentioned Southwark. The House will know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has granted a disregard for year-on-year increases in urban programme expenditure by partnership and programme authorities for each of the years from 1981-82 to 1985-86. However, my right hon. Friend has not received any general request to disregard expenditure under section 138 of the 1972 Act, although he has received requests for specific disregards —for example, in the case of the fire at the Bradford football ground. He gives all these requests careful consideration before he reaches his decision. I hope that the House will agree that it would not be desirable to enshrine these two disregards in primary legislation.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I understand that a request for disregard for the cost of the Handsworth riots was turned down. If so, how does the Minister justify rejecting requests for amendment when the Government have not behaved reasonably over appeals for disregard in the past?

Mrs. Rumbold: If the hon. Lady wants my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to reconsider the matter of the Handsworth riots, she is at liberty to ask the authority to make that request, and my right hon. Friend will look at the matter carefully. There is no point at which careful consideration is not given to a request for a disregard.

In response to the right hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) I should say that the Bill will not prevent Nottingham county council from bringing its case, but it will deny it a remedy.

Mr. Straw: With the leave of the House, I shall reply briefly to the points made by the Under-Secretary of State. Her closing remarks will go down as a classic in the annals of our parliamentary debates. She said that Nottingham county council could still go to court but that the Bill would deny a remedy.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Nottingham county council might even get a judgment in its favour, but, according to the Minister, it would still be denied a remedy. Who will then pay for that?

Mr. Straw: As my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) has said, a surcharge will no

doubt be levied on the councillors. But we shall come to the retrospective aspects of the Bill when we discuss amendments Nos. 1 and 3. Nothing could sum up better the Government's cynicism than the Under-Secretary of State's remarks. We found her reasons for refusing to accept amendment No. 30 and new clause 1 wholly unsatisfactory. If it is not, to use the Government's weasel words, their present intention to reintroduce targets, they should remove targetry from the statute book. We shall press the new clause to a Division.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:-

The House divided: Ayes 175, Noes 239.

Division No. 271] **[8.57 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
White, James
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*

Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'lich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Michael Neubert

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Rate Support Grants Bill, the Insolvency Bill [*Lords*] and the Company Directors Disqualification Bill [*Lords*] may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

Rate Support Grants Bill

Again considered.

Clause 1

VALIDATION OF APPROVED BLOCK GRANT DETERMINATIONS

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 5, leave out Clause 1.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 3, in page 1, line 12, at end insert—

"(2) The multiplier set against Birmingham in the Appendix to Annex G of the Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1986-87 shall be deemed to be 1.164156".

Mr. Boyes: After lengthy proceedings in Committee, we are now back at first base. Birmingham will not get back the £7·2 million stolen from it unless clause 1 is deleted, and that is the purpose of amendment No. 1.

In Committee we attempted simply to change the date from 21 August 1986 to 31 December 1985, but that the Government found unacceptable. The reason why we wished to change that date related particularly to the consequences for Birmingham.

How the calculation that affected Birmingham's budget was made was argued at length in Committee and I do not wish to rehearse that now. However, if the Government had accepted our amendment, it would have left their main intention intact but allowed claims by other local authorities for wrongful treatment in the 1986-87 report when multipliers therein contained would not be retrospectively validated. We have no alternative now but to argue and vote for the deletion of clause 1.

Let us examine the nature of multipliers. They are complex, and, as demonstrated by the Birmingham case, can be used in a most vindictive way. During the debate on multipliers in Committee on 1 April 1980, which is a significant date when one considers what has happened since, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)—little did he know that the great city that he has the honour to represent would be so hard hit by a system whose application he described as complicated—said:

"More dangerous than that are the circumstances in which I understand they are to be used . . . One problem is the very flexibility of the multiplier system. Flexibility is the Government's word, but flexibility, while it is beloved by Governments and civil servants, is a matter of which Parliament ought to be particularly wary. One man's flexibility is another man's capriciousness. If something can be used flexibly, it means that the Minister can use it in a variety of ways."

My right hon. Friend also said:

"They are crucial to the scheme and potentially damaging to some local authorities. They place in the hands of any Government arbitary powers".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 1 April 1980; c. 1044-46.]

What prophetic words those turned out to be.

One of the problems for local authorities and Members of Parliament, and, above all, the public, is that the year-by-year application of multipliers has been different. We debated at length amendments to the Bill in which we argued for greater clarification of the local government finance system, which is getting more and more incomprehensible. Apart from a handful of experts who understand the system, for the rest of us confusion abounds. The Bill is about to make matters worse because of the Secretary of State's desire for an unnecessary and inordinate amount of discretion.

What was the main purpose of introducing multipliers in the first place? I ask that because they have been used on only two occasions for caps. The main intention was for safety net purposes, to ensure that local authorities did not lose a great deal of grant from one year to the next. "Complex" was the word used by the Minister in 1982 when discussing multipliers. That view was confirmed by the Audit Commission, which found that

"it had in practice become so complex that many officers and members of local authorities had abandoned the attempt to understand it fully, while others had concentrated on features that could be exploited to the advantage of a particular authority."

My understanding of the situation is that Birmingham's case is not complicated. In Committee the Under-Secretary of State appeared to allege that Birmingham had made up the figure of £7·2 million. "Plucked out of the air" became the phrase bandied about in Committee. However, the mode of calculation of the £7·2 million was explained by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) when he said:

"Let me tell the hon. Lady now so that she can understand. The Secretary of State estimated a base grant of £158 million for 1985-86 using contrived assumptions, whereas in the Secretary of State's own projections the grant entitlement for 1985-86 was expected to be £165·2 million. The difference is £7·2 million and that is the amount that we are discussing".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 1 July 1986; c. 19.]

10.15 pm

Birmingham is the only council to go to court, but many more councils are affected by the Government's decision. Thirty shire counties, 121 shire districts, eight metropolitan districts and one outer London borough are involved. The sum total involved is about £150 million, but only Birmingham has been to court. I understand that Nottingham wishes to go to court—but that is another matter.

This wretched Bill has been introduced because of the action of one local authority, and it involves £7·2 million which could and should have been found from the Department of the Environment's coffers. The entire £150 million could have been found from recycling grant cash.

The Government have used retrospective action on a number of occasions. The nature of retrospective action in this case causes concern to the Opposition. In the past in their dealings with local government this Government have changed the law relating to local authority mortgages. That was done by section 7 of the Local Government Act 1986. Section 91 of the Local Government Act 1985 makes unlawful payments by the GLC and metropolitan county councils to voluntary organisations and other local authorities after 24 July 1984. Section 8 of the Local Government (Finance) Act 1982 legalises the effective reduction in local authority block grant for those who have not complied with expenditure guidance issued previously by the Secretary of State in the 1981-82 financial year. In addition, the present Secretary of State for the Environment, while Secretary of State for Transport, legislated to overturn a decision by the courts in a case brought by the GLC involving payments to London Transport.

The clause is designed to override Mr. Justice Mann's decision in the Birmingham case. It will also prevent local

[Mr. Boyes]

authorities, which are considering the 1986-87 rate support grant order, from doing so. It also validates all previous block grant determinations.

There is sometimes a case for retrospective action by Parliament. I give but three examples — to correct an administrative oversight, to put right an administrative mistake, and to regularise wartime acts. Remedial retrospective action is normally unobjectionable. There is nothing unconstitutional about it, because Wade and Phillips in their book "Constitutional and Administrative Law" said:

"It follows from the supremacy of Parliament that Acts may have retrospective operation. But to change the character of past transactions carried out on the faith of the then existing law is repugnant to the conception of the rule of law."

In an article on retrospective legislation and the rule of law in Britain, J. W. Bridge said:

"It has been argued in this article that experience in Britain has shown that it is not desirable to prohibit retroactive legislation in all circumstances. Retrospective legislation may be used where justice demands it to protect persons from harm to themselves or their property where that harm results from an unforeseeable or unintended effect of the law or, as in the case of taxation, where different considerations apply. But apart from these exceptional and justifiable circumstances retrospective legislation does offend against the principles of the Rule of Law."

That might not be a relevant example, but the Government's retrospective action tonight certainly offends the people of Birmingham. They are being denied the product of spending £7·2 million which has been taken from them by the Secretary of State. Birmingham is in a region of growth in unemployment and could make good use of the money. We believe it essential to delete clause 1.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I shall speak more briefly than I had intended. I wish strongly to support the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) and amendment No. 3, which would substitute a different figure for the multiplier used for the calculation of the rate support grant for Birmingham for this year.

During our discussion in Committee, it was established that from the time of the first announcement of the principles of this year's rate support grant a year ago, throughout the summer and the autumn environment Ministers discussed the basis of the RSG for this year with reference to last year's actual rate support grant. All local authorities thought that this year's RSGs would be based on the actual grants payable last year. That was the position throughout all the meetings and consultations with representatives of local authorities until the Secretary of State's announcement in December 1985.

What happened between the end of the consultations and that announcement, as became clear in Committee, was that some London authorities had made representations to the Secretary of State, who then changed his mind and based this year's RSGs not on the actual grants payable in 1985-86, but on what were called deemed grants — notional grants, artificial and contrived figures, dreamed up by the Secretary of State. I think that the word "dreamed" could be used instead of "deemed". That announcement came as a bolt from the blue to all local authorities.

For Birmingham, the difference between using the actual grant payable in 1985-86 and the deemed grant was £7·2 million. There is a tremendous feeling in the city of Birmingham about what has been called the robbery of £7·2 million. After protests to the Secretary of State, the city council decided to go to court. It is now well known that it won its case. A few days previously, the Secretary of State backed down and the Minister came to the House and told us that a Bill was being introduced. When the case came to court, the Government conceded the strength of Birmingham's case, and as a result an order was made in favour of Birmingham and the Department was ordered to pay the city's costs. The Secretary of State's representative in court admitted that the Secretary of State had acted illegally.

This Bill makes legal something that a court of law judged to be illegal. That is objectionable in any circumstances, but especially when it costs an individual or a group of people a large sum of money. The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) may shake his head, but it was admitted in Committee—he was not there—that the effect of the Bill would be to make legal something that had been judged illegal and which the barrister representing the Secretary of State conceded was illegal. I am not questioning the good faith of Ministers; I accept what was said in Committee about their having taken a decision in good faith, being advised that they were wrong, conceding that and paying the city of Birmingham's costs. But this Bill takes away the fruits of that action; it means that Birmingham will not get £7·2 million.

We moved several amendments in Committee that would have given Birmingham the money that we regard as rightfully belonging to the city council. Amendment No. 3 would provide a means of giving Birmingham its £7·2 million, but in a different way. We tried to move amendments in Committee to persuade the Government to respect decisions made in a court of law on proceedings that had begun before the Bill was introduced into the House. That was not acceptable to the Government. We introduced other amendments that would have given the money to the city of Birmingham, but they were not acceptable either. I am not sure whether these amendments will be acceptable to the Government, but I suspect not. Amendment No. 3 would substitute for the existing multiplier used in the calculation of RSG for Birmingham —1·196046—a multiplier of 1·164156. The result would be straightforward—to give Birmingham its £7·2 million in RSG.

My hon. Friends and I came to the House this afternoon in a mood that relected the anger of the people of Birmingham, especially the city councillors, and prepared to discuss at length, through the night and the morning if necessary, the effects of the removal of £7·2 million from the city and to describe just what that means for our constituents——

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): And in detail.

Mr. Davis: Yes, in detail.

We have, however, received a letter from the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government telling us that ministerial note will be taken of the representations that we have made both in Committee and privately and that Ministers will give careful consideration to Birmingham's case for additional resources from the Department of the Environment's programmes during the current financial year. Leaking roofs are mended not by

careful consideration, but by money. We do not not deal with the problem of Smith houses in Birmingham by considering it carefully. That problem, too, will be dealt with by money. There are many other examples where money is needed.

In the circumstances, I think that it would be unreasonable to press the Government further tonight. We expect the Minister to come forward with fresh money for Birmingham, and we shall accept that if it happens at short notice. My hon. Friends and I are prepared to accept the assurances that we have been given by the Minister on the basis on and the spirit in which he has given them. We expect, however, that his fine words will be matched by money. We shall not seek to delay unreasonably the passage of the Bill through Parliament tonight, but we expect the hon. Gentleman to respond by coming up with money in due course.

We are taking the Minister's word and putting ourselves in his hands. I have no question about his good faith, but we are suspicious, especially after what was said last year about the way in which rate support grant would be calculated for this year, when a change in the method of calculation cost Birmingham £7·2 million. There was naturally some suspicion among my Birmingham colleagues. As I have said, we are prepared to accept the assurances that we have received from the Minister this evening and we look forward to seeing fresh resources being made available to enable Birmingham city council to deal with the many problems that we have described briefly tonight and in detail in the past. I hope that it will not necessary to describe them in detail in future.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I am happy to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis). Satisfactory assurances may have been given to him and his hon. Friends, but they have not so far percolated through to the Government side of the Chamber. Nottingham Members — I include the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), who is in his place —have not received the same assurances as those which have been given to Opposition Members who represent parts of Birmingham. Consequently, I feel obliged to pursue the issue, and I shall do so as briefly as possible.

Does the Bill, as drafted, have an effect on legal cases which have already been commenced? The hon. Member for Bassetlaw asked the same question in a different way and he will have reached his conclusion on the reply which he was given. I am looking to a reply from my hon. Friend the Minister to the question as I have posed it.

I seek to draw the attention of the House to the position in which Nottinghamshire finds itself as a result of the Bill and I am looking for an assurance from my hon. Friend the Minister on the effect that it will have on our county. Many Nottinghamshire Members are present, including the hon. Member for Bassetlaw.

Long before the Bill was published, Nottinghamshire county council commenced proceedings against my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The council claimed that the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87 was incorrectly established and calculated. Whether that is correct is not for me to say and not for the House to say. However, if a judge decides that the council is correct, Nottinghamshire ratepayers will be entitled to receive back from the Government about £18 million. I understand that the case is down for hearing before the Divisional court on 17 October. What is not clear from the Bill—nor was it clear from the Delphic reply of my hon. Friend the Minister to the hon. Member for Bassetlaw—is whether the council, by virtue of the Bill, is to be deprived of having its case determined by the courts. That is the long and the short of it. Has the Bill deprived my county council of its remedy through the courts? In my view, disputes should be settled in the courts—not by a side wind in a Bill dealing with another county council. I shall be glad to hear from my hon. Friend that my fears are ill-founded.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman's fears are not ill-founded. His fears are well-founded, because the Parliamentary Under-Secretary made it crystal clear at the end of her speech on new clause 1 that Nottingham could go to court, but it would have no remedy.

10.30 pm

Mr. Alexander: That is why I am pursuing the matter. My hon. Friend did not say in so many words that it would be unwise to go to court. She said that it could go to court. I do not claim that her reply was satisfactory. I think that Labour Members would be unwise to press me too far, because basically I am with them on that. I am trying to edge my hon. Friend into a more positive reply.

I appreciate that the Secretary of State must have some finality with a final date fixed for the calculation of the multiplier. Clarity and certainty are virtues in almost all fields. Delay might cause my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to alter the multiplier for other authorities in the same group, if the rules of the game had to be changed.

Nottinghamshire was entitled, as a matter of law, to use the law to challenge the proposed contribution it had to make to the further education pool as a result of the decision in the case involving the Inner London education authority. There is nothing else the county council could have done after that case than to go to law, if it believed that it was wrongly charged to that pool.

A successful appeal will reduce its budget and penalties. It is not fair if, as a result of the Bill, the council will not be allowed to proceed with its case — not because of anything that the county has done or any specific matter dealt with in the Bill, but because of something that occurred in a side wind as part of the Bill. That was not the reason for the Bill. I ask my hon. Friend to say that the Bill will not affect any remedy that a judge may decide the county council has.

I ask my hon. Friend for a specific assurance that my county council will not be deprived of its legal remedies by any side wind in the Bill. The Bill deals with something else. I ask my hon. Friend to assure me that there is nothing in the Bill to prevent my county council proceeding and, if found correct, proceeding to a satisfactory conclusion in the courts.

Mr. Ashton: I am happy to follow the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander), but I think that he is rather optimistic. Asking the Government to change retrospective legislation is like asking for a reversal of the World Cup decision when Maradona knocked in the ball with his hand. The hon. Lady is on record as saying that, while the court case can be heard, whatever the outcome, there will be no recompense for Nottinghamshire.

In March this year, the county council commenced legal proceedings, because it felt that the case should be determined in the courts. It is now pressing for an

[Mr. Ashton]

exclusion clause to be inserted in the Bill which would protect the court proceedings. The Minister refuses to insert any sort of amendment or clause, or anything from the Labour party which says that the Minister is not above the court.

Before the legislation was introduced, Nottinghamshire had obtained leave from Mr. Justice Mann for a judicial review of decisions made by the Secretary of State. Clause 1 of the Bill, which has been approved, will retrospectively legitimise all the decisions of the Secretary of State under section 59 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act. As a result, Nottinghamshire county council will be denied an effective hearing in the courts, irrespective of the merits of the case. That is a form of dictatorship. We have often heard Governments allege that trade unions alter and backdate their rules, but the Government are doing exactly the same. It is wrong that the Bill, which, as the hon. Member for Newark said, was designed to alleviate Birmingham city council's problem, should now deny Nottinghamshire county council £18 million.

In February last year, Nottinghamshire county council fixed its budget for 1985-86 at £378 million. That was £8 million over target and the Government imposed a penalty of £18 million. The council knew that the penalty would be reduced if it cut spending. The budget included £16 million toward the cost of advanced further education. In June last year, ILEA successfully challenged in the High Court the basis on which the Secretary of State for Education and Science calculated contributions to the further education pool. By October, it was clear to the county council that its contributions would be reduced by about £1·6 billion only if it acted in the same way as ILEA. It therefore wrote to the Secretary of State saying that it proposed to cut its budget by the same amount, which would reduce the penalty.

In June, the council had revised its system of repaying loans for capital expenditure to spread it more evenly over the life of the loan. That brought Nottinghamshire into line with the majority of councils. It decided to charge to capital the salary costs of engineers working on new roads rather than pay them annually out of the rates. When those revisions were taken into account by the Department of the Environment, penalties would be reduced by £12 million.

During 1985, Nottinghamshire and Bradford sued the Secretary of State and were successful in the Court of Appeal but on 12 December 1985 lost in the House of Lords. I do not want to detain the House at this late stage with too many details, but the fact is that letters were sent and the Department of the Environment knew that Nottinghamshire county council was going to take that action. But still the council was ignored by the Department of the Environment. Because the council believed that the budget changes it proposed were legal and should be accepted, it wrote in October to the Department of the Environment, but the Department — probably deliberately — did not reply until 9 December. That letter, which was received on 11 December, stated two things. First, it said that the Secretary of State would not accept at that stage the advanced further education amendment because it was a windfall gain. The Secretary of State would have known that, if he accepted the amendment, it would increase the council's grant by £5 million. Secondly, to the council's surprise, the letter said that if there were any other budget changes, the Secretary of State would take them into account, provided they were received in time. An under-secretary confirmed by telephone that any other changes would be acceptable but he gave no indication that it was already too late because the rate support grant report was with the printers and had been signed that very day. The following morning, 12 December, at 10 am the council telexed all the budget revisions and the Department of the Environment acknowledged receipt at 11 am.

Nottinghamshire county council's case was based on the fact that it had altered its budget in time. The Secretary of State refused to accept that, although he is obliged by virtue of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 to use the best information available when making supplementary reports. Nottinghamshire's case is that he failed to use the information given to him about its budget and that he was told in time.

This dispute can obviously be settled only by the courts. The House cannot settle it. Legal evidence must be produced as to whether the county council was within the time scale and was doing exactly the same as ILEA — action of which the court had approved. It is common justice that the council's case should still be heard in the courts. The case is down for hearing in the middle of October. But the Under-Secretary of State says that it does not matter a damn what the court decides in October. The court can provide the remedy and say that Nottinghamshire county council was in order in everything that it did, but the Bill rules that out and any saving or amendment to the council's budget does not matter.

This is a constitutional issue. It is not about cash any more. It is about law and order. The party of law and order is quick to amend the law when it looks as though it might cost it some cash or as though it does not fall within the range of what it sees as being in order.

This is a panic Bill, although not too much of a panic because the Government know its effects. They know that the Minister has been acting illegally for about five or six years and has now been found out.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): They confessed.

Mr. Ashton: Exactly. The only way of covering their tracks and of saving a great deal of money at the same time is by amending the rules. They have changed the rules and moved the goal posts in the middle of the game. They are a Government of cheats if they do not allow the court to decide whether the Nottinghamshire application was made in the right place, at the right time and in a bona fide manner. Nottingham's ratepayers should not be denied £18 million because of something that has happened in Birmingham under totally different circumstances.

I hope that the Minister will give an assurance that if the courts find that Nottinghamshire county council has a justifiable case and should have received that £18 million, it will be given next year. Better still, the council should be notified of that fact very quickly so that it does not have to go to court.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I support both hon. Members who have just spoken, although not the florid language of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and his suggestion that my right hon. Friend was cheating. One principal point overrides all others. The

Nottinghamshire county council went to court, as did the Secretary of State. The court found against the Secretary of State's evidence that it could hear the action. That is the most important point. The Secretary of State gave evidence that this Bill would render the action unnecessary, but the court found that it should hear the case. In those circumstances, it is repugnant that the Bill should take away the remedy of that action.

I know that other hon. Members representing Nottinghamshire do not intend to speak, because of the time available, but I am sure they would agree that retrospective legislation in that form is totally unacceptable. It will create a precedent. If Opposition Members ever tried to do the same thing, Conservatives would be deeply offended. I would be equally offended if my right hon. Friend tried to do same thing.

Mr. Rooker: Like my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), I shall be much briefer than I had intended. The phrase that the Minister used in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) is almost on a par with the reply of the Home Secretary during the Second Reading of the Shops Bill. He was asked whether there would be a guillotine, and, almost without thinking, he said that there would not. That had major repercussions.

I do not know whether the hon. Lady read her answer on advice from the civil servants' Box or whether she thought about what she was saying. But her answer clearly applied specifically to the Nottinghamshire case, of which I know nothing, although I have learnt a lot in the last few minutes.

Nottinghamshire county council is bound to get advice from the comptroller saying, "You cannot go to court now because the Minister has already said in Parliament that no judge can give you a remedy. Therefore, the costs of going to court would be a misuse of public funds." Nottinghamshire is therefore placed in an impossible position.

Unlike Birmingham, hon. Members from Nottinghamshire on both sides of the House are prepared to get up off their backsides and speak up for their authority. That has not happened in respect of Birmingham, which has not been an all-party exercise. I also freely admit that I was out of the country during Second Reading, hence my absence from the Division lists on that night. But this affair has not been handled in the spirit in which things have operated in the past. Previously, when our local authority has been badly treated by central Government, we have operated in a more constructive manner than on this occasion. The lessons of Nottinghamshire can be taken on board in Birmingham.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern to have all-party support in Birmingham for the action on the repayment of the £7·2 million. Conservative Members have given many reasons why it is difficult for the Government to accept that, but it is equally difficult for many Conservative Members, especially those who represent Birmingham constituencies, to go along with the hon. Gentleman's view that the Government have stolen £7·2 million from Birmingham ratepayers when we have just heard that the local authority has taken £31 million more from the ratepayers than it needed.

10.45 pm

Mr. Rooker: I welcome that intervention, because it means I can deal with two points which I would not otherwise have raised. The hon. Gentleman did not know that when he refused to support the repayment of the £7 million.

Whether the sum should be £7 million may or may not be justified in the Government's mind. Therefore, I welcome the Minister's letter and take it on trust, as, indeed, we all do. I shall spell out what I expect of the Minister, following that letter. I do not know what representations Conservative Members for Birmingham have made. They do not seem to want any of the £7 million returned because they find it too difficult to organise. I do not know whether they have asked for the money in another form, because there are other ways of assisting Birmingham quite legitimately and separately from other local authorities. There need not be a knock-on effect. We are making a special case for Birmingham, and we shall show, by highlighting certain factors, that there is a special case to be made.

Members of Parliament do not often have the opportunity to set priorities for local authority budgets. It is not our function. Most constituents think that we are in charge of local government budget priorities, but we must frequently disabuse them of that. Given the Minister's letter and given that there is some concession coming, it behoves us to say what our priorities are. The Minister knows that, despite what has happened recently, Birmingham is still by and large a low spending and low rate authority compared with many other large cities. Housing policy is not given sufficient priority in Birmingham compared with other projects. Tonight I have an opportunity on behalf of my constituents to try to influence the priorities on spending in Birmingham. I have no control over that and I do not wish to have any, because it is a matter for my colleagues on the city council. But tonight there is a chance of influencing how the Minister repays some or all of the money to Birmingham. Clearly, he will not accept the amendment.

The Minister should listen to what is said in the House as well as what is said in the City. No one would deny that the first priority of the chief executive of the city council is to get that £9 million urban development grant, but whether it should be used for a five-star hotel is another matter. I would argue that there are other priorities. The Minister has turned the application down. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short, will undoubtedly make the point with more force than I can because it affects her constituency. A five-star hotel would not be my priority and it should not be the city's priority either.

Even in housing there are arguments about where the money should be spent. My view is that it should be targeted. The Minister's letter refers to programmes during the current financial year. Therefore, we are referring to something that has not been budgeted for. If the Government were to say, "We have decided to provide compensation amounting to £X million to overcome these difficulties, but we cannot do it by means of the multiplier; we will do it in another way, and here is the money," that would not be satisfactory. I want the money to be targeted on housing.

Money should be allocated specifically to compensate for the cuts caused by the lack of home improvement

[Mr. Rooker]

grants. Money should also be allocated to remedy housing defects. To its credit, Birmingham, as the largest public housing landlord, has taken the lead among English local authorities in surveying defective housing and estimating the costs of repair. It has discovered that the Smith, Parkinson and Boot houses cannot be repaired within the financial limits set by the Government. In some cases the repairs would cost far more than the market value of the houses. Therefore, Birmingham has said that it will repurchase the houses, with a view to future demolition.

The Minister ought to consider providing additional financial assistance for Birmingham under the Housing Defects Act 1984. A sum of £4 million would not be amiss. We are already a quarter of the way through this financial year. We could cope with additional expenditure of that order before 31 March 1987. It would not solve all the problems. The expenditure would be much higher than that. However, it would release other money for repairs and improvements.

To channel the money to housing defects would solve two problems. First, people are living in homes that are an albatross round their necks. They bought their homes in good faith, but they are now unable to sell them. Buyers cannot obtain a mortgage and the houses cannot be repaired within the financial limits. Secondly, money would be released for repairs to the council's housing stock.

Ministers are not unaware of these suggestions. On 19 May the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction received an all-party delegation from the council. However, the delegation contained only Labour Members of Parliament because the Tory Members refused to attend the meeting. The Minister received a presentation of Birmingham's difficulties in operating the Housing Defects Act. We have not yet received the Minister's reply to that presentation. We were told that he would reply first to me and to my hon. Friends.

Birmingham faces special problems over the working of the Housing Defects Act. We know that £7 million more has been taken than should have been taken. In addition, there has been the catastrophic loss of rate support grant during the last few years. A case can be made for special additional funding under the Housing Defects Act in the current financial year. It would meet the commitment that is contained in the Minister's letter.

The Minister has also been pressed to disregard the special expenditure that is incurred by Birmingham's bid to host the 1992 Olympic games. There is no disagreement between the parties in Birmingham over that. Business has been a little slow to appreciate the seriousness of Birmingham's claim. Birmingham has committed an enormous amount of money to this bid. If the bid is successful,, it will do a great deal of good not just to Birminhgam but to the nation as a whole.

Additional expenditure has also been incurred because of the Handsworth riots on 9 and 10 September. The operation of the Riot (Damages) Act is a thundering disgrace, and it should not form any part of modern public administration. We need to look at this quickly, although that will not help my constituents, or those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) or of my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood, whose constituencies are also affected. A special disregard should be made for Birmingham because of its unique problems.

The Minister can find other ways to help. If he cannot find the full £7 million, I am prepared to take half a loaf. I can see from his letter that half a loaf is available. Unfortunately, this has not been done on an all-party basis.

I must respond to the point made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). It is a matter of some concern to any hon. Member if his constituents have been either over-rated or over-taxed. Birmingham has a revenue expenditure of about £900 million, give or take a few million, and deals with enormous sums of capital flow. The headlines last week were that we were £31 million overcharged on the rates, which is ludicrous, when there was a 43 per cent. rates increase last year. As I understand it, the £31 million was £23 million if one takes account of the £8 million deficit brought forward from 1984-85, which was the deficit that the Tory Councillor Bosworth left when he was thrown out of office.

There was a projected balance of £21 million when the budget was announced. The chamber of commerce was told about this in all the documents — there was no secret about this. There have been some technical changes in the way in which the Government have made their calculations. When one takes into account the balances that were robbed by the Tories so that they could cut the rates — a move for which they lost office — leaving a deficit that we had to make good, and the cuts in the rate support grant of £11 million over 1985-86, that leaves us with about £15 million. We are told that that is not an awful lot for a city that is spending £900 million. I do not see why there should be any balances anyway. The cash flows each week in Birmingham are enormous. The final figure is nowhere near the £31 million first quoted by the hon. Member for Northfield and he can get the information as easily as I and my hon. Friends.

I accept the Minister's word that something will happen. I have given my view as to where the money should be targeted, and why. I am not in favour of the money simply being made available after the budget has been met. because there are factors and projects on which nmoney will be spent of which I do not approve. They do not figure in my priorities and they would not assist my constituents. I am here to represent my constituents, not the organisations of local authorities.

Ms. Clare Short: I, too, will be brief—much briefer than I had intended to be if we had not received this generous letter from the Minister. I am sure that we are all extremely grateful and expect great things as he fulfils his undertaking to find some extra money for Birmingham to make up for taking away £7·2 million — an undertaking given because the Government took legal advice that showed that Birmingham would win in the courts.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), I wish to put on record my priorities for how the money should be spent. The Minister is right, if Saturday's *Birmingham Post* is correct, in rebuffing the request for a £9 million urban development grant for a luxury hotel to be built right next to one of the most appalling estates in my constituency, where people are living in tower blocks and maisonettes, with water and black mould affecting the health and the lungs of their

children, according to consultants at the Birmingham's children's hospital, which is in the same area. It is a declining and dreadful estate, with no community facilities or proper cleaning. The lifts are used in those revolting ways that we have heard about in high-rise tower blocks that are in decline. I appeal to the Minister to make some money available for refurbishing that estate, and to confirm that the money will not be used to build a luxury hotel across the road.

11 pm

The Minister will be aware that the Paymaster General made great play of a commitment to ensure that urban renewal work and so on would employ local people in the area of the Handsworth riots, which affected Ladywood, and the constituencies of my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr and of my right hon. Friend the Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell). That was an important undertaking, because in the past, as we all know, much of the money spent in Handsworth has not employed local people, yet our rate of youth unemployment is horrendously high. More than 90 per cent. of very young black people are unemployed, and they provide the majority of those seeking work in the area. Despite that undertaking from the Paymaster General there is no money for urban renewal, and so there will only be a few jobs. It is a good policy, but it is too late. The money has been spent, and no new money is flowing through. Consequently, there will not be many jobs for local young people.

Another priority is urban renewal for the remaining parts of my constituency. A number of privately owned houses are in a dreadful state of disrepair. Many people are unemployed and can no longer afford to maintain their houses. Thousands of unemployed young people would give their right arm to obtain a job, to earn some money and to build up their local community. When the Minister decides how the money is to be spent, I hope that it will be spent not on subsidising luxury hotels to be erected by enormously wealthy international companies, but on improving the sad and declining estate in my area, on the urban renewal needs of Birmingham, and on helping young black people in Handsworth to find employment in their community.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): In every sense of the phrase, this is a squalid Bill at the end of a wholly squalid affair. The city of Birmingham council went to court because it had a grievance. It was not simply a matter of the council arguing its case before the court, because the Government's representatives confessed in court that the Secretary of State had acted illegally. That guilt was confirmed by the court—it had little choice—and costs were awarded to the city of Birmingham. Having confessed to that illegality, the Government then obtained the support of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) in this form of legalised robbery.

Earlier we debated the fight against crime. It is quite bizarre that the Government's proposals should almost amount to knighting and honouring every burglar, mugger and rapist among those who carry out the 3·6 million crimes a year. If they had the power that the Secretary of State has or the votes that are behind him, they would go to court and get their convictions altered.

In practice, this argument should not be allowed to concentrate on the mind-bending detail of multipliers, rate support grants, GREs and so on. We are arguing about whether the city of Birmingham should be allowed to spend the money that it said that it needed to spend prudently and sensibly, on behalf of a modern regional city that is trying to work its way out of a recession. The debate is not only narrowly about Birmingham. As the largest English authority that body went to court. We are talking about the effect, seven years on, of this Government's continuing war against the right of locally elected councils to decide sensibly and prudently on their priorities and spending. That is what it is all about. Whitehall does not know best. Heaven knows how many times that has been said in the House and it is still not listened to, understood or respected.

It is not as if the city of Birmingham is a big spender: I wish that it were. I take no pride in saying, and I know that some of my hon. Friends take no pride in it either, that in 1985-86 the city spent 6 per cent. below the Government spending targets. One of the problems in Birmingham is that it has consistently and persistently, under successive regimes, seen its role as that of a low spender. The penny is now beginning to drop and we hope that it will complete the fall under the Labour council and show that that great city will never solve its problems as long as it takes this too modest approach. I am not talking about being profligate. The Secretary of State visited Birmingham last September, on a visit of Handsworth, and he congratulated the city fathers on the way in which, in the previous two or three years they had spent money.

Like my hon. Friends I do not want any money that will flow from the Secretary of State's letter to go into some unspecified pot. I stress, along with my hon. Friends from the city, the paramount importance of finding more ways of getting money into housing. There is no bigger crisis in our city and the Government need no lectures on that. We do not waste money and I am not knocking the bid for the Olympic Games which Birmingham is carrying on Britain's behalf. All of us who run regular surgeries in the city know about the way in which the misery has built up in people who live in inadequate housing and who cannot get a transfer or repairs and have no real hope on the waiting list.

I remind Ministers, in case he think we are messing about on this subject, that the last comprehensive return entitled "Repair and Improvement of the Local Authority Housing Stock", RILAHS for short, was sent to the Department of the Environment at the Department's request. That return identified the need to spend in excess of—wait for it:

"£715 million on repairing and improving the Council's existing stock."

That is not on one new build because there is not one new family house of flat or purpose-built property for the disabled included in that amount. That £715 million is to repair the wreckage that we have in housing at the moment. The statement was reported to the council meeting on 1 July from the housing committee and said:

"an additional 635 new rented dwellings need to be provided by the City and a similar number by housing associations each year for the next five years."

That is a total of 1,270 houses per year. I do not know how the hon. Member for Northfield can vote for this robbery when we have such housing needs, some of them in his own constituency. I do not understand how he can do that.

Mr. Roger King *rose*——

Mr. Corbett: I know that his constituents will not understand it either. I gladly give way.

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman has just given us ample evidence, if any were needed, of how disastrous it is for any city to get into such a situation with its council housing. In many ways it is a condemnation of the principle council housing, because there are plenty of alternative ways in which we could have developed housing within the city. He seems desperately concerned about this £7 million, but what about the £22 million left over from last year or the £15 million? That is over expenditure that was not budgeted for: it is excess profit for the council.

Mr. Corbett: The hon. Gentleman just does not understand. He continues to troop through the Lobby to vote for a Government who say, on the back of the right-to-buy policy, that local authorities cannot even spend the bulk of the money that they raise from that process on replacing, repairing, modernising or improving housing in the city. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. He must live with that for which he voted. He voted for this £7·2 million robbery, just as he voted to put the lid on councils spending the revenue which they obtain from selling their houses. He cannot have it both ways; the voters will see through him.

I must make a narrow constituency point. On the Lyndhurst estate in my constituency, about £1·5 million is being spent on six tower blocks because they are falling down. Exterior work must be carried out on safety grounds. In an ideal world, those tenants would be invited to move out while the work is being carried out, because it is noisy, it is a nuisance and it causes disturbance, dust and dirt. Many of the tenants have lived in those blocks since they were built; they are elderly and have mobility problems. Since the hon. Member for Northfield voted for the robbery by the Government of funds that Birmingham would have otherwise spent on housing, tenants in three of the blocks on which work has started are fenced in by plastic. There is scaffolding all over the blocks, and jack hammers and sledgehammers are banging all over the walls. Even those with the most severe medical problems will be lucky to be moved out while the work is carried on. The hon. Member for Northfield cannot justify stealing £7·2 million that could have been used to give those tenants some sanity and peace while the necessary work was done.

The Minister believes that Birmingham has run out of work. Let me tell him about 1,500 Boswell houses in my constituency. They were built in the 1920s, are shale-filled and have major suspected structural problems. We are not inventing those problems. Four hundred of those homes —I do not complain about this—have been bought by their former council tenants. They have spent much money putting in bay windows, changing the front doors and all the other things that people do when they buy. I do not knock them at all. There is a major problem there. Money must be spent to put that problem right.

If Ministers cannot yet understand why we from the city of Birmingham feel so strongly about this robbery, will they at least think about what happens to real people in real streets in all our constituencies, including Northfield? This is the reality of what spending is about. That is why we object so strongly to this legalised robbery and—I say this to the Minister flatly—that is why we attach supreme importance to the word that he used in the letter that he wrote today to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis).

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government (Mr. William Waldegrave): One problem, but also a pleasure, of being the Minister responsible for local government is that, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said, the complicated multipliers and formulae deal with real places and real people. Therefore, it is logically possible to extend such debates, which deal with all the authorities in the country, almost endlessly. I am grateful for the fact that the hon. Members who represent Birmingham and Nottinghamshire put succintly their strong cases on the way in which the legislation, as they see it, affects their local authorities.

11.15 pm

The amendments go to the heart of the Bill. The justification, approval for which we asked on Second Reading and which we received from the House, was that we needed to validate retrospectively the way in which the law had been thought to have worked to give us and local authorities the certainty that the law meant what we had thought.

I well understand that there will be losers among local authorities, just as there will be gainers, unless we as a Government relax the cash limits on local authority spending. It is legitimate for Opposition Members with a different view of economic policy to urge that, but as a Minister it is also legitimate for me to ask my hon. Friends to reject that.

There would have been no way to validate the law as we thought it to be for the losers and to put money in without abandoning our policy. That is why I must ask my hon. Friends, even though some represent authorities which in some respects are losers and would have gained from the immediate change that resulted from the court case brought by Birmingham, to reject the amendment.

The same is true of the Nottinghamshire case. There is no magic about the Nottinghamshire case either. The Department has written to Nottinghamshire saying that we shall, on the same grounds as the Birmingham case, concede their case. It is entirely up to Nottinghamshire whether it continues with the court case. I understand that it is uncomfortable for hon. Members, but we have had to say that the basis of the law must be returned to what we all thought it was.

I well understand that the legal challenges do not come from the fact that Nottinghamshire or Birmingham suddenly have, for general prima facie reasons, a sudden interest in the law. It is because they want to spend more money and have more money from the Government.

Mr. Ashton: The Minister has made a concrete cash offer to Birmingham, or at least has said that he will look at things favourably. Is he now saying that he will do the same for Nottinghamshire and that it will receive some financial benefit if he has the chance to look at the matter?

Mr. Waldegrave: There have been a number of debates. There has been a debate about the principles of validating what we thought the law meant, and I have no shame at all in coming to the House and saying—my right hon. Friend the Member for Wansted and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) put it well on Second Reading — that Governments have a perfect right to secure that the law means what everyone thought it meant and for which they have all worked. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) and others need have no doubt that that is a legitimate thing for Governments to do.

There has been another debate during the course of the Bill, which may be accidental in the sense that Birmingham brought the case, but it has fluently and persuasively focussed on some of the Birmingham problems. Hon. Members who represent Birmingham have justifiably used the Bill to press a number of cases on behalf of Birmingham, which they have also made outside the context of the Bill. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) or the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) was generous enough to make concession over Conservative councillors. Indeed, I have found that in dealings with Councillor Knowles and his predecessor, Councillor Bosworth, that they come from a city, as mine used to be, where the local people put the city first and work together, which must be a strength for Birmingham.

During debates on the Bill several issues have been brought to my attention and some have been mentioned tonight. They show, as is bound to be the case, that there are different priorities, even among Labour groups in Birmingham. The Hyatt hotel does not seem to be popular among those hon. Members who have spoken tonight, although the hon. Member for Perry Barr, who is a sensible man, will, I am sure, say that if private money comes forward he will have no objection to that.

A number of other points have been made. The issue does not depend on the Bill, but on the way in which powerful representations from Birmingham have been hung upon it. Powerful delegations have talked to us. We are looking at the mechanisms available to us which might meet some of the problems. Of course it is open to my hon. Friends who represent Nottinghamshire constituencies to come to see me. However, I shall not be influenced by a case made on the Bill. They must make a case on merit, as other authorities do when they see us.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): Did my hon. Friend say in response to the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) that the answer was no?

Mr. Waldegrave: I said that I could not possibly say to Nottinghamshire or to Birmingham that because they happened to be losers under the Bill, and because the multipliers mean what we all believe them to mean, they have any right to additional resources. A case has been made which we shall attempt to meet. The sum of £700 million was mentioned. I do not think that we are talking about such a sum, but we shall see whether resources can be found to meet some of the purposes put to us.

Mr. Alexander: In view of what my hon. Friend has just said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Ottaway) what does he mean when he says that the Government will concede the case? Will Nottinghamshire get the money, or not?

Mr. Waldegrave: The situation is exactly the same as that for Birmingham and for the other authorities which produced late information. There is a strong case for saying that it must be for the Secretary of State to set a date beyond which information cannot be handled. Other authorities also produced late budgets. A telexed budget was handed to the Secretary of State as he entered the Chamber. That is an impossible way to proceed. We have the right to set a cut-off date for information. That is fair.

We are talking about a central part of a Bill which validates procedures which we all agreed were valid in the first instance. The county case, which we have conceded, is put right and validated in the Bill.

I have made points quite clearly to hon. Members representing Birmingham and councillors from both parties who have been to see us. I have to disappoint my hon. Friends who represent Nottinghamshire constituencies by saying that they and other councils will lose under the Bill. They cannot seek money from the Government, but if they want to make a case on merit, we shall be delighted to see them.

Mr. Boyes: I have listened with care to comments by my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). They put the case with passion for the people who live in Birmingham. We talk about councils and large sums, but at the end of the day we care about the citizen.

Even taking into consideration comments by my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) about the Nottinghamshire county council case, I do not intend to press amendment No. 3 to a Division, but after listening to the Minister and his disappointing reply to many important issues, I shall ask my hon. Friends to divide the House on amendment No. 1.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 171, Noes 230.

Division No. 272] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John

Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Ron Davies.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 2

ADJUSTMENT OF BLOCK GRANT TO LIMIT EFFECTS OF CHANGES 1982 C. 32.

Mr. Straw: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 1, line 16, leave out from first 'section' to end of line 17.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendment: No. 9, in page 2, line 7, leave out from 'desirable' to end of line 14 and insert—

'( ) The Secretary of State shall not exercise the power for the purpose mentioned in subsection (2) above so as to decrease the amount of block grant payable to a local authority unless he is satisfied that it is necessary to do so in order to prevent—

(a) the difference in question having an unreasonable effect on the way in which block grant for that year is distributed; and

(b) an unreasonable increase in the amount of block grant payable to that authority for that year compared to the amount payable to them for the previous year;'.

No. 10, in page 2, line 7, leave out from 'desirable' to end of line 14.

No. 11, in page 2, line 18, at end insert

'subject to section 8(3)*(a)* of the Local Government Finance Act 1982'.

No. 15, in schedule 1, page 4, line 5, leave out

'paragraph *(a)* shall be omitted'

and insert

'for the words "in paragraph *(a)* of subsection (6) of that section"

there shall be substituted the words

'subsection (2) of section 2 of the Rate Support Grant Act 1986"'.

Mr. Straw: Amendment No. 9, the operative amendment, seeks to change the criteria under which block grants might be capped. Section 8(3)*(a)* of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 deals with caps. The section provides that powers conferred by section 59 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 shall not be exercised for the purpose specified in subsection (6)*(a)* of the 1980 Act

"so as to decrease the amount of block grant payable to a local authority unless the Secretary of State is satisfied that there will be an unreasonable increase, unless he exercises the power, in the amount of block grant payable to that authority for a year compared with the amount payable to them for the previous year".

The Bill seeks to change the test for caps from the effect on individual authorities that have received, on the face of it, a large amount of additional block grant, to the effect on other authorities. Clause 2(3) of the Bill provides that the Secretary of State

"shall not exercise the power for that purpose so as to decrease the amount of block grant payable to a local authority for any year unless he is satisfied that it is necessary to do so in order to prevent the difference in question having an unreasonable effect on the way in which block grant for that year is distributed or on the contribution made or to be made by ratepayers in that year to the expenditure of local authorities."

There is a major friction between the test under the present law and the test under the Bill.

The Committee sought an explanation from Ministers as to how the new power would operate. We asked whether it was possible, under the proposed powers, for an authority to have its block grant otherwise payable capped where it could be said that the amount that the authority was to receive was unreasonable, but where it could not be said that the amount was unreasonable for all other authorities, or that it would have an unreasonable effect on all other authorities. I was confused by the answers. When we considered the matter on 10 July, the Minister sought to explain it. However, the hon. Lady left me even more confused. She said:

"Last year"—

I assume that that is an error in the record, because she meant 1982—

"section 8(3) *(a)* of the Local Government Act 1985 provided the Secretary of State with powers to cut"—

it should say "cap"—

"gain where there was an unreasonable effect on one authority alone, but that power was not used last year, or even interpreted that way, and the action we took in relation to Birmingham concerns the power we now propose in clause 2(2)—the ability to tap"—

it should be "cap"—

"The authority's gain because of the unreasonable effect on the settlement to all other local authorities and all ratepayers."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 10 July 1986; c. 120.]

I invite the Under-Secretary of State to explain what she meant. She seemed to suggest that the power under section 8(3) *(a)* was not used last year in relation to the matters about which Birmingham complained. If that section is not in contention, why have we wasted so much of our time in the past few months seeking to amend it? My understanding was that section 8(3) *(a)* was a pertinent part of Birmingham's objection to the way in which Ministers made decisions.

Is the Under-Secretary of State saying that capping could not be introduced where the only objection to the amount of grant received by an authority was that it could be regarded as an unreasonable imposition on that authority but could not be regarded as such an imposition on every other authority?

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall try to clarify the matter that we discussed in Committee. As the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said, the amendments deal with a restriction on the power of the Secretary of State to cap grant gains by applying multipliers which reduce the grant. The existing provision requires the Secretary of State to satisfy himself that there would be an unreasonable increase in an authority's grant for one year compared with the previous year if he did not apply a cap. The amendments suffer from the same flaw with respect to the general powers of multipliers as was disclosed in the Birmingham case. This requires the Secretary of State to look at the overall change in grant. The amendments would simply incorporate the same flaw in the new legislation. I include amendment No. 9, which is a sort of hybrid between the existing provision and the one in the Bill.

In the Bill, as drafted, there is a new requirement that the Secretary of State should not apply caps

"unless he is satisfied that it is necessary to do so in order to prevent . . . an unreasonable effect on the way in which block grant for that year is distributed".

The use of caps is to prevent large gains by some

[Mrs. Rumbold]

authorities, reducing the pool available to all authorities. That is a seridus, sensible and proper constraint on the power of the Secretary of State to cap gains. I hope that the House will agree that that is the effect of the new power that the Secretary of State will be given under the Bill as opposed to the old power which will be subsumed by the new legislation.

Schedule 1

Amendments

Mr. Straw: I beg to move, amendment No. 16, in page 4, line 21, leave out paragraphs 8 and 9.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 17, in page 4, line 24, leave out from 'words' to end of line 25 and insert 'the reasons for making'.

No. 18, in page 4, line 24, leave out from 'words' to end of line 26 and insert

'the material consideration leading the Secretary of State to make any such determination'.

No. 19, in page 4, line 27, leave out from 'words' to end of line 29 and insert

'the material consideration leading to them'.

No. 20, in page 4, line 28, leave out from 'words' to end of line 29 and insert

'the reasons for making them'.

No. 21, in page 4, line 32, leave out from 'words' to second 'the' in line 33 and insert 'the reasons for making'.

No. 22, in page 4, line 32, leave out from 'words' to end of line 34 and insert

'the material considerations leading the Secretary of State to make the determination'.

No. 32, in page 5, line 47, at end insert—

'14.—(1) Section 56 of the said Act of 1980 shall be amended as follows:

(2) After subsection (10) there shall be inserted—

"(10A) If representations are made to the Secretary of State by any association of local authorities or by any local authority that the total expenditure of local authorities generally or of any particular local authority shall be adjusted by the addition or subtraction of expenditure of any description the Secretary of State shall consider those representations before determining whether or not to make a direction and shall give reasons for his decision."'.

Mr. Straw: Amendment No. 16 proposes that paragraphs 8 and 9 of schedule 1 should be left out. When, earlier today, I made a submission to Mr. Speaker about the possibility that a certificate might be made classifying this Bill as a money Bill, I drew particular attention to paragraphs 8, 9 and 13. I hoped to show Mr. Speaker that this Bill is about much more than the variation of charges out of moneys voted by Parliament.

11.45 pm

Paragraphs 8, 9 and 13 are not subordinate issues but go to the heart of the relationship between central and local government in relation to financial matters. They relate to the explanations that Secretaries of State are to be required to give for the decisions that they have made in relation to various determinations under the rate support grant legislation.

We discussed this aspect of the Bill at some length in Committee. The Minister's anxiety is that the existing words, which require him to spell out the considerations that lead the Secretary of State to make any such determination, are so wide that he might be tripped up in court when he had inadvertently failed to specify such considerations. I think the Minister accepted that no such attempts had so far been made to go to court under section 60(6)*(b)* of the 1980 Act. Therefore, this anticipated the possibility of a legal assault rather than dealing with one that had already taken place.

Our objection to paragraphs 8 and 9 is that they remove a clear duty under the 1980 Act and substitute a wholly subjective discretion. Instead of the Secretary of State giving the considerations that led him to make the determination, there is a discretion to provide such explanations as he

"thinks desirable of the main features of any such determination".

That could mean anything or nothing.

The Minister said that he and his hon. Friends were reasonable people, and we are told ad nauseum on account of Wednesbury that that goes without saying. He said that as reasonable people they would provide as much information as possible—indeed, that we would not be able to spot the join between the application of the present provisions and the new provisions.

Two points arise. First, if we are unable to spot the join between the old regime and the new one, why make the change at all? Secondly, while this Minister may be very reasonable, he may at some stage be elevated to an even higher position——

Mr. Terry Davis: A peerage.

Mr. Straw: That awaits him in any event, but as the roulette wheel has turned, half the Cabinet has been in office for less than a year. Therefore, it is short odds against, if not odds on, that the Minister may find himself in the Cabinet. However, he will not be there for ever, and who knows how another Secretary of State may interpret these words. Secretaries of State do not have to take account of explanations offered in this House, and they cannot be the subject of court actions. As we well know, only the words on the face of Acts can be tested in the courts, and paragraph 8 waters down an existing and important duty.

When we debated this in Committee, I sought to meet the Minister half way by accepting that the words "the considerations" might have been slightly infelicitously drafted. The Minister feared that everything would have to be put in the pot, including the reason why he had a go at Birmingham, which may have been because he had a bad breakfast. To meet the half genuine point of the Minister, I suggested that "consideration" should be qualified by "material" so that we would deal with the main considerations leading to the determination. The Minister said:

"I shall study closely what he has said, but that undertaking carries with it the lowest level of moral commitment to introducing an amendment." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 15 July 1986; c. 164.]

We may be denied the possibility of pursuing this, even in the other place, if the Bill is certified as a money Bill, which I hope it is not. I understand, but do not accept, the Minister's argument that the wording is too wide. Certainly, the new wording is too narrow and will give Ministers too substantial a discretion. I hope that the Minister will accept the amendment which incorporates

"material" as a qualification. That would meet the Government's concern that they should not have to specify every tiny consideration, but merely the main ones.

The courts are capable of applying common sense in this case. They are not expected to produce tomes the size of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, merely an adequate explanation of the reasons for Ministers' decisions. If local government is to be convinced that there is a systematic approach to the amounts of block grant they receive and that decisions are not based on caprice, it is crucial that it can satisfy itself how decisions are made. The Minister knows well—he is sensitive about this—that relations between central and local government have taken more than one knock over the past five years. He is anxious to restore them, but he will not do so if he seeks to deny local authorities adequate information about how decisions are made.

Amendment No. 32 seeks to amend section 56 of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980. It states:

"If representations are made to the Secretary of State by any association of local authorities or by any local authority that the total expenditure of local authorities generally or of any particular local authority shall be adjusted by the addition or subtraction of expenditure of any description the Secretary of State shall consider those representations before determining whether or not to make a direction and shall give reasons for his decision."

The amendment seeks to require the Secretary of State to consider requests from local authorities to amend the definition of total expenditure for block grant purposes and to give his reasons for granting or not granting such requests. In previous debates we considered the operation of targets and I moved new clause 1 to remove the power to establish targets under the 1982 legislation. Targets have now been abandoned for the time being and we do not lament their passing. But of the facilities that went with targets was the Secretary of State's opportunity to disregard certain items of expenditure when comparing an authority's expenditure with its target. That was an important safety valve of the target mechanism and enabled certain classes of expenditure which everyone accepted were essential not to suffer penalty.

Under the so-called pure block grant arrangements, a similar mechanism is not provided for disregards, but that would be all right provided that the penalty system was abandoned altogether. Although targets were abolished, the penalty system continues, with changes in the slope of the schedules, which means that authorities will still suffer considerable financial penalties if they spend over their grant-related expenditure assessment, plus tolerance. The abolition of the target mechanism and, with it the disregards, mean that a number of expenditures that would have been disregarded for target purposes and that would not have suffered penalty under that system will place some authorities in a more difficult position than would otherwise have been the case.

As examples of the cost to ratepayers of various disregards, in 1985-86 Lambeth paid £1·36 for every £1 of expenditure. In 1986-87, based upon provisional exemplifications of the settlement, with package A GREAs, the extra cost to Lambeth will be £2·17. In 1985-86, for every £1 of additional spending the cost to Birmingham was £1·09. In 1986-87 it will cost Birmingham £2·60. Most reprehensible of all is Lancashire. For every £1 of additional spending last year it was only having to pay 72p. This year it is having to find £1·24.

A paper was published by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, supported by the London Boroughs Association, the Association of Local Authorities and the Greater London Council, in an effort to seek a way out of this problem. It is important that the Minister should make observations upon that paper.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I support the amendments. The Minister will remember that in Committee it was strongly argued that the local authority associations would appreciate as much explanation as possible. We sought to find the best definition. The reply of the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold)—I was grateful to her for it—dealt with the precedent for the word "desirable". I accept entirely what she said about that being an appropriate word. The amendments do not preclude desirability as a factor, if that is thought to be appropriate. However, the amendments seek to provide for everybody who is interested in and affected by the rate support grant decisions of the Government the most material considerations—that is, the matters that relate to the basis of the Secretary of State's decision.

Perhaps the Minister will be able to say that what we are asking for is what the Government intend and that they will tell us a little more tomorrow. We are seeking to make clear the main criteria, so that when the annual reports on the rate support grant are published, there can be an assessment, year on year, of the change in the decision-making process and material parts of that, and in particular on the way in which the criteria that the Government have chosen to use are applied either local authority by local authority, or group of local authorities by group of local authorities.

12 midnight

As the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said, amendment No. 32 is something that the Minister could meet by way of an undertaking. The Government are being asked to undertake that certain representations made are considered, and that there is a specific duty and process whereby matters raised in the amendment, brought singly by local authorities or by groups of local authorities, about the total expenditure or single expenditure of a local authority, can, when they are added to or subtracted from, be the subject of specific consideration by the Government. These are procedural matters, but they would help confidence building between local authorities and central Government, and the understanding of the processes of central Government. They would follow in the tradition that the previous Secretary of State said it was the intention of the legislation to carry out, that is, to make the process more simple and comprehensible. I hope that we can achieve some acceptance by the Minister of what is intended by the amendments.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sorry to have to disappoint the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who has joined our debate. Perhaps he has dropped in to see whether the Opposition Front Bench is occupied. On one memorable occasion, he found it unoccupied and moved in, but I would not advise a takeover with the hon. Members for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) as bodyguards to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw).

[Mr. Waldegrave]

We went into the arguments about consideration in some detail in Committee. As the hon. Member for Blackburn was generous enough to say, if the law meant that every underlying consideration had to be published, that would produce a mountain of useless information, which would not help the local authorities or anybody else. A good way of hiding useful information is by surrounding it with useless information, and that is as good as not providing any information.

In Committee I told the hon. Member for Blackburn that we would look at other formulations that he provided, and we have done so. The hon. Gentleman suggested that "material considerations" should be specified, but I am advised that that would not help because it could be argued that every consideration underlying every GRE component is material. It would have done us no harm to have accepted a formulation that would have met the hon. Gentleman's point, but his suggestion would not work. Therefore, I have to ask him to accept that the declaration that we have made, with which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is associated, that it is not our intention to reduce the level of explanation given, should carry the burden of meeting the points that he and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey made.

On the fundamental and new point that the hon. Member for Blackburn made about trying to reintroduce the disregard system into the working of block grant, I have one of those dual-edged arguments. First, it is out of the question to do so, because that would plainly be turning the workings of the block grant into something different. Rather than allowing the redistributive system of the slope to do its work, it would reintroduce something much more like holdback and targets. On the other hand, we have, by law, to do a large part of what he wants. We have to consider any representation made about total expenditure and what should be included in it. Several representations have been and are being made, but it would take a very strong case to make us use the total expenditure definitions to reintroduce disregards in that way. It would take us back, to some extent, to the duality and complexity of having a target and holdback system.

Mr. Straw: Does the Minister accept that as long as the block grant mechanism is used for penal purposes and for purposes for which it was not intended — it was originally intended as a distribution system—there must be some safety valve to take account of expenditure that authorities have incurred, through no fault of their own, for national reasons or because of an act of God?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not accept that argument. The block grant system, schedule and slope are used in response to a good deal of pressure from my right hon. and hon. Friends in order to try to provide a marginal taxation rate that puts greater pressures on the high spenders than on the low spenders. Within that, we do not accept that it would be sensible to reintroduce the additional complexity of a zero marginal rate for certain categories of expenditure. However, we will have to listen to representations on the definition of total expenditure. In view of that, perhaps the amendment will not be pressed.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Boyes: I beg to move amendment No. 33, in page 5, line 47, at end insert—

'(14.—(1) Section 57 of the said Act of 1980 shall be amended as follows:

(2) After subsection (3) there shall be inserted—

'(4) A local authority's grant-related expenditure shall not be less than the level of expenditure (if any) determined or redetermined by the Secretary of State for the authority under section 3 of the Rates Act 1986.'.

The amendment requires the Secretary of State, in determining grant-related expenditure for those authorities subject to rate limitation, to set it at a level that is not less than the expenditure level determined under section 3 of the Rates Act 1984. Section 3 enables the Secretary of State to determine an expenditure level for those authorities subject to rate limitations. The 1984 Act is also the primary legislation under which the new joint authorities are subject to precept control for a period of three years from their establishment.

It is a constant source of discontent that rate-capped and precept-controlled authorities are subject to two separately assessed bench marks of expenditure: GREA, being the formula-derived standard level of service, and the expenditure level, which is a more realistic assessment of what the Secretary of State believes is a reasonably achievable level of expenditure. At the basis of the argument is the principle that the expenditure level represents a recognition by the Secretary of State that that is the level at which authorities need to spend if they are to maintain a reasonable level of service. If that level of expenditure is reasonable, the artificially contrived GREA should be set at least at the same level. I can illustrate some of the problems with reference to newly established metropolitan joint police authorities for 1986-87. I live in Northumbria, and there the GREA is £43·178 million and the expenditure level is £43·431 million. Thus the level of expenditure is higher than the GREA.

But the difference can perhaps best be illustrated by looking at west Yorkshire. There, the GREA is £50·712 million and the expenditure is £63·269 million, a difference of almost £13 million.

An authority covered by the Rates Act 1984 may be expressly designated for rate limitation only if it appears to the Secretary of State that its total expenditure in the preceding year was excessive, having regard to general economic conditions. For the new police authorities which are deemed to be designated, there is no presumption that the total expenditure of the predecessor authorities in 1985-86 was excessive. In determining the expenditure level for these new authorities the Home Secretary's principle is that each authority should be broadly able to maintain the level of service for its area provided by the predecessor authority, and he takes into account all the individual circumstances of each authority.

It is clearly inequitable that in those conditions the GREA should be set lower than the expenditure level. There is a precedent for the suggested course of action. The GREA for the Metropolitan police is set equal to the budgeted expenditure and the amendment would ensure similar treatment for rate-capped and precept limited authorities. In other words, if it is good enough for the Met it is good enough for the police authorities.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Last year the Government sought to move towards reconciling the difference there had always been between target and GREA. That was always an inconsistency and it gave rise to some illogicalities complained about by hon. Members in all parts of the House. The complaint was that what local authorities

could aspire to reach without penalty was not the basis on which their rate support grant was calculated compared to the needs of other local authorities. The amendment would continue the march towards consistency and would reconcile yet another and the most recently introduced of the Government's assessments — that applied under the Rates Act 1984 for rate capping purposes.

I hope that the Minister will be able to say that the Government will simplify matters by defining in one way for all purposes the specific amount of local authority expenditure calculated by them as being appropriate. It would seem logical that it should be extended to the calculations for the purposes of rate capping. I can understand that there may be an argument for saying that there is a common calculation, but there is room for an acceptable maximum that goes above that to allow scope within which local authorities can expend without being capped and having their rates determined by the Government.

If not tonight and in the context of this Bill, I hope that the Minister will be able to say that it is the intention to reconcile this definition with the others. The Minister may be able to shorten this debate by asking us to wait 12 hours at which time the Government will accede to the request in an announcement.

Mrs. Rumbold: As the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) has said, all local authorities and expecially the new joint authorities can be selected for the first three years but they can only be selected for rate limitation under section 2 of the Rates Act 1984 if their spending exceeds their grant-related expenditure in the year of designation.

I have to tell the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that the practice has been in the first two years of its operation that authorities are selected only if they are spending at least 20 per cent. above their grant-related expenditure. The amendment would arbitrarily increase the level of an authority's grant-related expenditure and would validate any authority that has chosen to indulge in high spending. it would also give them a higher grant entitlement at the expense of local and precepting authorities which are generally low spending. It would give them an unfair advantage and would let authorities out of rate limitation for the following year because by definition, those authorities would no longer be spending in excess of grant related expenditure. For those reasons I find it impossible to accept the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

12.14 am

Mr. Straw: My understanding was that the Minister would say a few words on Third Reading. I am delighted that he wants to speak after me rather than before me.

We have been over the ground of the Bill. It is three and a half months since the Minister came to the House to make his now-famous statement on the block grant multipliers. Never has a statement had such a fascinating title. Of course, the nation has been held enraptured ever since as we have pursued the Bill.

However, the Bill had a bad birth. It was dreamt up by Ministers to get them out of a difficulty caused by the application of their policies during the past seven years. It is a bad Bill, and we have not been convinced otherwise during our consideration of the measure. If we have the opportunity, we shall ensure that the Bill is pursued in the other place.

12.16 am

Mr. Simon Hughes: The criticism of the Bill from the beginning was that it was introduced solely because the courts had said that they would rule against the Government. It was the Government's response to the case brought by the city of Birmingham. It is never a satisfactory beginning for any legislation to be introduced as a way of getting the Government off a hook of their making and to alter the rules that they laid down. The principle of retrospective legislation, as applied by the Government in the Bill, has never been adequately justified. It does not accord with the principles of retrospective legislation that is acceptable and has been used in the past.

The Bill includes a couple of tidying-up mechanisms which are acceptable, but the part of the long title which suggests that the other major purpose of the Bill was,

"to clarify and amend the law relating to rate support grants,"

has not, sadly, produced the clarification and amendment that many of us would have wished.

It is clearly now an issue as to whether the Bill can be debated only by the House of Commons. I hope that those who consider such matters will remember that the Bill contains matters that relate not only to finance. Indeed, the second part of the long title makes it perfectly clear that the clarification and explanation of the law — for example, the explanation of what goes into the determination of rate support grant — goes far beyond that. I hope that the Bill will go to the other place, where it can be debated and, if necessary, amended. With the Bill, the Government have made no substantial progress towards convincing the Opposition, and many of their own Back-Benchers, that they have yet got the rules, let alone the application, of the rate support grant and rating system anywhere near right.

12.18 am

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): We understand that this could be a money Bill. Had we known or suspected that previously, the Committee stage would have been much longer than it was. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when a Committee considers amendments to a Bill, it also looks to the Lords to table other amendments. If the Bill does not go to the other place, some matters will not be debated at all. I wish to put some of them on record.

In this Bill, the Secretary of State has taken to himself great powers. But those powers will be available to any Secretary of State, of any political persuasion, once they are on the statute book. The Bill talks about local authorities

"belonging to the appropriate class."

For the first time, we shall be in danger of placing authorities into classes for the distribution of rate support grants. The amount that they receive will depend on their class, not the special difficulties to be found in those local authority areas. The Bill, if passed, will give the Secretary of State powers to direct finance to any authority in any way that he wishes. If the Secretary of State exercises those powers in one direction, he must remember that a Labour Government can exercise them in another.

12.20 am

Mr. Waldegrave: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to say a few words. We are about to pass a Bill which will clarify the law and make it what it was thought to be in a number of important technical respects in relation to rate support grant settlements. I hope that we have blocked off one or two other technical opportunities for challenge which would have introduced further confusion into the rate support grant settlements, both those that have been made in the past and will be made in the future.

I am grateful for the support given by my hon. Friends in Committee and on the Floor of the House. The Opposition have probed the Bill properly and introduced a number of powerful arguments, in particular relating to Birmingham, if I may mention that dreaded city. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Not dreaded in any real sense—that attractive and important city. We have all learnt a great deal about Birmingham; but, apart from that, I think that the general opinion of the House will be that the Government have thoroughly won the argument on the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Insolvency Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

12.21 am

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill, and the Bill which the House is to consider next—the Company Directors Disqualification Bill—are the product of a single consolidation exercise and are therefore closely linked. With the permission of the House, I will speak to both Bills now since it is not really possible to explain why the consolidation exercise was necessary without referring to both Bills.

This consolidation presents an unusual feature in that much of the legislation which is to be consolidated is of very recent origin. The principal legislation concerned is a part of the Companies Act 1985 and the bulk of the Insolvency Act 1985. The House will recall that the Companies Act was itself passed as part of a major consolidating exercise. The Insolvency Act made major revisions in the law relating to personal bankruptcy and also made amendments to the companies legislation. Necessary though it was to enact these two major pieces of legislation last year, the result has been to leave the law relating to insolvency split between two statutes. It was recognised that this left the law in an unsatisfactory state and a consolidating exercise was at once set in hand. Fortunately, since the bulk of the Insolvency Act was not to come into force before the end of this year, the opportunity arises to effect the consolidation with the minimum of disruption to practitioners in this area of the law and anybody else affected by it, and before a large body of supplementary subordinate legislation comes to be made.

The Insolvency Bill now before the House contains in one code of legislation the law relating to insolvency as respects both companies and individuals. The Company Directors Disqualification Bill brings together the provisions concerning disqualification from the management of companies.

Both Bills have been passed in another place where they were referred, in the usual way, to the Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c., Bills. The Joint Committee reported that the Bills were pure consolidation, though a small number of drafting changes and corrections were made by the Joint Committee and at Committee stage in another place. We are, as always, grateful to the Committee for its painstaking scrutiny. The two Bills constitute a very necessary consolidation in this most important area of the law and they will be of great benefit to practitioners and others. Our gratitude is due to the draftsman for producing the Bills in the short time available and to the Joint Committee for its consideration of the Bills.

12.25 am

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): It is unusual for the House to consider legislation that was passed only last year, but there are good reasons for doing so, and I am sure that the legislation will be welcome in its new form, especially to practitioners, as the Solicitor-General said.

I understand that these are the last two Bills that will be considered by the Consolidation Committee under the chairmanship of Lord Brightman. I associate the Opposition with the tribute to his work, which is much appreciated by the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Company Directors Disqualification Bill *[Lords]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Terms and Conditions of Employment

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79 (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Job Release Act 1977 (Continuation) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 1st July, be approved.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Measures against Counterfeit Goods

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 80 (Standing Committees on European Community Documents)

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 4092/85 and 4058/86, a proposal for a Regulation laying down measures to discourage the release for free circulation of counterfeit goods, and a proposed Amendment to the draft Regulation; recognises that there is much justified concern at the size and growth of the world-wide problem of counterfeiting; supports the activities of the Community in trying to find ways to contain international trade in counterfeit goods generally; and supports an instrument which would provide more effective measures to prevent counterfeit goods from reaching the internal market of the community.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Mrs. Irina Ratushinskaya

12.30 am

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I beg to ask leave to present a petition signed by David Somerville of Heaton Park drive, Bradford and 144 of my constituents from the congregations of St. Cuthbert's Roman Catholic church, St. Barnabas church and Westgate Baptist church, which calls attention to the plight of Irina Ratushinskaya, a poet, who is confined in a Soviet labour camp because of her poetry. She is in very poor health and, in the view of her husband and other fellow prisoners, her life is in danger.

The petitioners pray that

your honourable House encourages the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues in their representations to the Soviet Government with the purpose of obtaining both the release of Mrs. Ratushinskaya from the labour camp and her urgently needed assessment and treatment.

To lie upon the Table.

Strategic Defence Initiative

12.31 am

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I beg to ask leave to present a petition signed by Kath Parry of Duchy avenue, Bradford and 89 of my constituents — the signatures were collected in one hour — which emphasises

That the costs of SDI research would divert public money which might be spent to alleviate the financial cuts now being inflicted on health, welfare and educational services or on the modernisation of our manufacturing industries.

The petitioners pray that

your honourable House to make public the secret agreements governing both United States bases and Star Wars research in Britain; to take steps to remove the American nuclear bases and to end Star Wars research; to take positive initiatives to end Britain's role in the nuclear arms race and to promote the peaceful solution of international problems.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. L. Hedges (Pension)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

12.32 am

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Hon. Members are not infrequently approached by constituents who seek assistance in resolving a matter that they feel to be unjust or unfair. Frequently help can be sought from a Government Department, they can be advised of possible legal remedies, or, on some occasions, assistance can even be sought from the parliamentary ombudsman.

From time to time one is approached by a constituent who has a case that is not so simple, where advice from all the relevant Government Departments has been given, where, on the face of it, there would appear to be nothing for which there could be legal address, but where, none the less, if all the facts were known, the man on the proverbial Clapham omnibus or the man in the Bicester high street would say, "Hey, that is not right; it is not fair. Something ought to be done about it."

In such circumstances it is right to draw the attention of the House to the matter, first, in the hope that a re-examination of the facts might act as a catalyst for a re-examination of, and, perhaps, a happy solution to the case, and, secondly, so that others can take note of the lessons to be learnt from the case. I am grateful that this debate enables me to raise one such case, that of the pension from the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority of Mr. Leslie Hedges, a constituent of mine. I am grateful to the Minister for the time and attention that he has already given to this case.

Mr. Hedges retired in 1980 after 40 years of employment in the public service, throughout which time he paid a full contribution towards his pension. From 1937 to 1948 he worked for the Oxfordshire county council; from 1948 to 1961 he worked for the National Health Service; and from 1961 he transferred his employment to the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority at Harwell.

Shortly after Mr. Hedges transferred to Harwell, the superannuation officer of the AEA wrote to him confirming that in respect of his earlier employment he had been credited 20 years and 88 days in the UKAEA non-industrial superannuation scheme. Thus, in 1961 Mr. Hedges commenced his employment with the UKAEA with no fewer than 20 years of fully paid-up pension contributions already made. It is perhaps worth noting in passing that Mr. Hedges retained the letter sent to him in September 1962 by the UKAEA about his pension, which would seem to suggest a cautious, prudent man, rather than a man who might gamble with his future, as some came to suggest later.

If Mr. Hedges had stayed with the UKAEA until the age of 65, he would have received a full pension based on 40 years' service and his final salary. Furthermore, he would have received a tax-free lump sum of three times his annual pension. However, in 1970, after 10 years' service at UKAEA, and by now 30 years' service in the public sector, and at the age of 55 years, Mr. Hedges resigned his post as clerical officer at Harwell and took up employment at the University of Oxford. At this point matters go awry in respect of Mr. Hedges' pension.

The sensible thing would have been for Mr. Hedges to be able to transfer his 30 years' pensionable service from the UKAEA's non-industrial superannuation scheme to the pension scheme of the University of Oxford. The UKAEA pension scheme had a clear provision for the transfer of previous pension rights. Indeed, in 1961 Mr. Hedges had been able to transfer his accumulated pension rights from his local government and National Health Service employment to the UKAEA scheme. That, however, appeared not to be possible with the University of Oxford scheme.

Some years later, when, for reasons which I shall explain later, it became apparent that the value of Mr. Hedges' eventual pension was being substantially eroded, he made further inquiries of the university to ascertain whether it would take on his accumulated pension to date. The university was prepared to accept only the transfer of a cash sum from Mr. Hedges' previous employers. The cash sum that the UKAEA was prepared to make available to the university in respect of Mr. Hedges' pensionable service was only about £8,000. It should be remembered that that was for 30 years' fully reckonable pensionable service. Mr. Hedges had been paying about 6 per cent. of his salary while at UKAEA towards his pension.

Given this sum, the university was not prepared to credit Mr. Hedges with 30 years' pensionable service, nor 20 years, nor half, 15, but only 11 years and one month. When pensionable service is being transferred, the only consideration for the university is the cash value of the pensionable service offering the transfer payment. Put shortly, Mr. Hedges' new employer noted the value of what his former employers were prepared to transfer in respect of his pension contributions and, despite the fact that they represented 30 years' service, was able to offer only 11 years' credit within the rules of its own scheme It was understandable that at 55 years Mr. Hedges did not accept that.

I make no criticism of the university for its superannuation scheme. It was simply applying the rules of the scheme to the situation with which it was presented. I am not in a position to comment on the fairness or otherwise of the transfer value of about £8,000 that was offered by UKAEA. But it must be a matter of general concern when someone who has spent the larger part of his working life in the public sector finds in transferring his pension that it is worth considerably less than he had anticipated.

What happened to Mr. Hedges' pension? Apparently, until 1972 staff who resigned from UKAEA had an option under the rules of its non-industrial superannuation scheme to arrange at the time of their resignation for their superannuation rights to be reserved by the purchase of a deferred annuity instead of having their pension benefits frozen in the UKAEA scheme until normal retirement age. Put briefly, Mr. Hedges was given a choice: he could leave his pension benefits frozen in the United Kingdom AEA scheme until the time he retired, at which point he would receive a percentage of the pension relevant to his years of service, or he could, in effect, use his pension contributions up to the time of his resignation to purchase a deferred annuity.

Sadly, Mr. Hedges was given no advice as to the respective merits of such options nor as to their potential dangers. It so happened that the benefits offered by the insurance company in 1970 for a deferred annuity provided potentially a much higher fixed income on paper than the United Kingdom AEA alternative. But what no

one mentioned and made clear to Mr. Hedges, when he considered which option to take, was that the apparent advantage of the deferred annuity was always vulnerable to inflation, and the danger that, in time, it would become less favourable.

I do not suggest that there was any negligent misstatement on behalf of the AEA. As far as I can ascertain, there was no advice at all. No one endeavoured to explain to Mr. Hedges that he was, as the deputy general secretary of the CPSA — Mr. Hedges' trade union — observed, taking a gamble that the annuity option would hold its value. No one told Mr. Hedges, or even hinted, that he was engaged in a gamble. As Mr. Hedges says, he is not a gambling man, and he certainly would not have gambled with his pension. He was simply given two options and he took the option which, at the time, seemed to be to his advantage and the most attractive.

It was not long before the ravages of continuing high inflation seriously eroded the value of Mr. Hedges' pension. With inflation now around 3 per cent., it is all too easy to forget those years of the 1970s with inflation, on occasions, over 25 per cent. Inflation destroyed the value of people's savings and pensions.

It did not take Harwell long to realise that the option could be disastrous for its former employees. In fact, in 1972, just two years after Mr. Hedges transferred to the University of Oxford, it removed the option. But for Mr. Hedges it was too late.

When Mr. Hedges realised what was happening he asked the United Kingdom AEA to change his choice. However, the AEA made it clear that deferred annuity arrangements were specifically in lieu of the benefits that would otherwise have been provided under the authority's scheme. The UKAEA maintained that its liability was discharged absolutely when the capital sum was paid to the insurance company in respect of Mr. Hedges' deferred annuity, and that it was not responsible for augmenting funds provided by the insurance company.

Even with inflation running at only 3 per cent., Mr. Hedges is becoming steadily worse off every month and year that passes. His pension, in respect of his 30 years' employment in the public sector, until he left the UKAEA is a derisory sum. It is just £868 per annum.

Should not the AEA have appreciated that it was offering a choice, one option of which, in times of rising inflation, could have a dramatic and devastating effect on Mr. Hedges' final pension?

How many others are there in the same position as Mr. Hedges? How many others resigning from the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority prior to retirement age took that option? Why did the AEA not give Mr. Hedges some impartial advice as to the merits of the options available to him? After all, as Mr. Hedges has said to me, he could not believe that the UKAEA was acting other than in his best interests. He trusted the authority as an employer in the public sector. If the UKAEA realised in 1972 that this was an unsound option, should it not have appreciated that fact by 1970?

In 1980, the chairman of the UKAEA, Mr. Hill, said that he had

"sympathy with the problems caused by inflation for those who took deferred annuities rather than the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's superannuation scheme pension"

and that UKAEA had

"looked most anxiously and carefully into the possibility of doing something to improve their pension position,"

but apparently the authority concluded that no remedy was available. However, I have no doubt that the proverbial man on the Clapham omnibus or the man in Bicester High street, if aware of the facts of the case, would say that it is unfair that someone who has given a lifetime of work in various ways to the community should find himself in this position.

Mr. Hedges simply and understandably wants a pension that reflects his many years of public service. I believe that this case merits re-examination. There may be similar cases. I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State simply to undertake that his Department will look into Mr. Hedges, case to ascertain whether, even at this late stage, there is some discretion to enable him to receive a reasonable pension in respect of his years of service and substantial contribution, and not one the value of which is eroded day by day and month and month.

12.46 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) has raised with meticulous care an important issue on behalf of his constituent, Mr. Hedges. I have listened with close attention to what he has said, but, for reasons which I shall explain, I fear that there is nothing that the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority or the Department of Energy can do to improve the position of Mr. Hedges or of other pensioners in respect of the matters raised by my hon. Friend.

As my hon. Friend has told the House, Mr. Hedges joined the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority on 8 August 1961 as a clerical officer, having previously worked for a local authority and for the National Health Service. By means of the payment of a "transfer value" from the NHS pension scheme, he was able to make his previous local authority and NHS service superannuable in the authority's principal non-industrial superannuation scheme. The credit in the authority's scheme for previous service was 20 years and 88 days.

Mr. Hedges resigned from the authority on 14 August 1970 to take an administrative post with Oxford university. He had at that stage 29 years and 95 days in the authority's scheme, including the 20 years and 88 days of back service. At that time, Oxford university's pension scheme could not accept in transfers of pension rights earned with other employers. Mr. Hedges had the choice of two methods of preserving his accrued pension rights under the rules of the authority's pension scheme. First, he could have had his pension benefits "frozen" in the scheme until his contractual retirement age with the authority—65. Alternatively, he was able to purchase a "deferred annuity" — a policy with an insurance company which provided a lump sum and a fixed annual pension from age 65. It was the authority's principle and practice to leave individuals to choose the method of preservation they judged to be in their best interest.

The deferred annuity option had the primary purpose of providing a form of preserved pension provision for early leavers with less than 10 years' service who would otherwise, under the then rules of the scheme, have been entitled only to a refund of their own contribution, plus a small amount of interest, but less a deduction for tax. To improve the available benefits members were given an entitlement, if they wished, to transfer their pension benefits into an annuity policy to make some provision for retirement.

[Mr. Alastair Goodlad]

In addition, the deferred annuity option also gave those scheme leavers who had 10 or more years' service, and who therefore had a right to benefits to be preserved under the scheme, a degree of choice in how their benefits should be preserved. This extension was made at a time when the authority was having to run down staff numbers rapidly, and it was desirable to be able to offer maximum flexibility in pension provision for those who left to take up other employment. Contrary to the impression that I think was given by my hon. Friend, the authority transferred a proportion recommended by the actuary of its own, as well as Mr. Hedges' contributions.

As he requested in advance of resigning, Mr. Hedges was given details of, first, the value of his benefits if frozen in the authority's scheme and, secondly, the proceeds of a deferred annuity based on the then current rates. The amounts in round pounds were as follows. First, if he chose to stay "frozen" in the authority scheme, he would receive a lump sum of £710 and a pension of £398, though with a possibility that these amounts would be augmented by pensions increases.

Secondly, if he chose a deferred annuity, Mr. Hedges could have either a fixed lump sum of £1,883 or £2,153 with the benefit of estimated bonus — plus a fixed pension of £672 or £769 with estimated bonus — or alternatively a fixed pension of £896 or £1,024·19 with estimated bonus but no lump sum.

It was made clear that the estimated bonus was simply an estimate and in no way guaranteed. Assuming no pensions increases in the occupational scheme, the figures presented to Mr. Hedges indicated a relative attraction for the deferred annuity option, though of course, on the assumption that scheme pensions would be increased, this altered the relative attractiveness of the options. It was authority policy not to press employees to select one route rather than another, as the authority was in no position to predict future events.

On 13 July 1970, Mr. Hedges applied for a deferred annuity—making in effect the assumption that pensions increases would not catch up with the annuity—and on 17 August accepted the version of the deferred annuity "cash lump sum" plan.

I should explain here the authority's relationship with the insurance company involved. For all employees who wanted the deferred annuity option at that time, the authority entered into a master policy with the Guardian Assurance Company Ltd. It was this company's estimated rates that were quoted to the individuals concerned. The authority fully discharged to the Guardian all liability for pension provision for those individuals on whose behalf the authority paid over to the Guardian a capital sum to secure a deferred annuity policy. The authority had no powers of discretion concerning the proceeds of the policies.

When Mr. Hedges reached the age of 65 in 1980, proceeds of the annuity policy provided benefits of a lump sum of £2,479 and a fixed annuity of £868. Had he elected instead for the "maximum annuity" variant, he would have received an annuity of £1,157, but no lump sum. If Mr. Hedges' benefits had been preserved in the authority's own scheme, they would have been worth in 1980 with the benefit of pensions increases a £2,300 lump sum and £1,288 pension, and his pension now would be £2,141 a year. The particularly high levels of inflation experienced in the 1970s were difficult to foresee when Mr. Hedges resigned from the authority in 1970. The period of high inflation which eroded the value of fixed benefits has in retrospect shown that deferred annuities were a relatively poor choice to have made. But the judgment is made with the benefit of hindsight.

It would also have been impossible to foresee the introduction by the Government in 1971 of index-linked pensions. At the time Mr. Hodges made his decision in 1970, authority pensions were reviewed from time to time along with other public service pensions which were increased by individual Pensions Increase Acts. These increases were not regular and were not kept up with inflation, although they mitigated its effects. Subsequently, the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971 introduced updating every other year, and the Superannuation Act 1972 made updating mandatory on an annual basis. Such annual index-linking protects pensions from the eroding effects of inflation by increasing their value in line with rises in the retail price index.

In 1972, in view of the potential effect of inflation on the real value of deferred annuities, the authority decided to remove the annuity option from its pension scheme. I understand that that was done by administrative action, since the staff trade union side would not agree to the change. Until the annuity option was removed, some 786 employees had taken it.

I should like now to explain the attempts that have been made by the authority to alleviate the position of deferred annuitants, such as Mr. Hedges, both in general and in his particular case. A number of avenues have been pursued.

First, there have been discussions with the Department of Energy and its predecessors as to whether a way could be found of supplementing and index-linking deferred annuities ex gratia, on a par with public service schemes. But it was judged by the Department and the Civil Service Department that this would not be a proper use of public funds, given that those concerned had exercised a free choice in the knowledge that they were forfeiting all benefits under the authority scheme.

Secondly, on behalf of annuitants, the authority has asked the Guardian Assurance company whether it could increase the level of annuities in the light of interest rates and high inflation. However, the company has insisted that when it issued the policies the premiums were invested in a form so as to ensure that policy benefits were met, irrespective of future financial conditions. That meant that it had to invest the premiums in safe investments. It therefore said that it was not in a position to grant an increase in benefits provided by this means. The following is the relevant extract from its letter of 26 March 1982:

". . . when an Insurance Company issues a policy, the premium is invested in a form which will ensure that policy benefits are met irrespective of future financial conditions. In the specific case of annuity contracts, investment would normally be in gilt-edged securities. This ensures that a regular series of cash payments is provided. Should interest rates rise, the value of the investment will fall but the income from the investment is unaffected. To invest money on short-term deposit would leave the Company vulnerable to a fall in market rates of interest, the expected income from the investment would be insufficient to meet the required payments. The annuitants would be unprepared to accept a reduction in benefits if interest rates had fallen. The investment policy, therefore, avoids loss due to a fall in interest rates but (unfortunately) precludes profit on an increase. The Guardian is not therefore in a position to grant an increase in respect of benefits already purchased."

Thirdly, from 1 April 1978 the Oxford university scheme was able to accept in transfers of accrued pension rights earned with other organisations. The authority accordingly asked Guardian Assurance if the annuity could be cancelled and a transfer value offered. The insurance company agreed to that and the transfer value offered by the insurance company was £8,250. I stress that that sum was determined by the insurance company and not the authority. That sum would have produced only 11 years of pension credit in the Oxford university scheme as calculated by that scheme's actuary, compared with some 29 years which were originally converted into the annuity. Mr. Hedges declined the offer and retained his annuity which came into payment in 1980 when he was 65. A substantial proportion of deferred annuitants have likewise declined offers to unscramble their pension position through transfer values to an occupational pension scheme.

Fourthly, the authority considered the option of providing payments from authority funds, but concluded that it was not able to do that since, as already explained, it surrendered all liability for such individuals' pension position to the Guardian Assurance Company. Any payments would, therefore, be ex-gratia and had already been deemed to be an improper use of public funds.

Fifthly, the authority considered whether assistance could be made available from the authority's benevolent fund. The benevolent fund is an independent registered charity which has as its purpose under its constitution the relief of poverty among the authority's past and present non-industrial staff. It is managed by its own committee of management and is to all intents and purposes independent of the authority, which cannot give it directions on the use of its funds. I understand that Mr. Hedges did not meet the criteria necessary to benefit from the benevolent fund.

I am advised that in 1981 the authority board itself looked most carefully into the question whether any further steps could be taken to improve the pension position of its deferred annuitants. For the reasons I mentioned above it was forced to conclude that there were no further steps that could be taken.

I gather that Mr. Hedges wrote a letter of protest to my hon. Friend's predecessor in 1980 when his annuity came into payment. The then authority chairman, Sir John Hill, replied to the hon. Member expressing his concern and regret about the deferred annuitants' position but explaining that their decision on the means of preservation had been freely taken and that they were left in no doubt at the time that their decision on the means of preservation was in lieu of any continuing benefit from the authority's pension scheme. Sir John Hill pointed out that

"the apparent advantage of the deferred annuity [had always been] vulnerable to inflation and to the danger that it would become less favourable at some point in time."

There appear to be no avenues left unexhausted by the authority to enable it to do anything towards alleviating the position of Mr. Hedges and his fellow annuitants. Other public sector bodies, including the CEGB, have been forced to a similar conclusion about their own position. I think that the House will agree that the authority has gone to very considerable lengths to try to alleviate the problem and that Mr. Hedges was not misled about his pension position.

Mr. Hedges' experience, and that of others like him, demonstrates clearly the damaging effects of high inflation on people's lives. It is a further reason, if such were necessary, why the Government's determination to ensure that inflation is kept under control is very important indeed.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 22 July 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

IPSWICH PORT AUTHORITY BILL

Lords amendments agreed to.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (DISPOSITIONS) BILL *[Lords]*

Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

BOURNEMOUTH-SWANAGE MOTOR ROAD AND FERRY BILL *[Lords]*

As amended, considered.

Ordered,

That Standing Order 205 (Notice of third reading) be suspended, and that the Bill be now read the Third time. —*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

BROMBOROUGH DOCK BILL *[Lords]*

As amended, considered.

Ordered,

That Standing Order 205 (Notice of third reading) be suspended, and that the Bill be now read the Third time. —*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Queen's consent having been signified—

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

PORT OF FOSDYKE BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

1. **Mr. Evans** asked the Paymaster General what is the present rate of unemployment; and how it compares with the figures for June 1983 and June 1979, respectively.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The seasonally adjusted level of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom this June represented 11·7 per cent. of the working population. Estimates on a consistent basis for June 1983 and June 1979 were 10·8 and 4·2 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Evans: Will the Paymaster General confirm that, despite the 16th massaging of the figures since the Government took office, the underlying level of unemployment is at its highest point for over 50 years? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that virtually every employers' organisation has joined the Select Committee on Employment in demanding a Government programme of infrastructure work, which would not only put hundreds of thousands of people back to work, but would improve the nation's productivity? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman acknowledge that the overwhelming majority of the people now want measures to tackle unemployment even more than income tax cuts?

Mr. Clarke: The rate of unemployment is too high, and reflects the difficulty of creating new jobs quickly enough to keep up with the rising numbers of people looking for work. The fact is that over 1 million new jobs have been created in the British economy since spring 1983, and the rate of employment—people in work—has gone up by 4·3 per cent. since the first quarter of 1983, but obviously we have to improve on that record. I am intrigued to see that the hon. Gentleman is now going back to infrastructure spending as the cure. I continue to watch the varying suggestions put forward by the Opposition as to how they can live up to their claims for reducing unemployment.

Mr. Sayeed: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there are now more people in work in my constituency of Bristol, East? Is he further aware that that trend is reflected throughout the country?

Mr. Clarke: There are more people at work in this country all the time. We actually have a higher proportion of our population of working age in work than any other country in western Europe, apart from Denmark. Of course, we are having to tackle the problem that all the time more young people and more women are entering the labour force, so that we still have not caught up with the level of unemployment.

Mr. Leighton: Is the Minister aware that in 1978 unemployment fell by 90,000. In 1979 it fell by 60,000. In the following year, 1980, after the right hon. and learned Gentleman's Government came into office, unemployment increased by 700,000. In 1981 unmployment rose by over 900,000 and it has risen every year since. Is that not because the Government's economic policies have turned off the engines of economic growth and wealth creation? We are producing fewer manufactured goods now than we were in 1979. When will the Minister show some contrition and apologise to the unemployed, rather than taking the flippant attitude that he does to this disaster?

Mr. Clarke: I have not been flippant. The hon. Gentleman's figures cannot disguise the fact that, in 1979, the country's economy was in a dire state. A great deal of our industry was in a non-competitive condition. When the last Labour Government left office we were set on a course for higher unemployment and the world recession made it worse. However, unemployment rose at a faster rate in West Germany than it rose here. We are now back on the road to recovery. The number of new jobs in the British economy continues to rise steadily, quarter by quarter, and has done ever since early 1983.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall a book written by the general secretary of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs when the last Labour Government held office? Its title was "The Collapse of Work" and it postulated an

unemployment level of 5 million under that Labour Government because of Britain's lack of competitiveness. Does he agree that unemployment could rapidly reach the level contemplated by Mr. Clive Jenkins if Opposition Members were ever able to put their inflationary spending plans into practice?

Mr. Clarke: I certainly recall some such analysis. I think the figure of 5 million people unemployed is wholly credible when one looks at the state of the economy as the last Labour Government left it in 1979. Unemployment would probably be at that figure now were it not for the fact that we are in the sixth successive year of economic growth and we are witnessing a steady increase in the number of new jobs in the economy.

Mr. Wainwright: Is the Minister aware that during the first quarter of this year and for the first time in several years there was an actual decrease in the number of employees in employment. The Government were only saved from the greater embarrassment of a decrease in the national total of people at work, of any kind, by the convenient arrival of a round figure of 30,000 people assumed to be in self employment and hence representing an increase in the numbers at work. Will he explain to the House the particular witchcraft by which figures like this 30,000 are produced in respect of the self-employed?

Mr. Clarke: There is a changing pattern of employment in this country. For some years the number of people in self-employment have been steadily rising. More than one person in 10 working in this country is now working on his own account. The estimates that have been produced are carefully calculated. They are checked regularly against the labour force survey and are produced by well-tried methods showing the estimated increase month by month. There is no witchcraft in it. These are careful, accurate statistics, as has been well proven in the past.

Mr. Marland: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that we are facing another industrial revolution? The reason why it is so painful has been the reluctance of past politicians and trade union leaders to embrace new and modern technology for the opportunities that it offers.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. The attempt to delay the impact of new technology and to ignore the increased competitive pressures of the 1970s led to the disaster that we eventually suffered at the end of that decade and the beginning of this one. What is happening now is that new industries are emerging, more people are working in smaller businesses, we are witnessing a good rate of new business creation and more people are working in self-employment. The labour market is changing, but it is providing more jobs. We must not allow the Opposition's policies to try to put the clock back.

Unemployment Benefit Service

2. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to increase the efficiency of the unemployment benefit service.

5. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Paymaster General if he plans to make any changes in the operation of unemployment benefit offices.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Ian Lang): A variety of changes in the unemployment benefit service are planned and under way to improve efficiency, service and the control of public funds.

Amongst the most significant is the installation of new computer terminals in local offices, which will reduce staff work and provide better information to claimants.

Mr. Allan McKay: I thank the Minister for that reply and for the increased efficiency of the offices. With regard to increased efficiency, does the Minister agree that redundant mineworkers, like any other redundant workers, do on occasion need help and advice concerning unemployment and welfare benefits? If the Minister agrees, will he withdraw the directive sent to the offices on 15 April, and, if he does not, will he put his reasons in the *Official Report*?

Mr. Lang: We often give help to unemployment benefit offices to enable them to assist applicants for unemployment benefit. These are complex issues involving the interrelation between the redundant mineworkers payment scheme and the unemployment benefit service. Such guidance as has been given has been intended to give assistance to people in those circumstances and has involved the National Coal Board and the National Union of Mineworkers.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: If the Minister's claim that advice was given in an attempt to help the miners is sincere, why did the letter to unemployment benefit offices quite specifically say that in no circumstances should advice be given to miners about whether they were entitled to claim unemployment benefit? Will he confirm that miners have been singled out for a vindictive and squalid little campaign to prevent them from drawing what they are entitled to?

Mr. Lang: Miners have not been singled out. Advice is often given in these circumstances. The intention of the circular was to enable us to be sure that unemployment offices would not give wrong advice to mineworkers and thus prejudice their interests.

Mr. Latham: Will my hon. Friend have a look at the Public Accounts Committee's report and ask himself whether there is a good case for merging these offices with the DHSS?

Mr. Lang: I shall certainly look at the report. The two organisations perform essentially different activities, but there is scope for improved co-operation between them.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: As one who was made unemployed by Robert Maxwell years ago — he was perhaps the worst employer in the country, and, I believe, still is — may I ask my hon. Friend to investigate how people claim unemployment benefit and the ease with which somebody whose name begins with B for Bruinvels can make a claim at 9.15 am and get a job for the rest of the day, not that I ever did that?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is on to a serious and important issue which is being given close attention by my Department.

Labour Statistics

3. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Paymaster General what was the number of persons unemployed for one year and two years, respectively, at May 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Direct comparisons of unemployment by duration since 1979 are not possible because of changes in the way figures are collected. However, on 5 April 1979 the numbers of people in the United Kingdom who had been registered unemployed for over one year and over two years were 366,700 and 179,800 respectively. The corresponding numbers of unemployed claimants as at 10 April 1986 were 1,356,500 and 845,200 respectively.

Mr. Dormand: Does the Paymaster General agree that those appalling comparisons are the biggest condemnation of the Government's economic policies? I remind him yet again that the number of long-term unemployed now is greater than the total number unemployed people when Labour left office. When will he recognise that the present tinkering with schemes does not meet the problem and that there will have to be a fundamental change of policy? He should come to my constituency and talk to some of the long-term unemployed and see what they think about what he is doing.

Mr. Clarke: I agree that long-term unemployment is the biggest social problem that faces the country. It is more serious than the total figure, which disguises the fact that 500,000 people find a new job each month. The 1·4 million long-term unemployed are those to whom we are giving particular attention. Every long-term unemployed person in the hon. Gentleman's constituency will be interviewed during the next few months under the restart initiative, and each will be offered eight different ways in which he might get back into work. That will continue the considerable success that we have already enjoyed in the nine pilot areas.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the main reasons why this country suffers from high levels of long-term unemployment is the legacy of the anti-business, anti-enterprise, anti-profit policies which were pursued by the last Labour Government?

Mr. Clarke: Yes, and it is extremely important to reverse that part of our culture. That is why our Department and others concentrate so heavily on, for example, the business expansion scheme to encourage investment in new business, and why we are constantly strengthening the small business service and local enterprise agencies and all the other methods that we have to encourage enterprise culture.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Paymaster General accept the view advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand) about there being large pockets of unemployment, especially in mining areas where there have been pit closures? Will he take on board the fact that unemployment in those areas is high and that the number of people who have been unemployed for 12 months or more is high? Will he do something about that and ensure that unemployment is brought down, and that employment is created in mining constituencies?

Mr. Clarke: I accept the need for efforts of that kind and I am glad that the National Coal Board's enterprise company has been so successful in helping people to establish themselves in business and to bring new businesses into the coalfields. We need more efforts of that kind and more successes of the kind being achieved in places such as Consett and Corby, steel towns which where badly hit by redundancies. The same needs to be done wherever major redundancies occur in older, traditional industries.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: While unemployment is so high, does my right hon. and learned Friend think it justified to allow more than 250,000 Irish nationals to work in the British economy?

Mr. Clarke: That is a long-standing issue, going back to the creation of the Irish Republic in the 1920s. Free movement of labour is an important principle of the European Community, from which we benefit as much as anyone else. Questions about access of Irish citizens to this country are best referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Prescott: The Paymaster General now officially recognises that more than 1 million more people have been unemployed for more than 12 months since the Government came to power. As the Government profess concern for those people, does he accept that recent changes to the Social Security Bill mean that a married man with two children taking a community scheme job will face a cut in pay or a suspension in benefit for 13 weeks? Is a conscripted labour force the Government's alternative policy?

Mr. Clarke: I appreciate that that is one reason why the community programme is more attractive to younger and single employees. Tomorrow we shall be discussing reforms in the social security system which improve support for low-earning heads of families. That will be of great benefit to people wishing to get into work and away from unemployment. The job start allowance, now available nationally, provides a £20 a week allowance for a man obliged to take a low-paid job as his first job back in work. That will also help.

Job Creation

4. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Paymaster General what steps his Department is taking to seek to reduce unemployment in the town of Haverhill.

Mr. Lang: The Government's economic strategy is providing the climate of low inflation and sustained growth which is the only sensible way to secure real jobs in Haverhill and elsewhere. Haverhill will also benefit from the new package of measures announced in the Budget to accelerate the growth of enterprise, boost employment opportunities for the young and help the long-term unemployed find work.

Mr. Yeo: Is my hon. Friend aware that Haverhill has the most severe unemployment problem in my constituency and that although many of the measures to which he has referred are both welcome and helpful, his Department's initiatives are frequently obstructed by shortcomings in the policies of other Departments? Is he aware, for example, that Haverhill is blighted by poor road communications and is a victim of extremely poor and inadequate strategic planning? Will he prevail on his colleagues in other Departments to consider the employment implications of their policies when working them out?

Mr. Lang: We constantly try to co-operate with other Departments in formulating Government policies, but I

shall pass on my hon. Friend's remarks to my colleagues. With regard to my own Department, I am sure that my hon. Friend will welcome the substantial involvement in his constituency in the youth training scheme and community programmes and the fact that in the Norfolk and Suffolk area some 4,000 people have benefited from the enterprise allowance scheme since it started.

Maternity Leave

6. **Mr. Pike** asked the Paymaster General how many women will lose maternity leave rights under the proposals contained in the White Paper "Building Businesses . . . not Barriers."

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The White Paper is based on the need to reduce employment costs to industry if we are to increase the prospect of additional jobs for men and women. The White Paper proposals affect the right to return to work after maternity absence, but no women would lose maternity rights for which they have already qualified. It is very difficult to estimate how many expectant mothers would subsequently be affected by any changes.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that if the White Paper proposals are fully implemented, in the future the majority of women will lose their right to maternity benefit? Does he agree that removing rights and protection given to women in the past is an appalling way to proceed in 1986, and is the wrong way for the Government to go?

Mr. Clarke: I am not sure what aspect the hon. Gentleman is concerned about. Maternity pay is not affected by our White Paper, although it is affected by changes being made by another Department. With regard to the right to return to work, the difficulty is that for a small firm it is a considerable burden to keep a job open for up to 40 weeks for someone who might exercise the right to return. That is why we made the proposals in the White Paper. It is very difficult to achieve the right balance between the need to protect employees and the need to keep industrial costs down. We believe that the balance needs to be shifted further so that employers are not deterred, for example, from employing young women.

Mr. Cash: Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept our congratulations on publishing the White Paper, which has shown that this country can be properly governed by a Government who are determined to ensure that we put businesses before barriers and that we get rid of unnecessary regulations in line with the requirements of a modern economy?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. My right hon. and noble Friend and I are constantly being invited to make speeches abroad, particularly in western Europe, where the interest in this kind of approach to encouraging jobs in industry is steadily growing and where a number of other Governments are plainly proposing to imitate us.

Ms. Richardson: Thanks to Government changes in the employment protection laws, is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that maternity provision in the United Kingdom will now be more restrictive and maternity benefits the lowest of any EEC country? As this year marks the 10th anniversary of the implementation of the statutory right of women to return to work after child birth, is not the White Paper "Building Businesses . . . not Barriers" a rotten gift to give to women?

Mr. Clarke: I am not sure about the hon. Lady's comparisons, but we already have a higher proportion of women in work and a lower level of unemployment among women than in most other western European countries. Those European countries which on paper have stronger maternity protection than we do have probably reduced the job opportunities for women.

Wage Rates

7. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Paymaster General what is his latest estimate of firms paying workers less than wages councils' minimum rates in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* England and Wales; and how many subsequent prosecutions have taken place.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): No estimates of the number of firms paying workers less than the wages councils' minimum rates have been made. However, Wages Inspectorate statistics for 1985 show that 20·8 per cent. of all establishments checked in Scotland were underpaying one or more of their workers. The corresponding figure for England and Wales was 22·4 per cent. But these figures are not representative of all firms because the inspectorate tends to concentrate on the firms more likely to be underpaying. In the same year, no firms in Scotland and two firms in England and Wales were prosecuted for offences under wages council legislation.

Mr. McKelvey: Am I correct in my view that the Minister is saying that 3,000 firms in Scotland alone do not pay the minimum rate—in other words, they pay less than the scab rate—and that not one prosecution has taken place? I should like the House to know, because it has the right to know, whether any political instructions have been given to procurators fiscal not to prosecute in these cases. What is happening is a national scandal, coming as it does from a party that is supposed to stand for law and order.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman has extrapolated ingeniously but wholly incorrectly the figures to which I referred in my substantive answer. It will be interesting for the hon. Gentleman to hear the contrast between what is happening now and what happened when the Labour Government were last in office. In the three years to 1978, the last full year in which the Labour party was in office, 35·4 per cent. of establishments inspected were found to be underpaying. Under the last Labour Government, the average number of prosecutions was five a year. Since 1980, under this Government, the average number of prosecutions has been the same.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that procurators fiscal in Scotland have always enjoyed discretion in relation to prosecutions? I say that as the parliamentary spokesman for the procurators fiscal. Does my hon. Friend also agree that we, as the party of law and order, believe that when the law is seen not to be effective and not to be working, the answer is to change the law? That is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Trippier: Whether such cases go to the procurator fiscal depends on the recommendation of the various inspectorates that operate either in England and Wales or in Scotland. Under successive Governments—Labour as well as Conservative — the policy has been to seek

compliance with the legislation by advice and persuasion. A prosecution is considered where the offence is deliberate or repeated and the evidence is adequate.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the Minister confirm that we have a rising trend of employers breaking the criminal law and paying the poorest in society less than they are entitled to? Will he confirm that the Government have dealt with that problem by cutting by one third the number of wages inspectors and now, in the Wages Bill, by introducing a law which will weaken protection and promises further cuts in the inspectorate? The Government are inviting employers to break the law more frequently at the cost of the poorest workers.

Mr. Trippier: Nothing would invite employers more to break the law than the statements that we have heard from the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends, which give employers the impression that they will get away with it. The truth is stated in a letter which I sent to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), which has been widely circulated and of which the hon. Lady is aware. The legislation is changing because we are removing a great deal of the bureaucracy that has been operating in this area with incredibly complicated wages councils orders. Employers who in future try to claim that they cannot comply with wages councils orders simply because they do not understand them will be in a much weaker position than would otherwise be the case. I made that point in my letter. Wages councils will now be free from their former complexity and it will be simpler and quicker to check compliance. I do not accept that there is a rising trend of law-breaking among employers, as the hon. lady suggested.

Payment of Bills

8. **Mr. Ottaway** asked the Paymaster General what response he has received to the guidance booklet on payment of bills published on 20 May.

Mr. Trippier: I have received a considerable volume of correspondence from public bodies, large and small firms and small business organisations welcoming this initiative. Many small businesses continue to emphasise the problems that late payment causes them.

Mr. Ottaway: My hon. Friend is on record as having said that if the voluntary code does not work he will introduce legislation, and some of us would like to see that sooner rather than later. How does he intend to monitor the success of the voluntary code, and for how long?

Mr. Trippier: I have one effective way of monitoring the success of the code, which is that 130,000 copies were printed and I have recently authorised the reprinting of it, so demand is considerable. I am sure that my hon. Friend would welcome that. I have said that we may have to consider legislation if the pilot scheme does not work, but that could be hazardous. Many people in various small firms organisations have made representations to me that on some occasions small firms do not pay the bills of other small firms on time and that sometimes small firms do not pay the bills of large firms on time. If legislation were introduced some small firms—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am trying to hear what is being

Mr. Skinner: Does the Minister recall that more than seven years ago the Government were elected on the basis of relieving small firms of all the difficulties which the Tories believed surrounded them? It is now seven years later and the Tory Government have hammered small businesses to such an extent that the Government must now give them advice on how to pay their bills. What happened to the entrepreneurial society that was to produce all the wonderful profits with the help of the Government's policies? Would it not be nice for the 150,000 firms that have gone bankrupt during the past seven years to have even a letterbox through which to receive the code of conduct?

Mr. Trippier: That shows how much the hon. Gentleman is out of touch with what is going on in the small business community. The figures on the small firms front show a higher net increase in small businesses than has ever been recorded. We are involved in a code of practice for late payment of bills because we know that there is a cash problem when large firms delay the payment of bills to small firms.

Mr. Bellingham: While my hon. Friend is reluctant to introduce legislation at this stage, is he aware that many small firms feel strongly about the matter, and will he keep it under review? What extra pressures could be put on some of the biggest firms in the land, which pay bills only twice or three times a year?

Mr. Trippier: When I sent the code of practice to the 100 largest firms in the country, as my hon. Friend is suggesting, a number of them are guilty of delaying payments of bills. I found the response to be comforting. I am sure that the combination of the code of practice and the Finance Act 1982, which allows interest to be charged as long as the matter has been taken to court, will be effective.

Youth Training Scheme

9. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the number of two-year YTS places actually contracted for.

Mr. Trippier: At 1 July, the latest date for which statistics are available, contracts had been signed for 332,480 YTS places. This is nearly three quarters of the places we shall need during this year, and represents very good progress.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Minister aware that, according to figures that have been published by the Youth Training Board, only 44 per cent. of basic places had been contracted for by May and that a full 80 per cent. were still under negotiation? Will he say how much of an improvement that is? Does he realise that there is considerable concern among larger firms that the MSC is seeking to fill the old mode B-type places, with the result that it is having to suffer considerable delays in the placements that it would like to offer? Will the Minister explain what he intends to do about this?

Mr. Trippier: I do not accept the last part of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question, but I can update him on the first part. The latest figures show that 88 per cent. of the places that we need have been approved by AMBs. That is the definitive figure. It compares with 79 per cent. at this time last year, and that is substantial progress.

Mr. Dorrell: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most worrying aspects of the present unemployment

position is a co-existence of high rates of employment and emerging skill shortages? Does it not follow that the increased investment that the Government are making in ensuring that the training effort is more closely attuned to labour needs will in the end reduce unemployment? Is it not extraordinary that Opposition parties that claim to espouse the cause of the unemployed should be so anxious to belittle the efforts that the Government are making?

Mr. Trippier: I welcome my hon. Friend's supplementary question and I agree with every word of it. We are trying to concentrate, as he has suggested, on more work-related training with the YTS. We think that a start should be made before young people leave school. Thus, there is a good reason for pushing TVEI, which is work-related. The two schemes are complementary.

Mr. James Hamilton: Will the Minister recognise that many of the young people who have been contracted to YTS schemes are not being taught any skills? Many of them are carrying out labouring-type jobs and, as a result, many of them are disillusioned. I sent a letter yesterday to the Paymaster General setting out the case of a young person who had been contracted to a YTS scheme and who had done a labourer's job from start to finish.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General and I will consider the hon. Gentleman's letter. We shall study it carefully and respond as positively as we can. I think that he is wrong to suggest that young people on YTS schemes are disillusioned. The facts prove that more than 80 per cent. of those who have taken advantage of YTS places are satisfied with the training that they have received.

Mr. Lawler: Will my hon. Friend confirm the experience that I have had which is that in my constituency a significant number of young people are taking up YTS schemes voluntarily as a first option, and that others are giving up dead-end jobs, which they went into on leaving school, to go into the YTS to acquire a skill? Will he encourage the MSC to maintain the publicity campaign, which has been so successful, to counter some of the sniping criticism that comes from some Opposition Members and others?

Mr. Trippier: I welcome the last part of my hon. Friend's supplementary question. We are anxious, with the MSC much in the lead, to continue the publicity that seems to be widely welcomed throughout the country and not only by my right hon. and hon. Friends. The degree of flexibility that we have introduced to the scheme encourages youngsters who have never thought of self-employment, for example, to contemplate it. That is to be widely welcomed as well.

Mr. Sheerman: Is the Minister aware that there are serious difficulties emerging in various areas on mode B provision? Even on the April figures, 132 sponsors of mode B provision had given up, which equates to 10 to 12 per cent. of the places. Is there not a worrying tendency for inner urban area places and places that are open especially to young black people to diminish? What will the Minister do to encourage more YTS places in the inner cities and for more young blacks?

Mr. Trippier: I do not share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the premium places—not mode B places; we do not call them that. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) referred only to the actual places, not to the premium places. Those figures are higher. Ninety-seven per cent. of places have been approved. Our interest is in getting youngsters on to YTS. Where a number of managing agents have been saying that their schemes are closing down, my concern has been to make sure that all the youngsters previously covered by the scheme are adequately covered by the new scheme. The figure of 97 per cent. is very impressive.

Labour Statistics

10. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Paymaster General what is the figure of unemployment in the Sheffield travel-to-work area; and what percentage this is of the potential work force.

Mr. Lang: On 12 June 1986 the number of unemployed claimants in the Sheffield travel-to-work area was 46,700, which represents a local unemployment rate of 16·1 per cent.

Mr. Flannery: Does the Minister remember the poster put out during the 1979 election campaign, to try to prove to the people that the Tories would get them all back to work? Will he undertake to come to the great east end of Sheffield, which lies so still and quiet, remembering only the promises made at that time? Will he hold out to our people some hope of returning to work? Will he come and see what his Government have done to working people? There are 16·9 per cent. out of work, and many others too, although the Government will not admit it.

Mr. Lang: We are certainly concerned about the level of unemployment in Sheffield and elsewhere. I regularly visit Sheffield. On one recent visit I called in at the job club at Woodhouse. The hon. Gentleman may care to know that that club enjoys considerable success, placing 78 per cent. of its members in jobs.

Mr. Dickens: Did we not come to office in the face of a world recession? Did we not come to office to be faced with over-manning through the cosy arrangements of the Socialists and the Lib-Lab pact? Did we not have to face the bulge year for school leavers? Have we not outstripped the rest of Europe in job creation? Are there not more people working today than ever before? Is not 1987 likely to be a good year for getting people back to work?

Mr. Lang: In spite of the difficulties described by my hon. Friend, we have managed to ensure that over 5,000 people in the Sheffield area are benefiting from the youth training scheme and over 5,000 from the community programme. We have also managed to make sure that Sheffield has benefited from £8·5 million in regional assistance since 1979, and has been allocated over £4 million under the urban programme for the current year.

Mr. Duffy: Is the Minister aware that the recently published report of the Sheffield careers service declares that there is no real improvement in employment opportunities for young people? Last year—the seventh year of Tory Government — it had the dubious distinction of returning the highest recorded figures for youth unemployment in the history of Sheffield. Which of the Government's policies will relieve those figures?

Mr. Lang: I have just referred to 5,000 places under the youth training scheme. Under the two-year scheme, the number of places in the current year will be 6,000. The number of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in the area has risen by 53 per cent.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

11. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Paymaster General how many schools and colleges will be participating in the technical and vocational education initiative by the end of the current year.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There are likely to be about 660 schools and colleges participating in the TVEI pilot projects by the end of 1986.

Mr. Rowe: Is that not a remarkable achievement, and one that is very much to be desired and that will go a long way towards meeting some of the skill shortages of which we have heard this afternoon? Will my right hon. and learned Friend take steps to ensure that when the young people concerned enter employment they are properly managed by kicking some of these companies — especially the 20 per cent. of large companies — which do no management training at all and therefore ill-treat or misuse the skills which my right hon. and learned Friend takes such care to develop at school?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his commendation of the steps that we have taken so far. Our experience shows that the improvement in the curriculum in schools and the greater work experience that it gives the pupils is now very popular with teachers, parents, pupils and potential employers of those coming out, which is why we have announced the national extension of the project. Industry still needs to put more effort into training in Britain. We continue to encourage firms to do so and we continue to give positive support to those firms which do.

Mr. Eastham: In uttering statements about making available £900 million over 10 years, was the Paymaster General not deceiving the people, because in fact only £12 million has been allocated for next year and only £41 million for the year after, which is only a drop in the ocean?

Mr. Clarke: The national extension is being phased in, which is why the expenditure builds up to an average of £90 million a year over the next 10 years. Obviously, it is necessary to phase in the national extension, building on the success of the pilots. The figure that we and the hon. Gentleman have cited is being provided for the initiative because of its value to pupils and industry.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Favell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen. Tonight I shall be attending a dinner at the United States embassy in honour of Mrs. Reagan.

Mr. Favell: On the day that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has announced his attack on NHS waiting lists, will my right hon. Friend consider the outstanding success of the partnership, in Wales between the NHS and the private sector in tackling a shortfall in kidney dialysis treatment? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the number of new patients has trebled as a result of that partnership, and is not there a great deal for the rest of the United Kingdom to learn from that?

The Prime Minister: We welcome the involvement of the private sector in the NHS making provision for services of that kind, which give excellent value for money. They often enable people on NHS lists to get much-needed treatment more quickly. It is for the local health authority to evaluate the treatment, but we wish that scheme well and hope that there will be more.

Mr. Steel: In all her considerations with our Commonwealth partners of the measures that we should be taking against the South African Government, what weight does the Prime Minister attach to her need to safeguard the position of Her Majesty as head of the Commonwealth?

The Prime Minister: As I said last week, Mr. Speaker, I propose to follow the well-established practice of my predecessors and not answer questions, direct or indirect, about the monarchy.

Sir Edward Gardner: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the two main aims of any policy towards South Africa should be, first, to end as soon as possible the system of apartheid, and, secondly, and equally important, to protect the victims of apartheid from any unnecessary and avoidable suffering and bloodshed? Does she further agree that both those aims must overrule and override all other considerations, including who will or will not take part in the Commonwealth Games?

The Prime Minister: I wholly agree with my hon. and learned Friend. It is our aim to end apartheid as soon as possible. [HON. MEMBERS: "How?"] By negotiation, and by not applying punitive sanctions, which would hit those whom we most wish to help. I agree wholly with my hon. and learned Friend that the games are the Commonwealth Games, and it would be best if those who have thought of boycotting them would reconsider their decision and come and join in those games.

Mr. Kinnock: Following the Harare meeting last week, is it not clear that a categorical statement from the Prime Minister to the effect that the British Government will impose sanctions against South Africa would increase the probability of restoring participation in the games, would improve the prospects of the Heads of Government meeting in August reaching productive conclusions, and would at the same time strengthen the hand of the Foreign Secretary in his visit in South Africa. Will the Prime Minister now make such a categorical statement?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman is asking me to make a categorical statement before the Heads of Government meet to consider the matter. That is absurd.

Mr. Kinnock: By failing to make such a categorical statement at this stage, a categorical statement for which Commonwealth leaders both black and white have repeatedly asked, the Prime Minister is spoiling the games, is fracturing the Commonwealth and is sabotaging the mission of her own Foreign Secretary. Does she not realise that the Harare statement was an olive branch, or is she in such a state of paranoia that she cannot tell the difference between an olive branch and a club?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is asking us to reach a conclusion or to commit ourselves to a conclusion before the meeting which meets to consider the matter. That is an absurd way of going about any Heads of Government conference.

With regard to the Commonwealth Games, I stress that they do not belong to Britain or to Scotland. They belong to the Commonwealth. The countries which are withdrawing are damaging their own games and damaging the chances of their own athletes. In relation to the Heads of Government conference, we shall consider before we conclude.

Mr. Kinnock: The one thing that the Prime Minister says that is true is that the Commonwealth Games are not directly her business. What is her business is the withdrawals from the games, because that is entirely her fault. When she says that to make a categorical statement in favour of sanctions is absurd, is she saying that Rajiv Gandhi, Bob Hawke and Brian Mulroney and all the rest are absurd?

The Prime Minister: I am adhering to the Nassau accord. The Heads of Government, or their representatives, after the appropriate time, will then meet to review the situation. If in their opinion adequate progress has not been made within this period, we agree to consider the adoption of further measures. The right hon. Gentleman is following his old trick of reaching a conclusion before the meeting is even held.

Mr. Cyril Townsend: Bearing in mind the nature of the crisis in South Africa and Britain's pivotal position inside the international community on this issue, will my right hon. Friend at least keep open the possibility of personal talks with the state President, inside or outside South Africa, in the critical weeks ahead?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary goes to South Africa today to have talks with the President and a number of other people in South Africa — for more than one set of talks — and he may need to go again later. Obviously, I should like to consider the results of what he is able to achieve as President of the 12 countries of the Community before saying anything further. I do not exclude what my hon. Friend has said.

Q2. **Mr. Craigen** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Craigen: Does the Prime Minister know, and if she does will she tell us, whether some of the recent comments about the rift between No. 10 and the Palace on South Africa have arisen from certain sections of the Tory establishment——

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Craigen: —have arisen from certain sections of the Tory establishment who feel that she has been in the job too long as Prime Minister and has developed monarchical tendencies of the absolutist kind?

The Prime Minister: I make it clear once again that I propose to follow the well-established practice of my predecessors and not answer direct or indirect questions about the monarch. I note that the hon. Gentleman has no complaints about how the Government are running the affairs of this country.

West Derbyshire

Q3. **Mr. McLoughlin** asked the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to visit West Derbyshire.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Mr. McLoughlin: My constituents in West Derbyshire will be sorry to hear that my right hon. Friend has no plans to visit West Derbyshire at present. If she were able to visit West Derbyshire, they would tell her of their pleasure about yesterday's announcement by the Post Office of record profits and about the recent announcement of the profits of the *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has not been here for very long and he should be given consideration in asking his question.

Mr. McLoughlin: They would also tell her of their pleasure about profits recently announced by British Steel, the first profits for 11 years. Does my right hon. Friend not agree that that those profits hold out the prospects of a better future for the people who work in those industries than the major losses that were made when the Opposition were in government?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I join my hon. Friend in congratulating both the management and the workforce of British Steel on turning a £1 billion loss into a £38 million profit. It is excellent news. I congratulate, similarly, the management and workforce of the Post Office and Girobank, who have exceeded all the targets that the Government set for them. I will one day visit West Derbyshire.

Mr. Cyril Smith: If the Prime Minister did decide to visit West Derbyshire, does she think that it would increase or reduce the 100 Tory majority?

The Prime Minister: I am only after increasing the Tory majority.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ashton: As the Prime Minister cannot comment on her relationship with the Palace, can she comment on her relationship with her Back-Benchers? On the front page of yesterday's issue of *The Times* there was an article under the heading

"Rebel Tories accused of Thatcher plot."

What does the Prime Minister intend to do about such treachery? Or is it really a plot by the editor of the Tory *The Times* Mr. Rupert Murdoch, to drive a wedge between the Palace and Downing street? Is she aware that many of us hope that the Prime Minister will not be forced to resign over a constitutional crisis, because we think that she is one of the best vote-winners the Labour party has got?

The Prime Minister: I propose to continue to answer questions from this Dispatch Box, in the hope that one day the standard of questions from the Opposition may improve.

Q5. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Has my right hon. Friend had a chance to welcome the visit of Mr. Peres to Morocco to meet King Hassan, which shows that the middle east peace process may be under way again? Since my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is hoping to meet ANC leaders in South Africa, will my right hon. Friend in due course authorise meetings with Palestinian leaders, including members of the PLO?

The Prime Minister: I hope that the ANC will agree to meet my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on his visit to South Africa. If it does not do so, it will cast doubt on its commitment to try to solve the problem by peaceful means. Like my hon. Friend, I very much welcome the initiative of the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Peres, in visiting King Hassan of Morocco, with a view to a new initiative to help to solve the middle east problem. My hon. Friend will be very much aware that, unless the PLO accepts resolutions 242 and 338, I do not believe that it can be involved in negotiations to solve the middle east problem.

Mr. Loyden: In view of the answers given today on unemployment by the Prime Minister's right hon. and learned Friend, does she understand that the majority of people in this country now realise that the Tory Government have failed absolutely to solve the unemployment problem and that the scandal of unemployment is surpassed only by the Government's arrogance in disregarding completely the misery caused to millions of families by the direct actions of this Government?

The Prime Minister: The numbers of people in employment and in self-employment are once again rising, and that is good news. In the last three years 1 million jobs have been created. In the end we will solve the unemployment problem only when companies in manufacturing and services produce the goods and services that people are prepared to buy. The most worrying thing at present is the height of unit labour costs in Britain compared to those in other countries. That could be losing us export orders.

Mr. Gregory asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gregory: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to praise the British Railways Board and its hard-working staff for turning a massive loss last year into a surplus of over £49 million before taxation? Does she agree that the investment by the Government in electrification was a good investment?

The Prime Minister: I gladly congratulate British Rail on its excellent achievement. It has turned from a £408 million loss in 1984-85 to a small profit in 1985-86, and that is good news. I wish British Rail well and I am glad that we decided to invest in further electrification.

Miss Boothroyd: In view of the evasive answer given to me last week during Question Time by the Prime Minister, will she now take the opportunity to clarify her position? Is she in favour of early majority rule in South Africa, or is she not? The House demands an answer.

The Prime Minister: I am in favour of the process decided and described in the Nassau accord about apartheid. The Eminent Persons Group was sent to South Africa. The accord said — I shall read the whole paragraph — [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister is answering the question.

The Prime Minister: The accord said:

"We agree on the compelling urgency of dismantling apartheid and erecting the structures of democracy in South Africa. The latter, in particular, demands a process of dialogue involving the true representatives of the majority black population of South Africa. We believe that we must do all we can to assist that process, while recognising that the forms of political settlement in South Africa are for the people of that country — all the people — to determine."

That was the unanimous view of the Commonwealth.

Miss Boothroyd: On a point of order Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise out of questions?

Miss Boothroyd: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: As long as it is not a supplementary question, I shall allow it.

Miss Boothroyd: It is not a supplementary. I seek your guidance Mr. Speaker. Is it right for the First Minister of the Crown to treat the House in this way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is an experienced Chairman, and she knows that that is a supplementary question.

Rate Support Grant

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With permission, I should like to make a statement about local government finance for 1987-88.

The Government believe that for 1987-88, there should be a rate support grant settlement which allows no increases or very low increases in rate bills if authorities budget responsibly, which provides greater certainty for all authorities about their grant entitlements, and which provides tough pressures on authorities that persist in overspending. I want to make it clear that this settlement means that high rate bills, or poor standards of service, or both, will be entirely the fault of the authorities concerned.

Under the present rating system, the link between the governed and the governors is being increasingly weakened. Our proposals for the future will certainly restore that link. Meanwhile, this settlement is designed to secure the greatest possible democratic accountability that the present system can yield.

My proposals are as follows. For local authority current expenditure, I propose to set provision at £25·2 billion. This is a cash increase of £2·9 billion over provision for 1987-88 published in January's public expenditure White Paper and is equivalent to an increase of 3·75 per cent. over local authorities' budgets for 1986-87. This level of provision represents a reasonable assessment of what local authorities will spend, given the level of inflation and their past pattern of spending. It does not follow that I believe that local authorities need to spend at this level. There is widespread scope for carrying out services more efficiently and for cutting out extravagant provision. Therefore, I am reviewing — I want to consult local authorities as usual about—the aggregate of GREs with the aim of keeping them broadly steady in real terms.

I propose to provide authorities with about £[illegible]·85 billion in aggregate Exchequer grant. This will maintain the grant percentage at 46·4 per cent. of relevant expenditure, the same as in 1986-87. This is a cash increase from 1986-87 of over £1 billion. This will mean that, if authorities spend in line with the generous provision that we have made, there should on average be no need for rate bills to increase at all. Ratepayers will have the certainty that the blame for high rate increases lies fairly and squarely at the door of their local authority.

These are very substantial increases, which I am sure will be welcome. They make it fair for me to propose a change that will both provide authorities with greater certainty as to their grant entitlement and increase the penalties for the reckless, putting greater pressure on authorities to spend less.

Hitherto, overspending authorities have contributed grant to a pool of money which was then recycled to all authorities on the basis of a common rate poundage. Individual authorities had no certainty as to their grant entitlements, which depended not only on their own expenditure decisions but on those of all other authorities. Of necessity, authorities could be informed of the estimated level of recylced grant only at a late stage, when it was difficult for them to take it into account in setting their rate or precept. More paradoxically, even those authorities that chose to overspend regained some recycled grant.

Therefore, I intend to introduce legislation in the autumn, after consultation, to abolish grant recyclying. As a result, authorities will be able to plan their budgets and rates with much greater assurance. Their grant entitlement will depend solely on their own expenditure decisions. It also means a tougher regime for high spenders. They will continue to lose grant if they overspend, but will not then gain on the roundabouts, by getting recycled grant, part of what they lost on the swings.

I move on to the incorrigible, for whom we have rate limitation. I am today laying before the House a report setting out how authorities will be selected next year. I am selecting authorities not selected in 1986-87 whose budgets are more than 12·5 per cent. above GRE and show growth of more than 4 per cent. since 1985-86. I am reselecting those authorities that were selected in the current year whose budgets are more than 12·5 per cent. above GRE and show growth either of more than 4 per cent. since 1985-86, or more than 20 per cent. since 1982-83.

On these criteria, nine authorities not selected in 1986-87 — Brent, Brighton, Gateshead, Hounslow, Middlesbrough, Newham, North Tyneside, Sheffield and Tower Hamlets — are selected. Eleven authorities are reselected — Basildon, Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newcastle, Southwark and Thamesdown. Together with the authorities subject to automatic precept control under the Local Government Act 1985, this will mean that, in all, the Government will next year be limiting the rates or precepts of 40 authorities with expenditure totalling some £4·5 billion.

I am today also setting the expenditure levels for the 20 rate-capped authorities. For reselected authorities, there will be a cash standstill on expenditure levels for 1986-87. All but one of the nine newly selected authorities have budgeted in 1986-87 for a significant increase in spending. Therefore, I am setting their expenditure levels at the lower of their cash budget this year and a 6 per cent. increase over their 1985-86 budget. I am, of course, open to representations for redetermination of expenditure levels. As last year, where an authority applies for redetermination because it considers that special accounting arrangements imply unachievable economies in 1987-88, I will not use my powers to reduce expenditure levels or impose conditions.

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Home Department, Education and Science, and Transport will be making separate announcements about expenditure levels for ILEA and the joint authorities subject to precept limitation under the Local Government Act 1985.

In the field of capital expenditure, I have to tell the House that, from authorities' own forecasts, we expect the main national cash limit in England to be overspent in 1986-87 by about £700 million.

The Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" set out proposals for a better capital control system, both for the benefit of the national economy and to give local government greater stability. I am urgently considering what steps to take in the light of the responses. I shall make a further announcement later.

I am acting now, however, to end an abuse relating to advance and deferred purchase schemes. These are borrowing schemes masquerading as expenditure. They make use of a bank or other intermediary to transfer expenditure from the year when work is done to an earlier

or later year. On the scale that some authorities have indulged in recently, those devices store up massive problems for their ratepayers in the future.

I shall therefore introduce legislation to ensure that prescribed expenditure is incurred in the proper year regardless of when the authority pays. That will apply to all advance and deferred purchase arrangements, and other arrangements with a similar effect, entered into after midnight tonight. It will apply to England and Wales. Officials are writing to local authorities today with the details.

I am considering an exemption, so that authorities which genuinely need to use the device for its proper purpose for an occasional project are not disadvantaged. Any such exemption would also take effect from a date to be announced.

My proposals for this settlement — decisions on abolition of recycling, rate limitation, advance and deferred purchase — increase the pressure on high spending authorities. On the other hand, authorities which spend sensibly and prudently will have a clear opportunity to keep rate increases low. They will have greater certainty and will not have to gamble their budgets and rates on the unpredictable proceeds of recycling. Where authorities spend up, they will forfeit grant. Where spending exceeds all reasonable limits in flagrant disregard of the interest of ratepayers and local businesses, authorities will be subject to rate limitation.

With a realistic spending provision and a generous grant level that keeps the percentage of grant aid unchanged, I believe that this is a settlement which the whole House should welcome.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I begin by congratulating the Secretary of State on a very cleverly worded and presented statement: a statement, however, which is grotesquely misleading. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that he has improved the presentation while diminishing the substance of what he had to say? Whatever has happened to the criticisms and to the cacophony of calls of overspending and of abuse by local authorities round the country? Do not at least his words demonstrate the needless damage that has been inflicted on local authorities for the past six years?

Is the Secretary of State aware that in his statement it is easy to recognise the all too-obvious deception? He is planning to reduce grant-related expenditure aggregates. Is he not also effectively increasing penalties on all local authorities by making the slope of penalty for spending over GRE steeper and more punitive than ever before?

Is not the Secretary of State also, in his plan to end the recycling of grant, effectively saying to local authorities, "Here is additional money in the settlement, which will be taken away later, almost certainly in at least an equal amount, by the termination of the recycling of grant."? Does not that simply mean a massive windfall for the Treasury, which will be used for other purposes than local authority expenditure?

Does the Secretary of State agree with the Prime Minister's words in the Ryedale by-election when she claimed — as a result of the spending of Labour authorities in the main — that education spending per pupil was at a record level? Is the right hon. Gentleman planning to end that level of expenditure in the settlement? Will his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science agree?

Is it not clear from the studies by the expenditure groups of the Department of the Environment's own officials that any improvement in efficiency that local authorities may be able to achieve will amount to less than 1 per cent. of the total planned expenditure, so there is no way that local authorities can counteract the cuts that have been imposed on them in the past in that way? How can the Secretary of State claim that there will be little or no rates increases, when the Government are planning tomorrow to overturn the defeat in the House of Lords on the Social Security Bill, which will ensure, through legislation, that everyone, regardless of income, will have to pay a minimum of 20 per cent. of their rates bill in future? Does not that mean that thousands of families that do not pay anything at the moment will face major increases in their rates bill as a result of the legislation?

With regard to the end of the recycling of grant, is not the implication of what the Secretary of State has had to say that the Treasury may be taking back up to and perhaps beyond the £1 billion extra that he is saying will be available to local authorities as a result of the settlement? Does not the massive increase in rate capping mean that this Government are spreading even further the central domination and control of local authorities? How is it that, yet again, the right hon. Gentleman has been able to rig the criteria for rate capping to catch more Labour authorities, while avoiding the fact that the City of London is the biggest overspender of GREA of all authorities in the country? Is it not scandalous that he continues to rig the criteria to exclude the City of London, while including impoverished inner-city Labour authorities?

In his promise to legislate to end what is called creative accounting, is not the Secretary of State really enforcing further cuts on many authorities, reducing their freedom and flexibility, and their room for manoeuvre? Is not this statement, like all the others, a naked attack on local authorities, on the quality of the services that they provide, and on their freedom to provide the services that their electorates want? Like all the others, is it not doomed to bring political disaster to this Government, who are already on the road to defeat?

Mr. Ridley: I must check with my office to see whether the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) was sent a copy of the wrong statement. I cannot make any correlation between his remarks and the welcome and important announcement which I have just made.

The local authority associations asked for the provision to be increased by £3 billion and it has been increased by nearly that amount. I simply cannot see how the hon. Member for Copeland can say that, in some way, this is not what local government asked for.

The hon. Gentleman alleged that the GREs had been reduced. As a result of the statement I have just made, the GREs will be increased by 3·75 per cent. or possibly more, subject to consulting the authorities. The hon. Member said that the slopes had been steepened for grant penalties. That is simply not true. I never mentioned anything of the sort, nor is it our intention to do so. So far, the hon. Gentleman has been wrong on three out of three and I regret to tell him that he is wrong on the fourth point, regarding grant recycling.

I have never heard a poorer response to a statement — generally welcomed by the House — and a more incompetent piece of analysis than that which came from

[Mr. Ridley]

the hon. Member for Copeland this afternoon. With regard to grant recycling, we have made realistic provision both for spending and for aggregate Exchequer grant. No authority need incur any penalty or forfeit grant provided that it does not spend more than this year's budget plus the GDP deflator. We have allowed for inflation and we have allowed for the present high level of spending, but if, on top of that, an authority makes a further increase in spending, it surely deserves to forfeit grant. If every authority behaves in the reasonable way that I have suggested, no grant will be forfeited. The hon. Gentleman's suggestion that £1 billion of grant would be forfeited is ridiculous. The hon. Gentleman is aware that at this year's level of provision, which was well under the level of spend, only £628 million was forfeited, under totally different conditions.

The hon. Member, in seeking to consider next year's rate support grant, made reference to the Social Security Bill, but I think that that is something which should be discussed tomorrow.

With regard to rate capping, the hon. Member asked why a number of Labour authorities appear in the list. The hon. Gentleman is aware—I read out the criteria—that the criteria are clearly designed on levels of spending and levels of increases in spending. The fact that a number of Labour authorities appear in those lists is surely an indictment, if ever an indictment was needed, of the Labour authorities which go in for profligate waste.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the best compliment that the House can pay him is summed up by the lacklustre response of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)? Does my right hon. Friend accept that all prudent councils and all ratepayers of cash-happy councils will welcome his statement this afternoon? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is no coincidence that, of the 20 rate-capped authorities, 19 are Labour-controlled and one, Tower Hamlets, is Liberal-controlled? Does my right hon. Friend further accept that industry and commerce in the inner cities will be grateful for his protection so that they can go about creating jobs and wealth?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right about the political denomination of the 20 councils I mentioned. However, I must say that that is only a temporary state of affairs and it may not last much longer. The business rate is vital to those of us on this side of the House who are trying to increase employment.

The greatest damage which has been done to employment in large parts of the north of England has been the excessively high business rates which have been levied by local authorities. If this settlement makes a contribution to holding or even reducing the rates in those parts of the country and results in a better climate for business, I shall be proud of its contribution to job creation.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Is the Secretary of State aware that, although the increase of nearly £3 billion is welcome and the fact that the Government have not reduced the grant again below 46·4 per cent. is a consolation to local authorities, they believe that the increase takes account only of inflation during the past few years and will probably not compensate for the increased wages that they will have to pay the police, teachers and other public officers? Although the change in the recycling rules is welcome because it is better for local authorities to have certainty, it is tinged with danger because there is no prospect of gain for any authority which tries to conform with the Secretary of State's guidance. That is a defect of the abolition of recycling. Does the Secretary of State agree that the change from 20 per cent. to 12·5 per cent. above GREA for rate-capped authorities is tightening the screw and that capital controls are the thing which local authorities resent most? They want to be able to spend their capital as they choose and not have the Secretary of State increasingly dictate that they can spend less and less of it.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman has to accept that local authorities must be responsible for the wages that they negotiate and the pay of their employees. I cannot be expected to accommodate the public spending rule to whatever they choose to pay. I am glad of his welcome for the abolition of grant recycling. There is a chance of gain this year because, with the increased aggregate Exchequer grant, authorities will get more grant, provided that they do not go and forfeit it by engaging in overspending.

The hon. Gentleman is not alone in welcoming the abolition of grant recycling. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who I see in his place, referred to it on 5 March when he said that it was causing great financial uncertainty in Labour and Conservative authorities alike. I should like to introduce him to the hon. Member for Copeland to see whether they can agree about grant recycling.

I am delighted to be able to help the constituents of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) by rate-capping the borough of Southwark. That will protect his constituents from excessive rate demands which would otherwise have been made. I have not yet announced the result of our consideration of the capital controls system for local authorities.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on what appear to be some encouraging and welcome features in his statement. Is he aware that much of the trouble this year, and all of it in my county, was caused not by the local authority but by the Government setting the taper points for the reduction of grant in totally the wrong place? Will he assure the House that nothing so unjust and ridiculous can possibly happen under the system that he has announced this afternoon?

Mr. Ridley: I was delighted to receive my right hon. Friend only last week, when he brought a delegation from Buckinghamshire to discuss these matters with me. I think that he will agree that much of what he said has been incorporated in the statement. I cannot go further into the effects on individual counties until we have completed the consideration and consultations about GREAs, but in the next statement, at the end of the year, I hope to be able to give much closer exemplifications of the effect on every authority.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Is the Secretary of State aware that the British people will not be fooled by a Conservative Secretary of State in a Government who, when county and district councils were Conservative-controlled, cut rate support grant so that rates were forced

up, but who now that nearly every local authority is Labour-controlled or hung, are giving enough RSG to keep rates down? Does he agree that this is a vicious attack on local government? The Secretary of State is giving a so-called extra £1 billion, having taken £17 billion off local authorities during the past seven years, and he will claw most of that £1 billion back and keep it, rather than redistribute it, as happened in previous years. The Government did a calculation last year of how much clawback there would be because of penalties. Has the right hon. Gentleman made that calculation of the money that he will keep this year?

Mr. Ridley: With so many authorities now in the hands of Labour or hung, it is right that the Government should do something to protect the unfortunate ratepayers and victims of those vicious councils. I give notice to the hon. Gentleman and to all councils that after this rate support settlement there will be no excuse for any authority to increase its rates bills by more than a small amount. If such increases occur, they will be the fault of the authorities concerned. The Conservative Government have come to the aid of ratepayers throughout the country, despite the Opposition.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I congratulate my right hon. Friend, first on maintaining the percentage of Government support, particularly unless and until we can spread the load much more fairly, and, secondly, on tackling the abuse of the deferred payment scheme. Is it his assessment that more authorities should have greater funding than at present to enable them to improve the fabric of school buildings, housing, and so on?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The figure of 46·4 per cent. remains and I believe that many authorities will welcome that. I also thank my hon. Friend for his reference to the stopping of abuse of the deferred payment scheme which will save ratepayers immense burdens in the future. It is in the interests of ratepayers that that abuse should be stopped quickly before it gets them into real trouble.

Capital allocations are not the subject of this statement, but I shall be putting forward proposals or making a statement about that aspect at a later stage. The figure, of course, will be covered by the public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Bernard Conlan (Gateshead, East): Does the Secretary of State recall that the borough of Gateshead has been more than responsible in its budgeting to meet the terms and conditions laid down by the Government? Is it not perverse that an area more deprived than most in terms of education, housing, health care, social services and employment should be treated so badly? Does he agree that it is disgraceful and scandalous that such a responsible authority should be rate-capped?

Mr. Ridley: Gateshead is spending 14 per cent. above GRE. Its spending has increased by 11 per cent. and the local rate by 27 per cent. since 1985-86. Those high-spending performance figures bring the authority within the criteria for rate capping.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my right hon. Friend accept that my two excellent district authorities of Lancaster and Wyre, which have scarcely raised rates at all in the past six years, will greatly welcome a settlement that is fair to those who do best?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I confirm exactly what she has said.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): The Secretary of State has made much of increased spending in rate support grant available to local authorities, but will he confirm three points? First, will he confirm that the extra amount is a mere fraction of the amount taken away in the past six years? Secondly, how much of that amount does the Treasury intend to claw back? Thirdly, will he guarantee that, once the entitlements for individual authorities are announced, they will not be altered retrospectively, as is being considered in the case of Southwark?

Mr. Ridley: I acknowledge that the grant percentage has continued to fall under this Government, a process started by the Labour Government, and that it has fallen from 61 per cent. to 46·4 per cent. That has been a deliberate act of policy by the Government to put more of the burden of local spending on local people.

I cannot confirm that there will be any clawback from the grant. It is a realistic settlement and if authorities spend in line with inflation and not above there will be no forfeit of grant at all. That is quite different from the situation last year when it was clear that the provision was less than the likely spending, so there was a heavy forfeit of grant for recycling.

I did not quite follow the hon. Lady's third question, but I assure her that there will be no change in grant entitlement as the year goes on because of the abandonment of recycling.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): In view of the extent of Labour protest about the penalties suffered by authorities which have spent far above their GRE, may we conclude that authorities which spent considerably less will be very favourably treated under the new proposals? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that such authorities will be allowed to spend more to reach their GREs? If they cannot do that, what is the point of having GREs at all?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend will need to study the full details when they are worked out to see the effect on any particular authority, but I confirm that, when an authority makes a budget, it will be able to read off immediately the amount of grant that it will receive for that budget and will be able to maximise its share of the grant by its spending plans. In addition, it should be able to benefit from the increased grant. I believe, therefore, that there is every opportunity for prudent authorities to do better out of this settlement.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): What about Labour councils such as Birmingham which have always spent less than GRE figures but have lost grant this year because the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor referred to notional rather than to actual figures for last year? Will they lose next year as well?

Mr. Ridley: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is referring to events which were brought to a successful and correct conclusion late last night, but Birmingham, like all authorities, must abide by the rules for rate support grant and share equally.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Whatever my right hon. Friend considers to be the right and proper rules, by which Birmingham should abide like everyone else, does he appreciate that cities such as

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Birmingham have very special problems? What hope is there for them in this settlement? Are we to get more money or are the slums to continue? Which is it to be?

Mr. Ridley: It depends entirely on how much money Birmingham budgets to spend. If it budgets for this year's spending plus 3·75 per cent. it will maximise its grant take.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is the Secretary of State aware that official statistics published by the Department show that the London borough of Newham is the second most deprived borough in the country? Is he aware that the local council is wrestling with massive problems, including a terrible housing problem, exacerbated by the need to remove tower blocks like the notorious Ronan Point? Does he agree that on any objective criteria the Government should be granting partnership status to Newham and helping the area, not rate-capping it? Does he agree that decisions about expenditure should be taken locally and decided by local democracy in elections? Is he aware that in the elections immediately following the setting of a rate in Newham Labour won 60 seats of of 60? Is that why he is being so vindictive to Newham?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman cannot be pleased or proud of the figures for Newham, with spending 18 per cent. above GRE, an increase of 19 per cent. since 1985-86 and a local rate which has gone up 66 per cent. above the class average and is 50 per cent. higher than in 1982-83. Any authority with a record like that would be wiser to keep quiet.

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement will be received with relief and considerable satisfaction by most local authorities, although their ability to achieve low rate increases will clearly depend on the level of wage increases? Will my right hon. Friend continue to bear very much in mind the problems of traditional low-spending authorities which have little or no waste remaining to be cut out but which wish and are required to provide an adequate level of public service?

Mr. Ridley: I believe that authorities of the type that my hon. Friend has described will find that they can accommodate the spending that they need with aid from the Government as a result of this settlement. I commend the settlement to my hon. Friend, because it recognises the very point about past rate support grant settlements that he has been making with such persistence.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does not the Secretary of State accept that, in the past seven years, we have seen a process of centralisation of local government power in the hands of the Secretary of State and that rate increases in most of the inner urban areas, particularly in inner London, have largely been due to cuts in the rate support grant? How are inner London local authorities supposed to maintain very important services such as social services and meet the legitimate aspirations that have been democratically decided upon by their people if they are placed within the confines of a central Government straitjacket, the like of which has never been seen before?

Mr. Ridley: I shall give the hon. Gentleman a straight answer. Islington rent arrears are running at 16 per cent. As that authority is short of money, why cannot it collect that rent and spend the money on these more important purposes?

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Does the Secretary of State accept that there will be considerable satisfaction in counties such as Lincolnshire at this settlement, in that, because there is a realistic assessment of next year's likely budget and there has been no decrease in the Treasury grant, it should be possible to keep rates at their present level? Will he consider one point? In counties such as Lincolnshire, which are spending below their GREs, there is as yet no provision to uplift spending towards their GREs without grant penalties. Will my right hon. Friend consider whether such a facility can be extended to such counties?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said. It will be possible for counties such as his, and many others like it, to be able to maintain their present level of services in real terms by zero or very small increases in rates if they do not go in for an overspending rush. We shall have to look at the details for each county as they come in, but this settlement is designed to enable counties such as Lincolnshire to achieve just that result.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): When the figures show that rate-capped authorities such as Basildon, Lewisham and Greenwich are budgeting this year, despite the limits, to increase their spending over last year by anything up to 25 per cent., how can the Secretary of State claim that rate capping is protecting the ratepayers of those authorities?

Mr. Ridley: Far be it from me to tell the hon. Gentleman about events in his constituency, but he knows full well that, had it not been for rate capping, Greenwich would have had very much higher rates than it has now. There are various ways in which some authorities have sought to evade the effects of rate capping, which will cumulatively catch up with them in the end.

Mr. J. E. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the £1·25 billion available for teachers' pay is still in place? Will he further confirm that it will be subject to the conditions announced at the time by our right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) when he was Secretary of State for Education and Science?

Mr. Ridley: I can confirm that this settlement does not include any allowance for the increase in teachers' pay which may or may not be approved by the Government depending upon the ACAS process. The £1,250 million was offered to the local authorities in return for improvements in the way in which the teaching forces managed in order to improve educational standards. When the ACAS process is complete, the Government will consider the outcome in full and decide whether the release of all the £1,250 million is justified.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): When will the Secretary of State accept that the really irresponsible action has been that of the Government? How can the Government blame local authorities when those authorities have been robbed of millions of pounds? For example, Sheffield has lost more than £240 million in grants and has received a measly £20 million, despite the fact that all the problems remain. The Government may take the money away, but while the problems remain, the

caring will continue. I am convinced that, had this Government been in power many years ago, the good Samaritan would have been shot for irresponsibility.

Mr. Ridley: Under this settlement, Sheffield has an opportunity to mend its ways, and I should have thought that it would have been grateful.

Sir John Osborn (Sheffield, Hallam): Will my right hon. Friend therefore explain why Sheffield was not rate-capped last year? Is he satisfied that the budget it submitted to escape rate-capping was false, because last January we were threatened with 70 per cent. increases? Will he now confirm that the £33 million a year which Sheffield is borrowing from French banks will be stopped forthwith, because ratepayers — whether householders, commerce or industry — will welcome such action in relation to a council that has not run its affairs properly?

Mr. Ridley: Sheffield was not selected last year, because it did not meet the criteria. This year it does meet the criteria. We operate strictly in accordance with the criteria, and I cannot pick or choose within or without those criteria.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): How will the right hon. Gentleman's statement help those who are unemployed in Middlesbrough, and how will it help the impoverishment of the town by general Tory economic policies since 1979 by depriving that town of the wherewithal to raise the money to meet its needs? No doubt the Secretary of State will quote a series of figures, but let me quote to him a litany of sad and tragic facts — 28 per cent. unemployment, with 98 per cent. unemployment in certain areas. How will the right hon. Gentleman's statement help the town? Is he merely another of these high-ranking Tories who are full of hypocrisy towards the town and have no generosity of spirit?

Mr. Ridley: I must tell the hon. Gentleman in all sincerity that Middlesbrough has had a local rate that is 89 per cent. above the average for its class, and spending per head has been 119 per cent. above the class average. Figures such as those — I say this seriously — result in crushing burdens on business, which in turn cause unemployment. The hon. Gentleman quoted unemployment. Has he yet realised that there is a very strong link between these profligate rate policies and unemployment, and does he now see how rate capping can even be a contribution towards helping the prosperity of his own town?

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): While I warmly welcome the statement, I return to the point made by my hon. Friends the Members for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) and for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern). Does my right hon. Friend agree that the present formula simply does not take into account those local authorities that have very rapid growth? We are so far behind that we need some means of catching up.

Mr. Ridley: I was pleased to discuss these matters with my hon. Friend when he came to see me. He will take some comfort from the fact that we were able to help him over the problem of the new town of Milton Keynes in his constituency. I do not believe that it would be possible to base GREs on expected increases in population, as he suggested, as it would also be necessary to base them on expected decreases in population, which would be too difficult to achieve. But we are constantly listening to what he and his hon. Friends say, and I hope he will think that we have gone a long way to helping them in this rate grant settlement.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Today's grants announcement is designed to be equivalent to a projected inflation figure next year that will, in the right hon. Gentleman's words, produce a standstill in the rates. Will not the announcement produce a standstill in the conditions of misery that are experienced in Coventry and other cities throughout the country? Coventry will still have 1,000 council houses unfit for human habitation and 6,000 private and council houses without toilets or hot and cold running water. It will still have 14,000 houses each of which will need repair and modernisation amounting to £4,500. We do not need a statement such as this or even a change of Minister — we need a change of Government who will restore the money to local authorities so that they can bring the housing and other conditions of working people up to the level that they ought to be.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman displays his usual ignorance. The refurbishment of housing is a capital responsibility, not part of the rate support grant. Coventry could well help itself by making sure that its rent fund allowed for the proper repair and maintenance of its houses rather than resulting in large amounts of dereliction because of its own neglect. If the hon. Gentleman really cares about the people of Coventry, he will be looking forward to the election of a Conservative council there.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): While I welcome the abolition of grant recycling, which returned to Leicester more than £200,000 after it was rate-capped and, therefore, did not qualify for it, why has Leicester city not been included in those which should be rate-capped? Two years ago it was rate-capped and since then it has continued to waste ratepayers' money. The council has just made an 80 per cent. rate rise and is showing no regard for ratepayers and the decent people of Leicester.

Mr. Ridley: I must say to my hon. Friend, although I know that he is a staunch advocate of ratepayers in Leicester, that Leicester does not come within the criteria which I set out, so it would be wrong to include it.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Does the Secretary of State recognise that Leicester city council is struggling to meet great problems of deprivation and that his statement paid practically no regard to the duties of local authorities to care for people in need and to the services which they provide? Does he recognise that the words "democratic accountability", which he used, in the local authority context mean the accountability of councils to those who elect them, and that he and the Government continue to remove that accountability?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. and learned Gentleman must also bear in mind the accountability of councils to those who find the money which they spend. That is something which one never hears from the Opposition Benches. If local authorities spend £25·2 billion in 1987-88, they will be spending more than a quarter of total public expenditure, which is an extremely large sum.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must take into account the subsequent business on the Order Paper today, which is

[Mr. Speaker]

extremely heavy. I shall allow questions to continue for a further 10 minutes, which will give a full hour for the statement. That is rather longer than usual.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): While I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement and the general gist of what he said, does he accept that some Conservative Members are deeply worried about responsible, prudent but expanding authorities which have been penalised under successive rate support grant announcements over recent years? Will he give a categorical assurance that authorities which have obeyed the Government to the letter will in no way be penalised by this settlement? Although it is not a major part of the statement, will he reassure us that the limitations on the spending of capital receipts will be relaxed for responsible authorities which want to use the money to build specialist accommodation, particularly for the elderly?

Mr. Ridley: I have not dealt with capital receipts today. They will have to be the subject of further study before we can make an announcement. On my hon. Friend's first point, I have tried to design the settlement with the sort of views and objectives he has in mind, but it is never possible for a rate support grant settlement to be wholly acceptable to every authority. However, within that constraint this will prove to be a settlement with which authorities can live and provide a decent level of service.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Is not one of the most blatant cases of political bias revealed in rate-capping Brent? When it was Labour-controlled it was rate-capped. Last year there was a Tory authority which left behind a series of repairs to be done on school buildings and a whole log jam of work to be done. The council is now Labour-controlled and has again been rate-capped. Is the Secretary of State aware that each week my ratepayers spend £30,000 on bed-and-breakfast accommodation for 650 homeless families, that 18,000 people are on the waiting list for housing, that our social services have made the news throughout the country, that 52 per cent. of the population fall into ethnic minority groups, and that 80 per cent. of our school leavers are black and in July will go straight on to the dole? We are urban-aided, but is it not nonsense to give urban aid with one hand and to rate-cap with the other?

Mr. Ridley: Is it not nonsense to have 36 per cent. rent arrears in the borough of Brent? Would it not be a useful source of income if the council at least collected its rent and spent the money on the purposes to which the hon. Gentleman rightly draws attention?

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): My right hon. Friend will be aware that by far the largest proportion of any local authority's budget is that spent on wages and salaries. In that context, does he agree that there is a great responsibility on those who negotiate increases in wages and salaries to ensure that more local authority resources can be spent at the sharp end rather than on wages and salaries? Does my right hon. Friend agree that no local authority should accept a generous settlement merely to employ additional staff when all local authorities should be economising on the number of staff?

Mr. Ridley: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It is no excuse to hide behind the fact that local authorities have chosen to negotiate a number of wages and salaries centrally, because, if they do that, they must take account of the cost of those settlements.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Having rate-capped a large number of inner city partnerhips and programme authorities, which is bad enough, what is the point of penalising those authorities if they spend within the resources available to them, and of preventing them from spending on capital projects when at the same time the Department, in a statement on urban programmes, is encouraging local authorities to take inner-city partnership schemes into their main stream and to spend on capital? What is the logic of the Government's programme on inner cities?

Mr. Ridley: I must confine the statement to the rate support grant. The hon. Gentleman includes matters which deal with capital control and public expenditure provision of capital. I cannot yet discuss that.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): While I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, will he take into account the fact that both his immediate predecessors told my authority that, in return for a bad settlement, there would be a better one next time, and that that has now happened two years in a row? Can Solihull expect to be lucky the third time?

Mr. Ridley: Not a bit of it. My predecessors' promises have been fulfilled.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Will the Secretary of State concede that the principal reason for the savage rate increases over the past two years is that the Tory Government have removed £17 billion in rate support grant from local authorities, and that it has little to do with so-called profligate local authorities? Does he agree that, if his statement that there should be no rate increases is not to be dismissed as pernicious propaganda, he must acknowledge that that will depend on the circumstances of individual authorities and such factors as the rate of inflation and the level of wage and salary increases, especially for teachers? Is he aware——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Two questions is plenty.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman must look at the spending figures. During the past five years total local authority current spending has grown by 38 per cent. in cash terms, which is 7 per cent. in real terms. It is not merely a question of who is finding the money. There has been massive growth in the total spent, as those figures prove. Before an agreement is reached on teachers' salaries between the Government and other parties, we must see the nature of the agreement with ACAS. The Government have not yet been shown that. I must reiterate the conditions of that, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) has made clear to the House in the past.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, if local authorities such as East Sussex continue to be as prudent as they were last year and in previous years, they will benefit even more next year?

Mr. Ridley: As my hon. Friend knows, I cannot give the details for every county council, but the settlement is designed to provide a good level of grant. Providing that

authorities do not increase their spending above the rate of inflation, they should be able to manage with zero or small rate increases.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Secretary of State confirm that the help that Bradford will receive from central Government in real terms as a result of the settlement will remain the same? Will he come to Bradford, or receive a delegation from Bradford, so that he can consider urgently the need for additional money to deal with our housing and education crises and inner-city decay?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot comment on the precise effects on individual authorities, as I have said to all hon. Members who have asked me that sort of question. I can say that the settlement will enable authorities to achieve a proper level of services without large rate increases.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): My right hon. Friend's statement will be welcomed especially by careful authorities such as my own. Will he accept that authorities such as Gillingham are worried about the contortions and distortions of the system which allowed two years ago for Gillingham to be in penalty, when it was spending 49 per cent. of its GRE, while this year it has not had to raise a rate at all, due to the munificence of my right hon. Friend's immediate predecessor?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I think that the changes that I have announced today will have a considerable effect in simplifying the system and making it easier for authorities, ratepayers and electors to understand what is happening.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Will the Secretary of State break the habit of a lifetime by giving the Chamber a straight answer to a straight question and so allow hon. Members fully to appreciate the level of cunning and slyness in his ploy and its presentation this afternoon? Will he give an undertaking that the total GRE will equal the total running expenditure and that there will be no unallocated margin?

Mr. Ridley: I can give the hon. Gentleman a straight answer—no.

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents who are ratepayers and who live in the Basildon district council area will be pleased by the announcement that Basildon is to be rate-capped for the third successive year? Is he aware also that ratepayers in my constituency and ratepayers everywhere will be indebted to him for the action that he will be taking from midnight tonight on the advance and deferred purchase schemes?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The spending of his authority is 97 per cent. above GREA and spending per head is 99·9 per cent. above the class average. I am sure that he and his constituents will be grateful for the action that is being taken. The second part of my hon. Friend's question was addressed to deferred purchase. The leader of Islington council, Ms. Hodge, is engaged in one of these schemes to the extent of £38 million. In a newspaper report, she is alleged to have said:

"This is a high risk strategy, because not only does it depend on a change in government but it also depends on a commitment by the Labour Front Bench to bail us out when they return to power."

The Leader of the Opposition is in his place and he can give such a commitment. I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman is prepared to give such a commitment this afternon to bail out his friend in Islington. But I doubt whether he will ever be in a position to deliver.

Several Hon. Members *rose*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope to be able to call all hon. Members who have been rising in their places to put a question to the Secretary of State for the Environment. When that has been done, we must move on. I ask for one question from each Member and for brief replies.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Secretary of State has said that the London borough of Newham is spending 18 per cent. over its GREA and will be rate-capped. The City of London spends 190 per cent. over its GREA but it is not being rate-capped. Does the right hon. Gentleman realise how deeply offensive it is to describe the spending programme of Newham as profligate when it is surrounded by massive social and economic problems? Will he emerge from behind the Dispatch Box and his prepared statement and come to Newham to see things for himself?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that only authorities that fall within the criteria can be selected for rate limitation. The authorities which I have read out are the ones that fall within that criteria.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Surely what is grossly misleading is the present system which penalises low-spending authorities by rewarding high-spending Labour authorities? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, with the welcome demise of recycling from low-spending shires to cities, the ratepayers of Lincolnshire, who have a low-spending authority, will never again be faced with high rate increases as long as we have the present Government, committed as they are to this reform, and as long as they re-elect Conservative county councillors?

Mr. Ridley: I think that I can confirm what my hon. Friend seeks, but I cannot commit my successors on the Government Benches as future Secretaries of State for the Environment.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that those outside the House will have understood what the statement is all about? They will understand that it is balanced on a piece of election elastic. That is why he has not been able to answer some of the questions which have been put to him. It seems that the statement has been made because there might be an early 1987 election. Is it not a double standard for the Government——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Skinner: It is brief.

Is it not a double standard to tell local authorities that they cannot be involved in rescheduling their debts when at the same time, or two or three years ago, the Government told the banks in Britain that they could reschedule debts to Argentina? They told them as well that if they managed to get a default upon the payment of these debts, they would be relieved of the requirement to pay taxation upon the debts. There is one law for the banks in Britain, which have been relieved of the requirement to pay taxation, and another for local authorities that

[Mr. Skinner]

provide public services to help the people in their areas, who are being hammered by the Government. There is one law for the bankers and another for local authorities.

Mr. Tony Banks: A Government of shysters.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is in scintillating form this afternoon. The entire House will be impressed by his immense financial expertise.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): As my right hon. Friend will be aware, due to the financial good sense of the previous Tory administration of Gloucestershire county council it has received a £5 million refund this year. However, it is now a hung council and the £5 million has not been redistributed among the ratepayers. Does my right hon. Friend think it in order for Gloucestershire ratepayers to look forward to a rate reduction next year?

Mr. Ridley: I am glad that my hon. Friend brings in the county which he, I and others represent. I can tell him that this year Gloucestershire county council, under Liberal-Labour control, forfeited £4·3 million of grant and received £4·8 million in grant from the recycling mechanism, which seems to be an odd reward for overspending. The only way to remedy this is for a change of control of the council.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Will the Secretary of State tell the House what his credentials are for understating the extent of the real poverty that now exists in inner-city areas? Will this statement make any real difference to the mean life which the Government have inflicted on my constituents and those of many of my right hon. and hon. Friends?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman says that there is poverty in his constituency. That poverty can be made worse only by having high rates and taking money away from those who are suffering poverty. He has still not grasped the point that there is great benefit in reducing the burdens which authorities such as that in his constituency are placing upon the poorest in society.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): The prospect of low or zero rate rises will be welcomed by employers in Norwich and by ratepayers generally. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that we are moving towards a system that will reward low spenders and to a far simpler system that will be free of the sort of gobbledegook which we have had to tolerate for so long?

Mr. Ridley: I hope that authorities will find that they can manage with zero or low rate increases if they keep their spending roughly in line with inflation. I hope also that my statement will make the system a little easier to understand, though I confess that it is still extremely complex.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the treatment of Norfolk county council in recent years has been harsh and unfair and that it is not its fault that this year has seen large rate increases? Will he accept that his statement will be most welcome, and will he give a categorical assurance to Norfolk ratepayers that he means business when he says that he is determined to improve the lot of prudent shire counties?

Mr. Ridley: I hope that what I have done will have that effect. I cannot, of course, forecast what will happen in future.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it needs to be said time and time again that if there is a rate increase next year in counties such as Oxfordshire it will be due entirely to the profligate spending policies of the Labour and SDP parties, whose only hobby seems to be a wish to write cheques on other people's bank accounts?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend has the point exactly right. I can add only that what he has said does not apply solely to counties such as Oxfordshire. It applies to every county and district throughout the land. If there are to be rate increases, the public must know full well that the blame must lie fairly and squarely upon the authority concerned.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The Secretary of State told my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that he was not planning to increase the slope. How, then, does he intend to implement the statement that he has made today, that he will increase the penalty for the reckless? In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), the right hon. Gentleman has now admitted that GREAs may well be set well below the level of aggregate expenditure. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will confirm that, if that is so, he will be putting into the settlement a mechanism by which he could claw back up to the £1 billion that he says that he is giving to the local authorities. How much is the Treasury budgeting to claw back from the local authorities? Is it not the message of the settlement that, after suffering seven years of assault, local authorities should beware of Conservative Ministers bearing gifts? While the rhetoric of the settlement has about it all the stench of the pre-election pork barrel, it will in reality do precious little to meet the social and economic consequences of the Government's actions and the poverty and hardship that they have produced, or to commence rebuilding of Britain that is the task that we shall inherit.

Mr. Ridley: I hope that, if the hon. Gentleman inherits anything, he will do his homework and get it right. He has not got it right. The penalty for reckless authorities is the abolition of grant recycling.

Mr. Straw: The right hon. Gentleman does not understand the system.

Mr. Ridley: I understand the system very much better than the hon. Gentleman. If a local authority loses grant on the present slopes, that grant is forfeited and goes back to the Treasury. However, since the grant and the provision are set at a realistic level, no authority need lose grant, nor do we expect any authority to lose grant unless it goes in for a wild bonanza. For that reason, we do not expect any grant recycle to be forfeited. The hon. Gentleman must make up his mind whether what I have announced is a cheat or a pe-election bribe. It cannot be both.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order later.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order after the Standing Order No. 10 application. That is the normal procedure.

Later

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During the statement made by the Secretary of State for the Environment on the rate support grant for England, he constantly referred to the levels of rent arrears in various boroughs. Is it in order for the right hon. Gentleman deliberately to mislead the House about rent arrears when they are the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Security?

Mr. Speaker: No hon. Member, whether from the Front Bench or the Back Benches, deliberately misleads the House. The hon. Gentleman seems to be seeking to raise a point for debate. As I understand it, there will have to be an order on this matter, and so there will be a debate. I shall bear the hon. Gentleman's claims in mind when we come to that point.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member took and subscribed the Oath

Mrs. Llinos Golding, for Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Nigel Duncan Williams

4.44 pm

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed release from prison on parole of Nigel Duncan Williams."

I believe that we should consider the basis upon which violent criminals are released from prison on remitted sentences and especially on parole. In particular, I ask that we be allowed to debate the interests of the victims families, who are affected by released prisoners returning to the local area.

In April, four years ago, Nigel Duncan Williams of Whitestone crescent, Bodmin, stood charged, with murder. He was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 12 years in prison. He had lain in wait for and had brutally assaulted, Caroline Cooper of my constituency, who died from her injuries. He then dragged her into the churchyard. Four years ago this month, on appeal, his sentence was reduced to eight years. Next Tuesday Nigel Williams is to be released on parole, to return to Bodmin and live round the corner from the victim's family, close to the very place where the crime took place.

This state of affairs is horrific for the locality and in particular for the Cooper family, who have another daughter now aged 15.

The issue is not restricted to one family and one convicted criminal. In the statement made by the Home Secretary in 1983 about the conditions upon which parole was to be given to violent criminals, and in the subsequent report ordered to be published by this House on 3 June this year, many points are made about the close consideration to be given to the parole of violent prisoners. However, there is no reference in either the statement or the report to the interests of the victim's families.

I ask that urgent consideration be given to this issue by the House. In the case to which I have referred, some four years and two months after his conviction, a violent criminal is to return to the very locality of his crime and the neighbourhood of the affected family.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed release from prison on parole of Nigel Duncan Williams."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

I will now take the points of order.

Wages Bill

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I wish to raise a point of order on a matter of which I have given prior notice.

Together with several of my Labour comrades I sat for many weeks on Standing Committee K, considering the Wages Bill, which is to come before the House tomorrow, after the Social Security Bill and the Social Security Regulations, and after the clotted cream and strawberries have been served at a wedding that I understand is to take place.

There are strict conventions governing what we are allowed to discuss tomorrow night. For instance, we are only allowed to discuss the amendments made to the Bill in the House of Lords. I should have liked to be able to table amendments to those Lords amendments and to put them before the House tomorrow evening. However, the Lords are not debating the Third Reading of the Wages Bill until tonight. The Vote Office can provide no information about what has been discussed so far or what changes might be made tonight on Third Reading.

I should like to quote from the Report of the Select Committee on Procedure of 1984-85:

> "If Parliament is adequately to scrutinise legislation and to have time to improve it, we believe it is essential that (emergencies excepted) reasonable periods are allowed for reflection and for consultation. We propose that the following intervals be laid down in Standing Orders as the minimum between various stages of a Bill:
>
> *(a)* two weekends between first and second reading;
>
> *(b)* ten days between second reading and the start of committee stage; and
>
> *(c)* ten days between report from committee and the start of Report stage."

We shall have barely 10 hours after the Lords finish with the Bill before it returns to the Commons. I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, to protect the 3 million workers who are to lose either holidays or legal minimum wages under the Bill, and to protect the rights of hon. Members adequately to analyse legislation and to consult those affected before we speak in the Chamber. May we either have advice on how to delay consideration of the Bill or have the recess delayed for at least two weeks so that we can do the job that our electors sent us here to do?

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As one who sat through the Standing Committee which considered the Wages Bill, may I put it to you and the House that this is an involved, complicated and technically difficult Bill which is not easy to understand? Indeed, for most of the time, the Minister in charge of the Committee found great difficulty in understanding the Bill. When he was forced to depart from the bits of paper that his advisers gave him, he flopped around because he did not understand it.

I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that we shall not have the Lords amendments until tomorrow morning and that that is grossly unfair. There are many interests involved. The Low Pay Unit, a public institution, is very much involved. It has taken a great interest in the Bill. It will be impossible to consult it in the few hours that are available. Many trade unions are involved, as is the Equal Opportunities Commission. This is an abuse of the procedures of the House and I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will be kind enough, as you always are, to give some thought to the matter.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you also bear in mind, when considering the point of order, the shabby way in which the Government have treated hon. Members during the passage of the Bill? On numerous occasions in Committee I and other hon. Members protested because *Hansard* was not available to enable members of the Committee to consider the Minister's speeches. It was pointed out that because there were 10 Standing Committees at that time the printers could not print *Hansard* in time. The *Hansard* staff were not at fault.

In addition, the Government amended part III during the passage of the Bill which brought forward the redundancy payment scheme. The reason given was that the Government intended to take another £50 million out of the redundancy fund — a fund incidentally, which is contributed to by employers and employers in Britain. Nevertheless, the Government wanted to steal an extra £50 million. That is the way that the Government have treated the Bill during its passage through the House.

I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will bear in mind what my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East, (Mr. Nellist) said about amendments not being available for hon. Members to consider until tomorrow because the other place is having the Third Reading debate today, during which amendments can be tabled.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that you will appreciate that my hon. Friends have a real and serious point. We shall have amendments which, as yet, we can only speculate on, and which will be of profound importance to many of our constituents. Yet not only shall we not see them, but, unless you are willing to help in some way, there seems at the moment to be no way in which we shall be able to amend the amendments in time. Therefore, we would appreciate your guidance on that. However, I emphasise that, whatever arrangement you make, for which we shall be grateful, we still regard them as a poor substitute for the proper consideration that the legislation should have had.

Mr. Speaker: I understand the difficulty in which the House finds itself, and I thank the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) for having given notice of the point of order. He and the House will know that I am not responsible for the organisation of business; that is a matter which would be best discussed through the usual channels.

The timing of the business and the fact that the House is due to go into recess this weekend is in the hands of the House. I fully recognise the difficulties in which hon. Members have been placed in this matter and I shall bear that in mind when I make my selection.

Mr. Nellist: Further to my point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am not sure that I can help the hon. Gentleman any more.

Mr. Nellist: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for having helped in the way that you have done so far. However, did I correctly understand the latter part of your remarks to mean that if amendments were tabled tomorrow as a result of tonight's Third Reading in the other place, the normal convention of a couple of days' notice would be set aside so that Labour Members could table amendments? Secondly, through you, Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the

House is listening, may I appeal to the Leader of the House to say whether he has anything to say about the position in which we will find ourselves tomorrow?

Mr. Speaker: I shall consider starred amendments, and I might, if time is short, have to consider manuscript amendments. We do not know what will happen, but I shall consider the matter carefully.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I am sure that the House will appreciate your concern, Mr. Speaker, to help us in the way in which amendments are selected. The arrangements for dealing with the Bill are, of course, far less than ideal, but they are by no means unprecedented. If the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) would like to do just a little homework, he will find that taking the Commons consideration of Lords' amendments the day after the Bill leaves the other place is by no means unprecedented. For example, the Social Security (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, completed its passage in the other place on Wednesday 23 March 1977 — a significant date — and was considered by the Commons on Thursday 24 March.

South Africa (Sanctions)

4.57 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for the application of the Nassau Accord in relation to sanctions against South Africa.

The accord was agreed in October 1985 and it had three main areas of action. First, there was the immediate application of limited sanctions — in fact, to coin the Prime Minister's words when she reported to the House, teeny-weeny sanctions.

The second area of action was that an Eminent Persons Group of seven should be set up whose terms of reference were clearly laid down in the accord. They were charged with the responsibility of bringing back to the Commonwealth Heads of State conference a full report within six months. The timetable was subsequently altered to about nine months.

I am sure that all hon. Members are au fait with the contents of the Eminent Persons Group's report. I want to quote the penultimate paragraph of the conclusions of that report, which gives the House an overwhelming reason for supporting the Bill. It says:

"The question in front of Heads of Government is in our view clear. It is not whether such measures will compel change; it is already the case that their absence and Pretoria's belief that they need not be feared, defers change. Is the Commonwealth to stand by and allow the cycle of violence to spiral? Or will it take concerted action of an effective kind? Such action may offer the last opportunity to avert what could be the worse bloodbath since the Second World War."

Thirdly, the accord outlined a further eight points which should be taken into account if adequate progress had not been made in nine months. Those eight points should be spelt out because that, no more and no less, is what I am asking the House to endorse this afternoon and to put into formal legislation. They are: a ban on air links with South Africa; a ban on new investment or reinvestment of profits earned in South Africa; a ban on the import of agricultural products from South Africa; the termination of double taxation agreements with South Africa; the termination of all Government assistance to investment in and trade with, South Africa; a ban on all Government procurement in South Africa; a ban on Government contracts with majority-owned South African companies, and, last but by no means least, a ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa.

Those were the eight points that were set out in the Nassau accord. Many of us believe that they are minimal and want full mandatory economic sanctions to be applied to South Africa, and I believe that the House must make a decision this afternoon in the light of the developing situation in South Africa.

As we all know, the situation in South Africa is deteriorating daily. Calls for the application of sanctions as a means of ensuring that the Pretoria regime gets round the negotiating table with the true leaders of the people of South Africa are almost universal. The South African Council of Churches, the trade union movement, Bishop Tutu, Nelson Mandela, and, as we reported last week in the South Africa debate, some business men, are now calling for sanctions to be applied. Outside South Africa, many nations are asking for action to be taken. The Synod of the Church of England, Archbishop Runcie, and the United States Congress have called for sanctions against South Africa, and during the past two or three days two

[Mr. Richard Caborn]

white members of the Commonwealth, including the Canadian all-party committee on human rights, have asked for broad economic sanctions to be applied from 30 September 1986. If agreement is not arrived at by the Commonwealth heads of Government, there are calls for Canada to go it alone.

The Australian Prime Minister, in a special appeal to the British Prime Minister, said:

"I can only express the hope that the developing attitudes around the world will impress themselves upon those who have to make the decisions in London when we meet there in a very short time . . . and I hope these events are becoming clear to the British Prime Minister."

The most significant movement over the past few days has come from British industry. It was reported in the press on Sunday, and was followed up yesterday, that the British Industry Committee on South Africa, which includes 50 of the largest British companies operating in South Africa, has changed its position and is now calling for limited sanctions. Why has it done this?

Its change of position has been caused by the slogan that is going the rounds in Africa and elsewere, "Buy British Last". That has caused the change in attitude in British business.

The options before the House are now clear. Do we support the vast majority of the Commonwealth, the overwhelming majority of the South African people, all the front-line states, the Church inside and outside South Africa, and, latterly, many parts of the business community? Or do we reject this near universal concensus in slavish adherence to the British Prime Minister, whose credibility sinks daily at home and abroad in that she says that sanctions will hurt the blacks?

For 100 years the blacks in South Africa have been struggling to be free. Over the past 50 years, since the Nationalist Government was formed, apartheid has been written into the constitution. In rural areas, the blacks have one of the highest infant mortality rates, at 500 per 1,000, of any country with a comparable GDP. South Africa is one of the worst countries in the world in that respect. Spending on education is balanced to one in favour of the whites. There is one doctor for every 300 whites, but only one doctor for every 12,000 blacks.

The blacks in South Africa have been suffering for years and they are calling for help. The Government have not heeded that call. The Prime Minister turned her back on the Brandt report, and her conduct towards the Third world in aid has been nothing less than deplorable. It is unacceptable for the Prime Minister to lecture us about the suffering of the South African people and claim that sanctions will cost Britain jobs.

The Prime Minister's claims have a hollow ring, both inside and outside the House, as there are 4 million people unemployed in this country and there are even some doubts about how the unemployment figures are calculated. The Tory Benches must take note of the major companies in the United Kingdom, which, in response to the slogan "Buy British Last" have said that not imposing sanctions could be extremely costly for the United Kingdom, if not in the short term, certainly in the long term—*[Interruption.]* I am trying to make myself heard.

The House has a special responsibility in the matter. In 1909 it passed the constitution Act for the Union of South Africa. This is possibly the only constitution based on racism, as racism is inherent in the Act. There was some opposition to the Act, but we have a responsibility now not to drag our heels on this issue. We must take the lead, bearing in mind that that constitution derived from this House of Commons and that the racist regime of apartheid was built into that constitution.

An interesting letter appeared in *The Times* on 27 July 1909. It said:

"We of European birth or descent are, by virtue of our civilisation, undoubtedly dominant; we shall, if we deserve it, remain dominant, but only in so far as we recognise and perform the duties which our privileged position entails. Our dominance must be dominance of merit in a free country, where career is open to talent and to civilised men,"—

this may refer to Conservative Members—

"with no discrimination upon such unsound, unstable grounds of race or colour."

The point of that letter to *The Times*, written nearly 100 years ago, is relevant to the House in 1986. Discussions are necessary. Will this House, in 1986, have integrity, humanity and compassion and act in concert with the Commonwealth and approve my Bill this afternoon? The Bill will signal to South Africa and to the Commonwealth that we mean business and that we will attack the apartheid regime.

5.7 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): In this House we know how frequently private Members' Bills are used as publicity stunts. Because we understand that, we do not normally wish to waste too much time on them. Indeed, we often let them pass on the nod. This practice is not so generally understood outside the House.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) is a member of the national executive committee of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. His arguments are familiar to us and I do not need to spend time on them now. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) was heard in relative silence. We have freedom of speech in this place.

Mr. Onslow: The hon. Gentleman cannot persuade me that if his Bill is allowed an unopposed passage today it will not be trumpeted around the world by the Anti-Apartheid Movement as a major setback for the Government and their policies. It becomes all the more obvious that that would be so when we remember, as the hon. Gentleman did not remind us, that the Foreign Secretary sets off today on the second stage of his South African mission.

We all know the case against apartheid, and we are united in this House and elsewhere in the country in our opposition to that abhorrent system. At the same time, we should also be united in wishing the Foreign Secretary success in achieving the objectives that he has set. If his mission is ultimately unsuccessful—as I hope it will not be—we know that then will be the time to consider with our partners in the European Community and in the Commonwealth, and with our friends in the West, what measures should be taken.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have made that clear time and again. In the meantime, it does no one any good to join the Leader of the Opposition—who is such a great boy for the bombastic cliché—in talking about

"using sanctions to bring Botha to heel."

Whatever the armchair guerrillas may say, the imposition of sanctions is not an end in itself. Our end and our aim must be a peaceful settlement in South Africa, not the promotion of violence and death.

The House today should give its full support, therefore, to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary in his very difficult task. We must not weaken his hand by suggesting that we believe that he can intimidate or blackmail Pretoria into submission. We should reject this thoroughly mischievous and unhelpful measure.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and Nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):-

The House divided: Ayes 196, Noes 243.

Division No. 273] **[5.10 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'll)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Tony Banks.

NOES

Ancram, Michael
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan

Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gwilym Jones and
Mr. Gerald Bowden.

Question accordingly negatived.

Orders of the Day

Education Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Before the House begins consideration of the Bill I should draw attention to a printer's error affecting amendments Nos. 117 and 118. These amendments are printed today in the correct order, having been transposed yesterday. However, names intended for the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), amendment No. 118, have been added to the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), amendment No. 117. This error is regretted, but Mr. Speaker was aware of it when he made the provisional selection of amendments.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): On a point of order that relates to the very heavy business for tonight, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have all seen Mr. Speaker's provisional selection of amendments. You will appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that some of them relate to very important matters. There is a substantive debate on amendment No. 153 about corporal punishment, and there will be substantive debates on special schools, transport to schools in rural areas and the closure of schools procedure.

Many hon. Members and especially those from rural areas will wish to speak on all those matters. It is highly unsatisfactory that the debate on such important matters should be held very late tonight. I should like to raise with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and through you with my right hon. and hon. Friends the possibility of not requiring the House to consider such matters late tonight.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has my sympathy but it is not a matter for me.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Further to that point of order, this is a most important and complicated Bill. Could my hon. Friend the Minister give an undertaking that additional time will be found to discuss the Bill at a later date?

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Chris Patten): I am always anxious to be helpful on Tuesdays. We had a good and constructive Committee stage on the Bill, and in the light of that we would like to make as much progress tonight as possible. However, one has to look at these things philosophically and if we cannot complete matters tonight I hope that we shall be able to do so when the House comes back in October. We shall have plenty of time then to accomplish that. We shall make such progress as we can during the course of the evening.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): The Minister has clearly said that if we do not make progress tonight it would not be beyond the bounds of possibility for the House to discuss these matters after the summer recess. Since that is the case why do we have to go on so late this evening?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As I have said, that is not a matter for me.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I should like to correct something in *Hansard* because it appears that I inadvertently misled the House by talking about the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Bagier) instead of the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay). I was discussing Mr. Speaker's ruling on sartorial elegance and I should never wish to confuse those two hon. Gentlemen. May I have the record corrected and may I apologise to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that that will be noted.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If we do not finish the business tonight and if after the recess the Government decide that there shall be further debate on this important Bill, will it be in order for the Government at that stage to bring forward further amendments?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We shall deal with that when we come to it.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before the Minister speaks to new clauses 18 and 12 may I seek your advice? New clause 18 is an admirable one and gives us almost exactly half of that for which we asked. There is no way that we can vote against clause 18, but we should like to move new clause 12 separately. In a substantial number of new clauses and amendments the Government have gone some way towards meeting the Opposition, and it will be impossible to oppose those amendments. May I have your ruling on whether we might move new clause 12 separately and have a separate vote on it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We shall consider that when we reach the appropriate stage.

Ordered.

That the Education Bill *[Lords]*, as amended, be considered in the following order, namely, new Clauses Nos. 18 and 19, Amendments relating to Clauses Nos. 44 and 45, other new Clauses, Amendments and Motions relating to Clauses Nos. 1 to 43 and 46 to 61, new Schedules and Amendments to Schedules. *[Mr. Chris Patten.]*

New Clause 18

ACCESS TO PAPERS ETC. OF GOVERNING BODIES

'(1) The Secretary of State may make regulations requiring the governing body

(a) of every county, voluntary and maintained special school; and

(b) of every institution of a kind mentioned in section 56 of this Act;

to make available, to such persons or classes of person as may be prescribed, such documents and information relating to the meetings and proceedings of the governing body as may be prescribed.

(2) Documents and information required by the regulations to be made available shall be made available in such form and manner, and at such times, as may be prescribed.'—*[Mr. Chris Patten.]*

Brought up, and read the first time.

5.25 pm

Mr. Chris Patten: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient also to consider new clause 12.

Mr. Patten: In bringing forward this new clause, the Government are fulfilling an undertaking made at

[Mr. Patten]

Committee stage, especially to my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris). We were spectacularly open-minded and generous in Committee, and this is one of several examples of the generosity of spirit that we showed during the happy weeks of June and July. The purpose of the new clause is to enable regulations to be made to provide for public access to the documents of school and college governing bodies.

It may be helpful for me to say a little about the content of the regulations on which, of course, we shall consult widely in draft. I stress that because it is important. We intend to specify that the agendas, papers and minutes of governing bodies should be available for inspection at the school or college concerned, and at all the schools grouped under a single governing body. We intend to provide in the regulations that references to disciplinary matters concerning named individuals, whether pupils or staff, and to discussion of named individuals as potential members of staff should remain confidential. In the consultation process, we shall ask particularly for guidance on the precise form that such a provision should take.

In framing the regulations we shall also bear in mind the point made in Committee by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) that signed minutes would not be available until the meeting after that of which they are a record and we shall consider whether draft minutes should not therefore be made available. I should mention in passing that amendment No. 55 will delete the provision in paragraph *(c)* of clause 8(6) since this is overtaken by the new clause. I am sure that the House will welcome this further evidence of the Government's support for public access to papers.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): We welcome this small concession from the Government, although it is sad that they did not manage to come up with rather more, which would have made the Bill rather better. If the new governing bodies are to be affected by the Bill, it is important that there is as open an access to as many documents as possible. I hope that on many occasions, the governors will meet in public, so that they can encourage a wide debate on matters such as the curriculum, discipline in schools and resources. We all recognise that there is a problem, in giving access to documents, with certain issues with which governors deal, such as the appointment of staff, or the suspension of staff or pupils.

We still think that there would have been distinct advantages in going through the procedure, originally suggested by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris), and set out in the new clause tabled by the Liberal party. Simply adding this provision to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act would have made it more clear and precise to those who want to press for access to all the documents. The Act makes provisions for keeping confidential matters that relate to individuals, and it would be far easier if there were a clear statement of all the information that people have the right to seek. I suspect that it will only add to the confusion if access to information about governing body meetings is set out by regulations.

I appreciate that the Government want to consult carefully about the regulations but enshrining the right to information in primary legislation has major advantages. I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you will allow us to vote on new clause 12, which would go the whole hog and put the right into primary legislation rather than having the Government's compromise of doing it by regulation.

Mr. Freud: New clause 12 was originally drafted by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) and moved by him in Committee. He has a good record on open government and access to information matters. Essentially, the clause extends the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 to meetings of school and college governing bodies. There is a clear prima facie case for making that move.

The Bill is about democratising school governing bodies and involving more people in their affairs, and about extending their boundaries to give citizens a real part in governing their schools. It is not only right but necessary to open up the school meetings, given the new and enhanced responsibilities that the governing bodies will have.

Above all, I believe that the ideas embodied in the Bill, about involving parents and the community and making education more accountable, should not stop with the increase in the number of parents on the governing bodies. It is not good enough simply to legislate for such an increase. We should be concerned with ensuring the fullest possible opportunities for involving all the parents and the community as much of the time as is possible.

The real impact of parental involvement, which can be very profound, on educational standards, will come not from the formal election of a few parents but from the openness and accessibility of the work of the school and the governing body. The hon. Member for Oxford, East gave eloquent testimony to the actual working of open government in governing bodies when he spoke in Committee of schools where this was the normal and accepted practice. He argued, and I share his opinion, that decisions were better made in the open, and that the quality of the decision-making process was enhanced.

In Committee, the Under-Secretary argued that the Government would look into this matter with care when the time came to draft the regulations. However, what has been drafted is inadequate. What is so different about school governing bodies from local government that the former is to be dealt with by regulations rather than by legislation? Do the Government not recognise the immense symbolic importance of having such a clause in the Bill? The access to records and minutes already permitted by the regulations does not compare to a statutory right to attend the meetings.

New clause 18 is clearly inadequate and much less of a reform than would be acceptance of new clause 12. I ask the Government to think again about this. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to let the House have a separate vote on new clause 12 so that genuine access to information can be available to the people by right, and not as a special benefit. As the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said, we already have guarantees of confidentiality. We should like freedom of access to governing bodies meetings enshrined in legislation.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) for his support in Committee and for his kind words today. His support for freedom of information goes back a long way before I became a Member of Parliament.

I am pleased that the Government have moved new clause 18, on the basis that half a loaf is better than none and that we have made considerable progress since the Bill was first drafted. I would have preferred it if my hon. Friend the Minister had been able to take on board rather more whole-heartedly the provisions of section 100J of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act. I appreciate that there are some technical difficulties in moving to that stage straight away. However, I am grateful that we have been able to make substantial progress before the Bill left the House of Commons.

The hon. Member for Cambridge, North-East spoke about what we were being offered, and by implication what we were not being offered. We are being given reasonable provisions for documents and information relating to the meetings and proceedings of governing bodies. That is welcome, particularly as we shall not have to go through the charade of being able to see the minutes of governing body meetings only after they have been approved by the governors. That meant waiting until the next governors' meeting had approved and signed them, by which time they were meaningless. This point was taken well by my hon. Friend the Minister in Committee, and it is good to see that the words "and at such times" in new clause 18(2) are intended to cover that eventuality.

However, we are left with the absence from the new clause of any provision allowing members of the public to attend governors' meetings as a matter of right. There is an irony there. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary wrote to me and to other members of the Committee after the sitting in which my proposed new clause had been debated, and made it clear that the Government were not unsympathetic to the general idea of access to information and the extension of that to education. He went on to make a somewhat curious argument about how governors' meetings were not meetings in the sense of councillors' meetings or meetings of health authority members, but merely meetings of groups of people who were part of the administrative process of the education system—rightly, as a number of my hon. Friends have said. However, my hon. Friend went on to say that governors' meetings had a status that meant that they would be injured or devalued if the public were permitted access.

I stress that when I talk about public access, I accept, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, that when dealing with named individuals, whether members of staff or pupils, many of the conditions that apply now in local authority agenda where part II requirements are frequently invoked, should be made available for meetings of school governors. No one disputes that, least of all me or the other hon. Members on both sides of the House who have supported the campaign.

More importantly, the argument that there is something qualitatively different about a governors' meeting as distinct from the meeting of a health authority, and that the former should be treated differently for public access purposes, is most unconvincing. Members of health authorities are appointed from many different bodies. They serve various sectional interests and their job is far more technical than that of school governors. All hon. Members will agree that members of health authorities deal with a specific allocated budget, and so they are in many ways immune to political arguments. Their job is to dispose only of the health resources allocated to them.

It has always been accepted that the meetings of health authorities should be public, but the issues dealt with by school governors' meetings are just as relevant to the public.

Mr. Freud: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the issues dealt with by health authorities are not as confidential?

Mr. Norris: That is entirely right. However, the proceedings of a health authority and of a school's governing body are both likely to be extremely important to the local community. We are discussing whether we should extend to governors' meetings the old received wisdom that the meetings of a local council or of a local health authority can be attended by the public. Much attention has been paid to the idea of allowing public access to the meetings of water boards. For some reason it is suggested that school governing bodies should be exempt from this process. However, the distinction is neither logical nor, more importantly, justifiable. A more important principle is involved.

Mr. Chris Patten: Just to inform me more clearly on this matter, will my hon. Friend tell me whether the meetings of management units are held in public?

Mr. Norris: If we start talking about angels dancing on pinheads we could, no doubt, think of many groups of public sector servants who do not meet in public. But there is a qualitative difference. The unit management group of a hospital is generally composed of the unit administrator, the treasurer, the medical officer designated to be a member of the unit medical group and possibly the nursing officer. They deal, literally, with nothing but administration. They are neither required to make, nor do they make, policy decisions other than those which have been directly delegated to them by the health authority, which meets in public.

Frankly, I am disappointed with my hon. Friend the Minister. If he was trying to think of an example to upset my logical progression he has picked a bad one. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) argued long and hard about access to information in local government. It is always argued that there are technical difficulties which make it impossible to allow regulations to be invoked. It is always said that there are technical difficulties, and that such a step would upset or offend this or that group, and it would cause difficulties. As those hon. Members who have been kind enough to read the information that I have often sent them will know the universal, non-partisan conclusion is that the problems are simply perceived and are not real. In practice it is perfectly possible for a governing body to operate effectively, knowing that what is said will be open to immediate public access and scrutiny. The only change is that standards of presentation and of argument on the part of governors would have to improve. Governors would no longer be able to get away with an irresponsible, rather unfair or subjective aside which might have passed for judgment in days gone by.

We have half a loaf, and we should be thankful for that. The amendment which I moved in Committee and which now appears as the new clause shows the way forward. I commend that way forward to my hon. Friend the Minister. I appreciate that we shall need consultation, and

[Mr. Norris]

that we should get things right before we embark on such a course, but access to information is a vital concomitant to a progressive and modern education service.

5.45 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I support what my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) has just said. I am in favour of extending to parents as much control over schools as possible. If we are to improve education, which is, at the moment, rather an uphill task, it is desirable to make schools and their governing bodies as responsive to the consumer as possible. One way in which schools can be made responsive to the consumer is to meet the principle that underpins new clause 12. For that reason I am sympathetic to what my hon. Friend has said, and I support his broad objectives.

On the principle that half a loaf is better than no loaf, I propose to support new clause 18. It is the kind of clause that will delight officials and should distress parliamentarians, because it is an enabling clause. It does remarkably little. It merely empowers a Minister to embark on the process of secondary legislation. We must ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State what it obliges him to do. The answer is that it does not oblige him to do anything.

Let us consider new clause 18. The Secretary of State "may make regulations". That is nice. He "may make regulations" but equally he may not make them. It is not a mandatory duty.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that in Committee we discovered that several of the regulating powers which the Minister had taken in the Education Act 1980 had still not been brought into effect by him?

Mr. Hogg: That is true of every major statute that provides for secondary legislation that I have ever encountered. From the early 1960s, statute after statute empowers Ministers to make regulations, although they frequently do not do so. That is my point. These provisions do not require the Secretary of State to do anything. He can scratch his head and say, "I am able to do so, but I do not choose to do so." No one can say anything about that. If the Minister persuades himself to make regulations what will they say? New clause 18 is remarkably silent on that.

The Secretary of State may make regulations

"requiring the governing body . . . to make available, to such persons or classes of person as may be prescribed."

That is interesting. We do not know what will be prescribed. It is entirely within the Secretary of State's discretion. What will he do? He will make available such

"documents and information relating to the meetings and proceedings of the governing body as may be prescribed."

There is no mandatory duty there.

Subsection (2) of the new clause states:

"Documents and information required by the regulations to be made available shall be made available in such form and manner, and at such times, as may be prescribed."

The magic phrase appears for the third time. It is a splendid enabling new clause, but it does not tell my hon. Friend the Minister what he has to do, to whom the information is to be released and in what circumstances it is to be released.

I am an enemy of secondary legislation. For important matters, the House needs to create the statutory duties and to impose the statutory conditions. I am against leaving such things to secondary legislation, both as a matter of principle and as a matter of practice. After all, we all know that my hon. Friend the Minister will come along with regulations that may, or may not be debated. Even if they are debated, the debate will be on a motion to affirm or negative them. As we all know, such motions are taken late at night for one and half hours, and are not amendable. Thus, we shall be given the privileged opportunity of rejecting or accepting the regulations in their totality. That is not a proper way of dealing with matters of major importance.

On the principle that half a loaf is a damned sight better than no loaf at all, I shall support new clause 18. It would be a mistake, however, for my hon. Friend the Minister to suppose that the House is wholly satisfied with it. I am sure that the House would like to see a more robust approach in future.

Mr. Chris Patten: Although the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) thought that I should be prepared to think again, I am afraid that I am not prepared to do so despite his moving and worthy tributes to my hon. and very able Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris). Indeed, new clause 18 is a small tribute to the eloquence, passion and enthusiasm that my hon. Friend has shown in the cause of access to information.

We look forward to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on the draft regulations, and we shall publish the draft regulations as soon as we reasonably can. New clause 12 seeks to apply the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 to the governing bodies of schools and establishments of further education. That would have two effects. First, it would make the governing body's agenda, papers and minutes more widely available. After discussion in Committee, the Government accepted the logic of that, and new clause 18 makes appropriate provision. However, I realise that my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham would have preferred us to act otherwise.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Although I understand why the words "as may be prescribed" are in the new clause, I do not understand why the first sentence says:

"The Secretary of State may make regulations".

Why does it not say "shall make regulations"?

Mr. Patten: We pursued formulas that had been used before. But I am happy to make it clear that we shall be bringing forward draft regulations, and will look forward to comments on them.

We believe that our approach in new clause 18 is much more straightforward than applying the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, which would need various modifications to fit it to the particular circumstances of governing bodies. The need for such modifications underlines the important point that governing bodies should not be seen simply as part of the local government structure. It has been the intention since the 1944 Act that a governing body should be an independent voice speaking for its school in the local partnership. The Bill aims to make that a reality in all cases.

That brings me to the second effect of seeking to apply the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, which

would be to allow public access to meetings. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East referred to what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State said in Committee. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary then argued that, unlike local authority councils or committees, properly meeting in public, meetings of a governing body are not formal events in the administrative process but part of that process itself. He went on to argue that the closest analogy might be to a meeting of education department officials. I accept that. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East and I disagree on this point. I believe passionately, although perhaps not as passionately as he does, in there being reasonable access to public discussion and documents, but the logic of my hon. Friend's argument sometimes makes him tip over into the assumption that any decision made in public will be better than a decision that is not made in public.

Mr. Norris: I fear that it is not me who is tipping over on this occasion. My hon. Friend's well known intellect and moderation will have enabled him to observe that there is qualitative difference between the meeting of an education committee's group of officers, whose job involves planning to carry out a policy that has been given to that committee by elected members who meet in public, and the meeting of a groups of governors who have been appointed from among a variety of interest groups so that they have special qualities and views to bring to bear on any debate. In part, the latter make policy and in part they make a significant input into a local school. Thus, their meetings are much more important to the community than any meeting of an education committee's officers. If that is not so, it is an indictment more of the officers' meeting than of the inadequacies of the provisions made by school governors.

Mr. Patten: I do not think that my hon. Friend and I will have a meeting of minds on this point, but perhaps I should try another tack. The Government also consider that unfettered public access to working meetings would be wrong. In my judgment, the effectiveness of governing bodies as a means of securing co-operative effort from governors drawn from a variety of sources would be severely hampered if they were required to meet in public, even with some safeguards for confidential matters.

I invite the House to consider the practical implications of allowing public access to meetings. In some cases, it might be very difficult for parents to share in the responsibilities that we want them to have. I wonder whether parent governors would always be able to perform to their full potential in raising and exploring inevitably awkward questions about standards and discipline in the face of a large, and possibly hostile, audience. That is not to say that governing bodies should be secretive. New clause 18 will ensure that their papers and the records of their proceedings are appropriately open. Governors would also be able to report back to those whom they represent. The governing body as a whole will be fully accountable to the parent body once a year through the annual report and parents' meeting.

Additionally, it is our intention that the post-Act guidance will encourage governing bodies to be as open as possible in their proceedings by inviting observers or allowing public access as they think fit. But we see it as crucial to the effective function of governing bodies that the attendance of non-members should be under their control. The House will note that I have set out my case based on my judgment of some of the principles involved. I know that it is always a dirty trick to make my next point, but there would be technical difficulties

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Drafting errors.

Mr. Patten: — in making this apparently simple amendment. My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham is as perceptive as ever. Much work would be needed to ensure that various provisions of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act were appropriate to the special context of governing bodies. In the light of all that, I hope that the House will accept the Government's new clause, even if some hon. Members think that it is only half a loaf. I also invite the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East to withdraw his motion and new clause. But should he wish to press it to a Division, I must urge hon. Members to reject it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): In response to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) and in order to help the House, I should say that if new clause 18 is added to the Bill, new clause 12 will automatically fall.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 19

RECOUPMENT: CROSS-BORDER PROVISIONS

'(1) The Secretary of State may make regulations requiring or authorising payments of amounts determined by or under the regulations to be made by one authority to another where—

(a) the authority receiving the payment makes, in such cases or circumstances as may be specified in the regulations, provision for education in respect of a pupil having such connection with the area of the paying authority as may be so specified; and

(b) one of the authorities is a local education authority and the other an education authority in Scotland.

(2) The basis on which amounts payable under the regulations are to be determined shall be such as the Secretary of State sees fit to specify in the regulations and may, in particular, be similar to that adopted by him in relation to directions given under section 48(1) of this Act.

(3) Any question concerning the connection of any pupil with the area of a particular local education authority or education authority shall be decided in accordance with the provisions of the regulations.

(4) The reference in subsection (1) above to provision for education includes a reference to provision of any benefits or services for which provision is made by or under the enactments relating to education.'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

6 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Dunn): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: New clause 16 — *A Survey of Recoupment*—

'Before implementing the provisions of section 48, the Secretary of State shall set up a survey of the financial and educational consequences of changes to the present system of recoupment.'.

Amendment No. 174, in clause 48, page 54, line 7, after 'amount' insert

'reflecting the average cost of provision to the providing authority'.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

Amendment No. 175, in page 54, line 7, after 'agree', insert

'provided that such an amount does not exceed the total cost of tuition.'.

Amendment No. 176, in page 54, line 8, after 'amount', insert

'reflecting the average cost of provision to the providing authority'.

Government amendment No. 177.

Mr. Dunn: The new clause provides for the making of regulations dealing with cross-border recoupment between England and Wales and Scotland and vice versa.

Although, generally speaking, clause 48 both covers and extends the provisions for recoupment which appear in section 31 of the Education Act 1980, it does not contain a provision corresponding to that found in section 31(5). The latter provides a regulation-making power to deal with recoupment between education authorities north and south of the border. The purpose of the new clause is to remedy that omission.

The reason why that step was not taken earlier is that there were technical complications arising from the fact that the 1980 Act provision was subsequently re-enacted, for Scotland, in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. That has given rise to doubts as to the scope of the powers to make one set of regulations binding on authorities on both sides of the border. Discussion between the respective education departments in London, Cardiff and Edinburgh has led to the conclusion that, in order to clarify the position, there should be included in the present Bill provision empowering the Secretary of State at large to make regulations governing cross-border recoupment between English and Welsh local education authorities and Scottish education authorities. To avoid adding more material to the already lengthy clause 48, the required provision has been set out in a new clause with reference as appropriate to relevant parts of clause 48.

Government amendment No. 177 is a drafting amendment designed to protect the freedom of providing authorities to refuse admission to further education students from other authorities when they know that recoupment will not be forthcoming.

Recoupment in schools is already automatic. That is, the providing local education authorities have an automatic entitlement to recoupment in respect of provision made for pupils of other authorities. The clause extends the principle of automatic recoupment to most, but not all, non-advanced further education. The exact scope of automatic recoupment in FE will be prescribed in regulations to be made under subsection (2). The purpose of subsection (5) is to support the free movement of students across local education authority boundaries by providing that it shall not be a ground for refusing admission to a student that he or she lives in the area of another local education authority.

The Government have decided, however, that it is unreasonable to expect authorities to bear the cost of providing for students not falling within the scope of automatic recoupment whose home authorities refuse consent to pay. It seems likely that a refusal to admit on the grounds that the home local education authority would not pay recoupment would be considered by the courts as tantamount to a refusal on the grounds of residence in the area of another authority. The application of subsection (5) therefore needs to be restricted to students to whom automatic recoupment applies, and the amendment to subsection (6) is designed to enable that to be done.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): The Under-Secretary asks us to accept new clause 19, which provides yet again for the making of more regulations. It is sad that the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) is not in his place to support us. His spirit may be with us on this matter. We would have welcomed his voice supporting us, because many of the things that he said about new clause 18 apply equally to new clause 19.

When moving new clause 18 the Minister of State wrapped himself in a cloak of generous flexibility——

Mr. Chris Patten: Not for long.

Mr. Fisher: The Minister's attitude was not very generous or flexible for as long as it lasted. The Government were defeated time and again in Committee, often on non-controversial matters, so it is surprising that their response to the debates in Committee is a small matter of only two clauses, to put right the many arguments that they lost resoundingly. Those arguments often came from the Government's own Back Benches, as well as from the Opposition Benches. It is hardly generous or flexible that we have the two new clauses, particularly as everyone on both sides of the House has said, because new clause 18 goes only half way to meet the point. New clause 19 seems to have missed the point altogether.

I take the point that the Under-Secretary made about cross-border recoupment for Scotland, but he will appreciate that in Committee other matters were raised that represented important considerations for local government, both financially and legally. It is sad that the Minister has not managed to add to the new clause some way of addressing those problems, which he acknowledged in the debate were serious matters.

The Minister will recall that he said at our 12th sitting that he would

"undertake to reconsider the matter without any commitment to taking action on Report." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee B*; 8 July 1986, c. 560.]

Much to our disappointment, the hon. Gentleman has failed to do so. The new clause would have commanded greater support on both sides of the House had that happened. The points that we were making on the problems of recoupment were directed not only at the deficiencies in relation to Scotland, but at redistribution in general. They were about the savings that the Minister claimed would be made through recoupment. We wondered whether the recoupment clause included adult education. The problem of further education is at the base of the recoupment problem and, sadly, the new clause does not tackle that at all.

In so far as the Government address the problem of recoupment at all, as the hon. Member for Grantham said, the new clause will do very little. It provides for the making of regulations, which, under the terms of the new clause, will be unspecific. Subsection (1) refers to the eligibility of pupils. It refers to

"a pupil having such connection with the area of the paying authority as may be so specified".

Perhaps when he responds to the debate the Under-Secretary will say how the regulations will address the problem of connection and eligibility. How will he specify

that in his regulations? It would be helpful to hon. Members on both sides of the House if he gave us some idea of how the regulations will be addressed.

The most important subsection is subsection (2), which addresses the problem of the basis for determining the amounts. Whether it relates to Scotland or to the whole of the United Kingdom is at the nub of the debate on recoupment. First, the Government are not certain of the basis, because the clause states:

"as the Secretary of State sees fit to specify in the regulations".

The House will be asked to approve the new clause having had to guess what the basis of redistribution will be. Secondly, the argument is turned in on itself by the Government when they refer us back to the original clause 48(1). Either way, it is extremely unsatisfactory that we do not know, and local authorities will be no wiser after today's debate, and after the Bill becomes an Act, about what form redistribution will take and on what basis they must plan their finances.

The new clause is totally deficient and lacking in the information to which local authorities will have to address themselves, particularly in regard to further education. In Committee the Under-Secretary recognised that further education would be a real problem, both in the uncertainty of the sums concerned and in whether they will be anticipated in a further year. We in the Labour party make our position clear in new clause 16 and amendments Nos. 174 to 176. In our new clause, we ask for a survey so that before the Minister rushes into giving those unspecified and unclear directions to local authorities he understands what the financial implications will be. In Committee the hon. Gentleman was not able to tell us what information he had on the financial implications for local authorities, and he did not address himself to that matter today.

If the House is to be asked to do something strange for local government, which is to ask one local authority to allow its neighbouring authority to commit itself and its ratepayers to financial consequences in a following year, the Minister should have a clear idea of the scale of the problem for local authorities. In Committee we gave the Under-Secretary some suggestions of the financial consequences feared by some local authorities such as Northumberland and Staffordshire—perhaps £1 million a year for Staffordshire and even rising to £3 million a year by the 1990s.

It will be difficult to ask the ratepayers affected by recoupment to shoulder such additional expense. The Under-Secretary would be better advised to accept new clause 16, which would give him time to look at the financial consequences. He could go back to the shire counties and other authorities—which often border on metropolitan areas—and get a clear idea of the financial implications of what he expects to be undertaken by other authorities on their behalf. This is a strange and new concept in local government finance.

I commend to the House amendments Nos. 174 to 176. They would improve the new clause enormously. They are addressed, as I hope the regulations will be—perhaps the Under-Secretary will enlighten the House on whether that is so—to the technical method of assessing the cost of one local authority as against another. Amendments Nos. 174 and 176 suggest that the method should be based on the average cost of provision. In amendment No. 175 we state that the cost should not exceed the cost of tuition. Local authorities need to know the basis on which these regulations will be formed, so that they may anticipate the future costs that will fall to them.

I hope that the Under-Secretary will recognise that these are serious considerations and that he will be able to tell the House considerably more about the regulations, for which he is asking the House to give him an open cheque. Unfortunately, the open cheque will have to be cashed by many of the local authorities.

Mr. Dunn: I had hoped that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) would have been converted to our point of view, which we expressed so eloquently in Committee, regarding the question of recoupment.

We made it plain that the whole thrust of the legislation which we were presenting was to make available, to many more people, a variety of provisions which may exist outside the local education authority area in which they live. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central has not been converted to the idea of the free market of choice—in which I believe—in the few weeks since we last met in Committee.

We have adopted a flexible approach. In earlier exchanges between Opposition Members and my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg)—whose opinion I always respect on so many matters

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Hear, hear.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Do not overdo it.

6.15 pm

Mr. Dunn: I do not wish to be accused of overdoing anything. If anything, I am accused of being rather laid back on too many occasions for the good of debates in the House.

The House will recall that clause 48 is not just about the introduction of automatic recoupment in non-advanced further education. One of its main purposes is to update the existing legislation relating to recoupment in primary and secondary schools, as well as further education, the better to reflect the realities of current administrative practice in this complex area, and it goes a long way in clarifying the Secretary of State's powers to determine disputes. The Government would not wish the implementation of these general provisions to be delayed while the proposed survey was put in hand and the new clause, as drafted, is unacceptable for that reason.

Beyond that, we do not believe that such a survey is necessary, or practicable. The Government have always acknowledged that the introduction of automatic recoupment—sometimes called "free trade"—in NAFE would cause some short-term redistribution of costs between LEAs as the real pattern of demand asserts itself. While it would be sensible for local authorities to try to assess the local effects of the introduction of free trade, it would not be practicable to attempt to measure the extent of these short-term gains and losses on a national basis. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central, to his credit, referred in Committee to some work done by Staffordshire LEA based on the number of out-county permits refused each year, but even were we to go to the expense of collecting this kind of information from all, or at least a representative sample of authorities—many authorities' records would be far from adequate for this purpose—this would tell us nothing about the number

[Mr. Dunn]

of students who seek advice informally and are persuaded not to apply, or who assume it is not worth applying for out-of-county places. Neither would such an imperfect "snapshot" indicate how patterns of demand are likely to alter as a result of demographic change, reorganisation of 16 to 19-year-old provision we debated this in Committee and the development of YTS and other new kinds of provision. It would, in short, be a time-consuming and expensive exercise which would produce little if anything in the way of meaningful results.

Mr. Fisher: Will the Minister confirm that his scepticism of the survey means that he believes the figures that would be produced would be greatly in excess of the figures that Staffordshire and other authorities have already produced the figure of between £1 million and £3 million a year? If that is so, the financial problems we anticipate for the local authorities will be horrendous.

Mr. Dunn: I am sure the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central will accept that I have acknowledged that there will be short-term gains and losses depending on the popularity and the availability of certain courses, especially where a number of local authorities meet.

In the long term I do not believe that these manifestations will be a problem. There will be a settling, rather like the settling of sediment at the bottom of a wine decanter. Local authorities can meet informally to discuss how best to rationalise provision. In Committee we spent a great deal of time discussing problems faced by my own constituency of Dartford, but I will not repeat them as it would be too long and tedious for Opposition Members. Committee members were persuaded of the upset and concern of many of my constituents—it may also affect the constituents of Opposition Members—when people find that they have been denied access to institutions of their choice simply because it is in a local authority other than that in which they live. The institution may have been in the local authority in which they work—indeed, the provisions and cases vary.

The House must accept that, under the present voluntary arrangements, LEAs which are so inclined can protect their own colleges at the expense of the freedom of the individual to choose. That is the key to the Government's attitude on the matter.

Protectionism allows the providers to avoid the need to satisfy the real needs of their customers, and probably means that the overall system costs more as a result of this distortion of the market. Of course the adjustment will be painful in some cases: LEAs which suffer a net loss of students to their neighbours will have to bear increased recoupment costs and it will take some time for them to rationalise their provision to the real level of demand and realise offsetting savings. Conversely, those LEAs whose colleges attract more students will be able to make efficiency gains as well as receive more recoupment income.

The Government believe not only that, over time, these movements will balance out but that, in the long term, the creation of a free market in NAFE will prompt the system to become more flexible and more responsive to the needs of its clients, providing better value for money throughout the service. The Government do not believe that this important reform should be delayed pending the outcome of a survey, a study which can only be based on speculation and guesswork, leading to conclusions of dubious validity.

Amendments Nos. 174 and 176 would change the basis on which costs are recouped so that the amounts concerned, instead of reflecting the national average cost of provision, would reflect the average cost of provision within each providing authority, which could be significantly higher than the national average.

As for the level of such charges, the Government would like the existing system to continue—local authorities to decide for themselves, in the Inter-Authority Payments Committee, the basis of the standard rates which are used for the calculation of the great majority of the sums which local education authorities can recover under the recoupment arrangements. There are, of course, several rates which apply to different types of provision primary, secondary under school leaving age, secondary over school leaving age, for example—and variants of them apply depending on whether the providing authority has to pay London weighting allowance. In all cases, however, the rates and the variants of them are based on the average cost of such provision, within the totality of the authorities to which the variant applies.

The proposed amendments would deprive such a system of any support in law. Under section 31 of the Education Act 1980, local education authorities are enabled to recoup such amounts as they may agree between themselves. Clause 48 of the present Bill re-enacts this, but under the proposed amendments, instead of local education authorities being entitled collectively to agree to recoup on the basis of standard rates based on the national average cost of provision, providing authorities would be entitled to make claims which reflected only the average cost of provision within the authority concerned.

If local education authorities are, as now, willing to agree collectively to use the national average cost of provision as the basis for recoupment, and if the law now enables then to do so, the Government do not think that it would be sensible, in administrative terms to take the legal basis for that away, and will therefore resist the amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

Clause 44

ABOLITION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Mr. Pawsey: I beg to move amendment No. 153, in page 47, line 20, leave out clause 44.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Amendment No. 154, in page 47, line 31, leave out subsection (3).

Amendment No. 155, in page 47, line 32, leave out

'anything done for reasons that include averting'

and insert

'the use of such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to avert'.

Amendment No. 156, in page 47, line 36, leave out subsection (4).

Amendment No. 157, in page 48, line 6, leave out from 'school' to end of line 10.

Amendment No. 158, in page, 48, line 10, at end insert—

'(iv) at a day nursery or other provision for children aged under five maintained or assisted by a local authority'.

Amendment No. 159, in page 48, line 13, leave out 'by a local education' and insert

'or assisted by a local'

Amendment No. 160, in page 48, line 15, leave out paragraph (c).

Amendment No. 161, in page 48, line 19, leave out subsection (6).

Amendment No. 161, in page 49, line 10, leave out second 'education'.

Amendment No. 163, in page 49, line 12, leave out 'employed by the authority'.

Amendment No. 164, in page 49, line 13, leave out 'employed by the authority'.

Amendment No. 164, in page 49, line 24, leave out Clause 45.

New clause 20.—*Corporal punishment*

'Decisions on the principle of the administration of reasonable corporal punishment in a school shall be taken by the head teacher in consultation with the governing body and any organisation of parents of children attending the school.'

Amendment (a) to the proposed new clause, in line 3, at end add

'provided that no such decision is in contradiction of the ruling of the European Court'.

Mr. Pawsey: It might help the House if I outline the events which led to amendment No. 153, in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), being tabled. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend, who has done much work on this issue for a considerable time.

In 1982, a judgment by the European Court of Human Rights on corporal punishment in schools said that the philosophical conviction of any parents should be respected. There is, however, no blanket objection to the use of corporal punishment, provided that it is moderate and reasonable. Some local education authorities have banned it using the articles of government of schools. Others have used teachers' contracts of employment. The latter method has yet to be decided on by the courts. I therefore assure the House that, if it votes in favour of the amendment, it would allow governing bodies to decide whether to use corporal punishment. The local education authority would not be able to impose its will on governing bodies using the articles of government.

In an endeavour to clarify the matter, the Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill was introduced last year. The House will remember that it was wrecked in another place. The present Education Bill started life in another place and would prohibit the use of corporal punishment. The amendment produced in another place was drafted defectively, so the Government had to redress that problem. Clauses 44 and 45 are the result.

It will be helpful to recall that the Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill received a Second Reading in the other place but was wrecked on Report. I am not suggesting that that is unique, but it must be rare.

Amendments Nos. 153 and 165 would delete clauses 44 and 45 and restore the status quo in that it would be possible to use corporal punishment in schools. One of the more worrying aspects of this affair is the way in which the other place has disregarded the will of this elected Chamber. The Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill received a Third Reading in this House without Division. Despite that evident unanimity, the other place overturned the Bill. I am not suggesting that that is unconstitutional and I do not deny the right of unelected Peers to impose their will on what they may describe as the lower Chamber, but this House is truly representative of the British people. It is hon. Members of this House who seek election. The House might therefore agree that wrecking amendments to two Bills to destroy their purpose in a matter which affects almost every family in the land are to be deeply regretted.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am sure that my hon. Friend does not want to be unfair to the other place. He will recall that, in the Committee on the Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill in 1985, on which I served, hon. Members on both sides expressed grave concern about enabling parents to opt out of corporal punishment. There was a strong feeling in the Committee that, if we complied with the convention and the Court, we would have to proceed to complete abolition. It would be wrong to suggest that there was not a substantial body of support for that policy in this place.

Mr. Pawsey: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that genuinely helpful intervention, as he gives me an opportunity to repeat that there was no Division on Third Reading of that Bill.

Thoughtful hon. Members, jealous of this House's powers and traditions, may view the other place's actions with some concern or even trepidation.

One of the Bill's principal aims is the devolution of power and the allocation of responsibility. Amendment No. 153 would allow that process to continue in the important area of school discipline. If approved, it would allow local options which reflect the ethos of local society. It would be for the governing body, in the light of discussions with parents and others, to decide whether corporal punishment should be retained.

The Bill provides for an increase in parental representation on governing bodies. It would therefore seem logical that parents should have a considerable say in the discipline of their children. Parents want their children to have an education which is relevant to work. They want their children to obtain worthwhile qualifications. They do not want a casual, sloppy or do-as-you-please attitude in schools. They want discipline in schools. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am grateful to my hon. Friends for that expression of support. I am anxious that schools should decide what is best for them. I do not believe that a blanket decision taken in a council chamber which is miles away in distance and attitude from the school is necessarily right.

The amendment would leave room for the European Court. Its decision would stand, and no child would be caned against the wishes of the parent. Here is a British solution to a European-induced dilemma. Those who dislike what they regard as European interference in the United Kingdom's domestic affairs have here an opportunity to redress matters.

Mr. Marlow: If this House of elected representatives of the British people decided that corporal punishment should be retained, is it not overwhelmingly apparent that the European Court of Human Rights or whatever else it cares to call itself would have no status whatever in the issue, in moral terms at the very least?

6.30 pm

Mr. Pawsey: I hear what my hon. Friend says and I am well aware of his views on Europe, whether on court

[Mr. Pawsey]

matters or otherwise. If he is fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will no doubt pursue the case that he wishes to argue.

A teacher acting in loco parentis has the right to act as a moderate and reasonable parent would act. If that moderate and reasonable parent sees fit to use corporal punishment to restrain the child, why should not the caring teacher have a similar right when standing in place of the parent?

Corporal punishment is a matter of considerable importance. Britain has a tradition of corporal punishment in schools. Other nations have their own customs and remedies for school misdemeanours. In France, a child is punished by suspension from school and during that period the social security benefits due in respect of the child are also suspended, so the family can lose a tangible measure of state financial support. The House may feel that when such a remedy is imposed there is no need to cane the child.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Having lived in France for 17 years, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take it from me that children subject to discipline in French schools do not have social security payments withdrawn. The procedure that the hon. Gentleman describes relates to truancy, and the French embassy confirms that even in those cases it is extremely rarely used. The hon. Gentleman should get his facts right.

Mr. Pawsey: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but I note that he does not deny that in France a child may be punished in that way for a misdemeanour. Truancy is a misdemeanour like any other and the hon. Gentleman admits that the child in question may be punished by suspension and withdrawal of social security payments.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): That is a travesty. It is not the child that is being punished but the parents.

Mr. Pawsey: With the utmost respect to my hon. Friend, that makes matters even worse, because the parents suffer for the errors of the child.

In the Soviet Union, a different method is used. The child's misdemeanours are exhibited on the information board in the factory where the father works. That solution, or the remedy adopted by the French, may commend itself to the House, but I very much doubt it.

In the United States, the decision on corporal punishment is made at local level. In Australia and Canada, it is made on a state-by-state basis. In New Zealand and India, corporal punishment is permitted, so it is quite wrong to suppose that the United Kingdom is unique in retaining corporal punishment.

Members who are minded to vote against the amendment should be honest enough to say what they would put in place of corporal punishment to fill the vacuum left by its abolition. In the wake of the European judgment, about 25 per cent. of English authorities have a policy of aboliton and in schools where corporal punishment is available it is infrequently used.

The principal argument for the cane is not its frequent use but its deterrent effect. Only last week, a respected head teacher of a middle school in my constituency told me that he had a cane but that he could not remember when it was last used. He argued that when a child was sent to his room to be punished for a misdemeanour it would be at the back of the child's mind that the cane might be used. A cane in a corner is a powerful deterrent. It does not have to be used for it to be effective. The era of thrashing, beating and whacking is over. The emotive talk of cruelty to children perpetrated by adults is an exaggeration. The cane is a simple aid to discipline in the same way as the blackboard is an aid to learning.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Gentleman talks of the cane as a powerful deterrent, but has he seen the photograph in *The London Standard* showing the marks on a boy punished with a cane? That is a disgraceful state of affairs. Is that the kind of society that the hon. Gentleman wants to encourage? He should look at that photograph and tell the House whether he condones what happened to that boy.

Mr. Pawsey: No one could condone that kind of activity, but hard cases make bad law. It is impossible to legislate for perfection. There will always be exceptions, but there are measures of redress that parents can properly take in the type of situation described by the hon. Gentleman. A teacher in loco parentis should be acting as a reasonable and moderate parent should act. Clear breaches of that principle are obviously wrong and no one could justify them, but that does not damage the basic principle of my argument today.

The amendment would enable the head teacher, together with the governing body, to reach what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State described on 10 June as "a suitable arrangement which would recognise the finding of the European Court of Human Rights that the philosophical convictions of any parent should be respected." — [*Official Report*, 10 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. 186.]

As ever, my right hon. Friend summed up the situation in a nutshell.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *rose* —

Mr. Pawsey: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I will not give way.

If corporal punishment is not available, what will its opponents put in its place? Do they want more suspensions and expulsions? Which does the greater damage to the pupil, exclusion from school or two strokes of the cane on the hand? If detention is thought to be the answer, what is to happen in areas where children depend on the school bus as the only means of transport?

Children require a disciplined environment for learning. Without discipline, there is bullying, time-wasting, vandalism and indifference. Fair and reasonable discipline provides an essential framework for learning.

Conservative Members have a free vote on this. We shall vote according to conscience and belief, but can the same be said for the Opposition?

Mr. Radice: Yes.

Mr. Pawsey: I understand that there is a three-line Whip for the Opposition. How do Labour Members reconcile that with their new slogan of freedom and fairness? Where is their freedom to vote as their conscience dictates? Where is the fairness? Indeed, where are Labour Members today when the House is discussing a matter of key importance to families throughout the country? We recognise that there is room for honest and genuine disagreement on this. It would be unfortunate for the

reputation of this House if Opposition Members were prevented from voting in accordance with their own consciences.

The strength of the amendment is that it will maintain the status quo. It will permit the use of the cane, and I believe that a cane in the corner of a head's study is a positive force for good in schools and that its presence helps teachers in the classroom.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Come off it.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman says, "Come off it," but he was a practising teacher, and he will understand the strength of the point that I have just made.

This Education Bill seeks to improve the quality and standard of education in our state schools, and that is where the majority of our children are educated. My amendment will merely assist and continue that process.

Mr. Radice: I speak against the amendments, which would, if accepted, retain corporal punishment, and in favour of clauses 44 and 45, which abolish corporal punishment in England, Wales and Scotland.

We in the Labour party believe that corporal punishment is barbaric, inhumane, degrading both to the chastiser and chastised, and, by its nature, open to abuse. Anyone who has doubts about whether it is open to abuse should glance at page 5 of *The London Standard* of tonight, which contains an article about an independent Anglican grammar school. There is also a photograph showing the bruises on a 13-year-old pupil who was given five strokes of the cane by the head of his school for getting low marks in an internal exam.

In my view, that picture says far more than all the statistics, but the statistics are bad enough. There are 200,000 officially recorded instances of corporal punishment each year. Some schools have recorded hundreds of instances each year, and in a few schools the same children receive corporal punishment again and again. Unfortunately, cases of abuse are far too frequent, and they include girls and pupils who are physically and mentally handicapped. The fact is that the use of force —which outside the classroom is defined as battery— is inherently dangerous and open to abuse. It is no wonder that corporal punishment has been abolished in every other European country and that the movement in most advanced countries, except South Africa, is towards abolition.

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) said that in the United States and Australia this was a local decision. He forgets that both Australia and the United States are federal countries where education is a state responsibility. Most of the states in America have abolished corporal punishment as have the two largest states in Australia. The hon. Gentleman might have said that before he used his facts.

It is also no wonder that 90 per cent. of Scottish schools do not use corporal punishment and that more than a quarter of English local education authorities have abolished it. I am pleased to say that this morning Wiltshire county council voted to abolish corporal punishment. The vote was 39 to 24. Two Conservatives voted with Labour and Liberal councillors. I hope that rather more Conservatives will vote against corporal punishment tonight.

There is only one respectable argument in favour of corporal punishment —we heard a bit of it, but not much, from the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth— which is that without such a sanction it would be more difficult to maintain order in the school. There is no hard evidence to support that contention, and it certainly does not justify the dangers of abuse that I described earlier. There is no evidence that discipline in European or Scottish schools is inferior to the discipline in English and Welsh schools. Can any hon. Member produce such evidence?

6.45 pm

There is no evidence that discipline in English and Welsh schools where corporal punishment has been abolished is inferior to schools where corporal punishment is still retained. Indeed, such evidence as we have suggests that the use of corporal punishment may be counter-productive. The former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph), was fond of quoting the well-known study of London secondary schools entitled "15,000 Hours". That study found that there was a tendency for high levels of corporal punishment to be associated with unruly behaviour. There is similar evidence from Scotland and Wales as well. It is surely significant that no country and no local education authority has reintroduced corporal punishment once having got rid of it.

I understand that the Secretary of State will not speak on the issue tonight. But on Second Reading he made great play of the fact that heads and governing bodies wished to retain corporal punishment. He might also have pointed out that all the teaching bodies are now in favour of abolition.

Mr. Chris Patten: In a genuine spirit of inquiry, is that now the official position of the Professional Association of Teachers or the NAS/UWT?

Mr. Radice: Yes, the PAT has changed its position, and following the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights, the NAS/UWT has now come out in favour of abolition.

Most professional teachers believe that good discipline and order is far better maintained by firm, constructive and purposeful teaching. We all accept that problems and difficulties arise in classes, but a variety of options exist to deal with such disciplinary matters, including reprimands, reports, parental involvement, withdrawal, suspension and exclusion. All are used by local authorities where corporal punishment has been abolished.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman has just referred to exclusions. Is he telling the House that if corporal punishment is abolished we shall see an increase in the number of exclusions?

Mr. Radice: Not necessarily. I have already quoted the evidence from local authorities where corporal punishment has been abolished, and as I pointed out, behaviour is likely to be better.

The truth is —as the experience of other countries and the schools in England, Scotland and Wales show— that corporal punishment is not necessary to maintain discipline or to deal with disciplinary problems.

Some hon. Members may not so far be persuaded by my arguments. Those who remain in favour of corporal punishment must face up to the consequences of the

[Mr. Radice]

binding decision of the European Court of Human Rights. The Prime Minister has said on many occasions that she believes that Britain ought to obey the European Court. The decision in February 1982 in the Campbell and Cosans case upheld under article 2 the rights of parents who oppose corporal punishment.

As hon. Members will be aware, the former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East, introduced in January 1985 his Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill, which attempted to produce a scheme that provided a right of exemption for parents who did not wish their children to suffer corporal punishment.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Radice: No. I have given way twice, and many hon. Members wish to speak.

The opt-out scheme, which we voted against on a reasoned amendment on Second Reading, was almost universally condemned as being unworkable. Indeed, the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) condemned it because it would create two classes of discipline in schools. In the end it was destroyed in the House of Lords. When this Bill was introduced in the House of Lords a clause was added which had the effect of abolishing corporal punishment. Its form may not have been perfect and we amended it in Committee to improve it, but the House of Lords decision was wise because it represented the only practical way of complying with the European Court of Human Rights ruling. Theoretically it may be possible to create two classes of schools, but, as the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East pointed out, that would have enormous practical difficulties, especially in rural areas, and would be hugely expensive.

I have to say that the option espoused by the Secretary of State is not a runner. On Second Reading he explained that he wanted to leave the matter to the new governing bodies and to the heads of schools, and that he wanted schools which continue with corporal punishment to agree suitable arrangements for recognising the conviction of parents who are against corporal punishment. That amounts to a much weakened version of the opt-out scheme of the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East.

If arrangements for opting out are introduced in schools, there will be the problem of two classes of discipline which was universally condemned as unworkable earlier. If arrangements are not introduced, it will be a flagrant breach of the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights. The Secretary of State has already accepted that because he has said that he will monitor the scheme, and that if it does not work, he will return to the old legal opt-out scheme of the former Secretary of State. Even in its present form there is a strong possibility that the Secretary of State's scheme fails to comply with our obligations under the European Convention in that it does not provide a legal right for parents. Certainly there would be a continuing risk of litigation. Hon. Members should remember that more than 30 cases from the United Kingdom are now pending at Strasbourg.

When the Secretary of State made his first speech to the House on Second Reading of the Education Bill, he put forward what he clearly thought was a clever cop-out, but in reality he refused to accept the logic of the decision of the European Court of Human Rights. In doing so he failed to face up to his responsibility both to the House and to the schools of England, Scotland and Wales. This evening we have the opportunity to put the matter right. I urge hon. Members to vote in favour of abolition.

We in the Labour party believe that corporal punishment is barbaric, inhumane and open to abuse, so we shall vote against it. Even if Conservative Members remain in favour of its retention, I urge them to consider the following crucial point: the only practical way to comply with the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights, to retain a workable, efficient system of discipline, and to avoid the problem of two classes of discipline is to vote for the abolition of corporal punishment and against the retentionist amendments which will produce only muddle, confusion and chaos. The only way to produce a lasting and effective solution is to vote against corporal punishment.

Mr. Graham Bright (Luton, South): The importance of discipline and order in our schools as a condition for successful teaching and learning is understood by everyone. The fact that there are widely differing views, certainly in the Conservative party, about the principle and practice of corporal punishment is not surprising. It is essential that we resolve this dispute tonight.

I am opposed to corporal punishment in schools, for two main reasons. First, it is wrong in principle for children to be exposed to physical sanctions and pain which would bring criminal proceedings if they were exercised on an adult. We have outlawed corporal punishment in every area, including in the armed services, yet we reserve it for young people. It is absent from adult life, and it is wholly wrong to impose it on the young. Its practice is undoubtedly humiliating to the teacher who imposes it and to the pupil who receives it. The art of teaching lies in gaining the attention and winning the respect of pupils, and the power to inflict pain is fundamentally incompatible with that objective. In the debate we have heard a call for the cane in the corner. It is a symbol of fear and does not in any way produce the sort of environment for education, teaching, or learning.

My second objection is that corporal punishment is not generally effective. It may be a deterrent to some children, but to others it certainly is not. Children from broken or disturbed homes where physical punishment is the rule rather than the exception are taught that problems can be solved by force. All too often that lesson has tragic consequences later in life. Some teenagers relish a record of punishment as a status symbol, and the same name often crops up again and again in punishment books, often for the same offence. That proves conclusively that corporal punishment is not a deterrent.

It is by no means clear where the borderline between reasonable and moderate lies. Beating a child with a stick cannot possibly be considered to be moderate or reasonable. It is violent. All too often teachers step across that borderline, with disastrous results. Indeed, that is clearly illustrated in a picture in this evening's *London Standard*. Innumerable similar cases can be reported. They are not isolated instances. A youngster of eight had his finger twisted for the rest of his life because of caning. A youngster of 11 had his finger broken because of caning. A youngster of nine had bleeding hands because he was caned merely for bad work and nothing worse. I would not

vote in favour of corporal punishment if I thought that one of those instances would happen, let alone the whole list that can be produced.

The problem now is to reach a coherent solution. In Scotland corporal punishment has been officially discouraged since 1968 and pupils on reaching their majority at 16 become exempt, unless they choose otherwise. In England and Wales local education authorities and school governing bodies have been able to determine their schools' policies. It is no accident that in recent years there has been a strong drift towards abolition in line with the rest of Europe. The tendency has increased since the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the philosophical convictions of parents had to be respected.

I do not believe that giving local education authorities and school governing bodies the option to retain or relinquish corporal punishment is a coherent policy. It is a recipe for local particularism. It will lead to neighbouring schools and authorities having entirely different disciplinary sanctions.

7 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden: I accept that there may be a philosophical reason why parents object to their child being subject to corporal punishment, but will my hon. Friend accept that there are some parents—I am one of them—who would rather their child received a short sharp shock, delivered with a controlled and caring approach, than be expelled from school, with all the disadvantages that flow from that, such as disturbance to family life and all the temptations that come to children when they are no longer in school? Will he accept that as a philosophical conviction?

Mr. Bright: My hon. Friend suggests that it is either thrashing or expulsion. That is nonsense.

Mr. Bowden: Expulsion was offered as a sanction.

Mr. Bright: I am not talking about expulsion. It is a last resort, and I accept that it still occurs, but if my hon. Friend examines the experience of some of the areas where corporal punishment has been banned, such as Birmingham, he will find that the number of expulsions has decreased. That does not bear out what he suggests. There are other areas where corporal punishment has been banned that show the same trend.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I respect the views of my hon. Friend, which are well known to me as a fellow Luton Member. He said that the same rules should apply in all schools. Does he accept that in his constituency there are certain schools with rather more problems than one finds in others? Will he accept also that schools in problem areas might have to have end-of-the-road punishments available to teachers? The situations that those teachers face are very different from those in other schools. We are talking about a deterrent. I hope that my hon. Friend will not dwell too much on facts that support his case and ignore the deterrent that is posed by the cane.

Mr. Bright: I accept that there are differences in behaviour in different schools. There are also differences in the approach of different head teachers and teachers. If we allow individual schools to make up their own minds, some schools will have corporal punishment and some will not. Worse still—this is what makes a dog's breakfast of the proposal — there will be schools with corporal punishment, and it will be the right of parents to withdraw their children from that punishment. That will produce two classes of pupil in one school. That would be madness. That would do nothing to help the maintenance of discipline in school. The entire system would be wrecked.

Those who support the proposal before us will be voting for chaos, and nothing less than that. I am against corporal punishment, and I believe that we cannot support something that is nothing more than a dog's breakfast. If a school decides that it will no longer apply corporal punishment, there will be no turning back. It is not something that can suddenly be returned. It is a fact that corporal punishment will gradually phase itself out in any event, and I want to ensure that it is brought to an end tonight.

It is possible to devise a disciplinary system that is based on rewards for good behaviour. At the same time, there can be a range of penalties, such as class reports, loss of privileges, lines, detention and interviews with parents. Such a system undoubtedly requires more commitment from pupils, teachers and parents. The teachers have taken that on board which is why the teachers' unions and the head teachers support this approach. Our neighbours in Europe have shown that such a system can work. This is our opportunity to come into the 20th century, to abandon the cane and to adopt what I believe is a much more positive approach to education.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The hon. Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) made a fine speech. I have never heard such a bad speech from the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). The hon. Gentleman tried to observe the letter of the EEC regulations, while dodging their spirit. He was trying to have it both ways and, of course, he failed.

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth offered the House a completely bogus argument in saying that Britain has always had corporal punishment and that it is a tradition. Imagine the House debating slavery and advocates of that practice saying, "We have always had slavery in this country and it is a tradition." Imagine our predecessors in this place saying, "We have always denied women the vote, so why should we now allow women to vote? It is a tradition that they have not had the vote." *[Interruption.]* I know that even now some hon. Members do not like the concept of women having the vote. Some Members prefer slavery and others prefer corporal punishment. Let it be understood that the tradition argument is bogus and nonsensical.

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth was offering us a message of despair, in stark contrast to the message offered by Mr. Martin Rosenbaum of the Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment. He has presented a marvellous message of enlightenment, in which he sets out how Britain can rid itself of corporal punishment to the advantage of teachers and pupils. I pay tribute to Mr. Rosenbaum for the fine work that he has done on behalf of STOPP. Those who oppose STOPP surely do not know anything about the research that it has conducted.

The argument for the retention of corporal punishment is too simple, given the complexity of the problem of maintaining discipline in schools. The advocates of this approach adopt a hanging and flogging mentality, and I suggest that that has no place in the House of Commons now.

[Mr. Jack Ashley]

When we see a child being awkward and difficult, we are often tempted to give it a clip around the ear. Sometimes we want to take that course. We tended to think in the old days that a clip around the ear by a teacher or a policeman solved the problem. It did not. We are seeing the past through rose-tinted spectacles. Clips around the ear imposed injuries and the practice was wrong. It made children resentful and that resentment lasted for life. It is wrong that lifelong resentment should be created when it is thought that a child has done wrong and when the child may think that he has done right. The child may sometimes realise that he has done wrong, but we cannot meet a wrongdoing by hitting somebody, by punching him or by using weapons. I cannot accept that civilised Members of this place are so brutal, stupid, uncivilised and old-fashioned as to believe that hitting someone can solve a problem. That is not the way to deal with the profound problems of control.

I shall make a short speech because I know that many other Members wish to participate in the debate. I believe that it is wrong to try to gain compliance by using force and brutality on children. That is wrong in principle and fallacious in practice. I believe that violence brutalises and begets violence. Some schoolchildren hit back at their teachers, but, even if not then, violence may beget violence later on. Violence is counter-productive. Violence demeans the pupil as well as the teacher. Violence creates rather than solves problems. I therefore hope that the House will use this rare opportunity of taking a real step forward towards a more civilised society. We are not asking for softness or sentimentality. We are asking for a reasonable method of dealing with children in schools. Let us get rid of one element of violence in our violent society, and thereby help teachers and pupils too.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I do not doubt for a moment the sincerity of the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), but I cannot agree with what he says. My remarks are based upon 23 years in the classroom, no fewer than 12 of which were spent in a comprehensive for 1,100 boys in King's Cross, where I was deputy head. With respect, I believe that it is possible to get away from the real world when considering this important issue.

I would never condone bad practice. If properly reported, the example given in *The London Standard* today is an example of extremely bad practice. To cane a child for bad work is a serious misuse of the cane. If pupils fail to do their best, that is their failure and there is a way to handle it. My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) spoke of children's fingers being broken and of blood being drawn. No one who has had the experience of having to administer reasonable corporal punishment, as I have, would condone such treatment for a moment. It is disgraceful and unacceptable, and it is no part of my case when I say that corporal punishment should be retained. I am referring to reasonable corporal punishment administered by the head or deputy head of the school — by someone with experience in the profession, experience in handling children and experience in administering corporal punishment.

The use of emotive words such as "beating", "hitting" and "violence" is not helpful. Corporal punishment should not be seen in those terms. It should be used only for the most serious of school offences, such as the very severe bullying by a large boy of a small boy, or, in some circumstances, perhaps, a boy attacking a teacher.

It is all very well for hon. Members to pontificate in the House of Commons. We need to put ourselves in King's Cross, Deptford, or many other places, in front of a class of 30 or 40 14-year-olds or in a playground where 1,000 or 1,100 boys, or boys and girls, are doing all the things that they do during recreation. One person may have to control that situation. It would be wrong to take away any sanctions in the teacher's hands. At the same time, any sanction must be used carefully and properly.

7.15 pm

There are schools not far from this House where there is little or no discipline. Children of all ages, primary and secondary, trot about like packs of hounds, doing what they like, totally out of control, cheeking teachers. I could give examples. The situation is very serious. The severe soccer and social violence from which we suffer does not diminish as sanctions in schools diminish. It seems to get worse.

What does the Bible say? In Proverbs we read:

"He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him."

Perhaps Proverbs goes a little far.

As a schoolboy I received corporal punishment. I have been on both sides of the fence. A teacher should always be positive if he is to be effective. If he is, and if interest can be inspired in the pupils, there will be few disciplinary problems. However, there may always be some. Things can go wrong even in the best of situations, and terrible things can happen outside the classroom.

We must consider every aspect of school life. In my own time as a teacher, I remember quite small boys hitting old women to the floor of their homes and demanding money. Other boys violated animals or beat people up. At the same time, pupils were going to Oxford and Cambridge. In a comprehensive school, there will be those who do very well and there will be those who get into difficulties with the police. We must face that.

Mr. Bell: We listen with great interest to the hon. Gentleman as he draws on his vast experience, but is he not confusing concepts when he relates corporal punishment to acts of violence that are criminal offences?

Mr. Greenway: I am simply giving the background against which a school has to draw its disciplinary lines, and giving one or two examples of what happens every day.

Good teachers have few problems, but we are not dealing only with able teachers. We are dealing with those who find it difficult to teach. Discipline emerges best from good relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils themselves. If relationships are good, there is never any violence. The friendship that people feel for each other enables them to think positively first, and to think of hostile actions only as a very last resort. The encouragement of pupils is absolutely essential and is basic to the well-being of any school. However, there will be bad behaviour in any school. One has only to read "Lord of the Flies" to be reminded of the fallen nature of man. There will be bad behaviour even in the best schools. We must consider what sanctions will be effective.

The school must involve the parents. it must work unremittingly with the parents of the pupil concerned to try to remedy the behavioural difficulties of the child.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): I wonder whether my hon. Friend's constituency postbag reflects mine? I find that, by eight to one, parents and pupils are in favour of what two of my constituents described as "capital punishment" in schools. If that is the general view of most parents, is it not arrogant for the Labour party to deny its own members the opportunity to reflect the views of their constituents?

Mr. Greenway: Many people are confused between the terms, capital and corporal punishment. I deplore the Labour party's stand on this. It is mandated by its party conference and to have a Whip on such an issue is disgraceful.

Many a problem in schools is cured by involving the parents. But, if it is not, how else can it be done? Much can be cured by a teacher's disapproval of a child's behaviour. A look of disapproval, a withering glance or an angry word might cure it, but not always. Lines are disgraceful and are bad education. Setting pupils to do mathematics destroys any love of an important discipline. I deplore suspension and expulsion. For that to roll so easily off the tongue of my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South and others is for them to miss a crucial point.

Mr. Bright *rose*

Mr. Greenway: I am sorry, I think that I have misrepresented my hon. Friend and I apologise. However, that has certainly come from the tongue of others in this debate.

To suspend or expel a pupil is to put outside the school the very children who must be there. They must be there for their education, however difficult they are. I deplore suspensions and expulsions and I am glad to say that I have never been involved in one. If I had been, I would have regarded myself as a gross failure.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: As the hon. Gentleman is taking us through all the possible punishments, will he tell us what, in his experience, people do when a pupil refuses to accept corporal punishment?

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman anticipates my point. In the end something must happen. In many cases children are put into court. If corporal punishment is abolished, there will be more suspensions, more expulsions and more court cases. I have known children put in court for stealing 10p. That is what the Labour party seems to want. It is disappointing and deplorable.

At the end of the road the administration of reasonable corporal punishment can end serious indiscipline. I am not saying that it is a cure, but it can bring things to a head and stop serious indiscipline in a pupil. It is reasonable to argue that corporal punishment is a deterrent.

On the continent the policy is to expel and suspend. That is a way of putting pupils out of school and it cannot be right. It is asked why we cannot be on our own in retaining corporal punishment. We were on our own in 1940. I do not see why we should be afraid of individuality. Should we do what Sweden does? Sweden is the only country in the world at present where five-year-old children can take their parents to court for smacking them. The Labour party is trying to take us that way. It appears to wish to see children aged five and upwards take a piece of paper home which explains to them that if their parents smack them they are to report them to the nearest police station were a summons will be taken out. The country must take note of that.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is easy to make facile judgments on this issue, but, as a matter of experience, many good and happy schools happen to have corporal punishment and many throroughly bad schools do not? Therefore, surely it is right that the judgment in these matters should be left to the head teachers, the educationists and the people in the schools who know best. Surely that is what the amendment is seeking to do?

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend is right. His long experience gives added weight to what he says.

If we abolish official and properly supervised corporal punishment there will be more unofficial beating. In schools where corporal punishment has been abolished there have been the most awful goings on which are undetected - the gym slipper, and so on.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: How do we know if they are undetected?

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman thinks that he has made a clever remark. He has been to school, as I have. Such things may be undetected in schools, but they can still be reported outside. I am talking of what happens in school.

Children can and do, as the hon. Gentleman has said, refuse all punishment. But in the end something must happen. It is reasonable to have corporal punishment as a backstop. It is fair between pupils. It is immediate and salutary and it can be right for certain serious offences. However, I do not advocate its blanket use for anything and everything.

School discipline cannot be decided at Strasbourg or Westminster, at county hall or town hall. It must be decided where it can be most fruitfully discussed, and that is at the school, between the head, the governors and the parents.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): If I do not recognise the problems on which the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) has been enlightening the House, it is because the problems simply do not exist in Scottish schools where, as my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said, corporal punishment has been abolished for a considerable number of years.

It is a great pity that Conservative Members, with the sort of experience on which the hon. Member for Ealing, North, a schoolteacher for 23 years, has just drawn, have not taken the trouble to see what has happened in Scottish schools since the almost complete abolition of corporal punishment there.

It was a pity that in moving the amendment the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) did not refer to amendment No. 165 which deals not with the position in schools in England and Wales but exclusively with the position in Scotland. Of course, the position there is completely different from that which prevails in England and Wales.

For example, Scotland does not have school governors. We have school councils, but the responsible authorities for schools in Scotland are the regional and islands authorities. In their role as education authorities they had before the European court judgment, the right to decide whether corporal punishment should be used in schools.

I have been close to the problem. The case that was taken to the European Court in 1982 involved a young boy

[Mr. Harry Ewing]

from my native town of Cowdenbeath. His parents took the case to the court. I lived for about 25 years within walking distance of the factory that made the famous Lochgelly tawse. Therefore, I have been fairly near to the problem for a considerable time.

One of the reasons for abolishing corporal punishment in Scotland all those years ago was that the education authorities were much more enlightened in their approach than the House of Commons now seems to be in 1986.

Excluding those hon. Members who have had experience as schoolteachers, the House of Commons is at its worst when it is moralising. I am looking particularly now at the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels). I hope that we shall not be given a lesson on morals by him.

As Members of Parliament with young families, we come here from Monday to Friday and have little or no responsibility for bringing up our families. We depend almost entirely on our wives to bring up our children. Then we try to act like experts and say what should be done to control indiscipline among children in or out of school.

I hope that when right hon. and hon. Members contribute to the debate they will pay attention to our circumstances as Members of Parliament over the years. When I came here, my family was young; I had to depend almost entirely on my wife and I would not pretend to be an expert in dealing with the problems of indiscipline among young children. I have been away from home from Monday to Friday for nearly sixteen years. That is the sort of factor that we ought to take into account.

Amendment number 165 would return the Scottish education authorities to the position that prevailed before the European Court judgment arising from the 1982 case. The Scottish education authorities would have the discretion whether to apply corporal punishment in schools. I submit that they have used their discretion over a great many years, and that has meant the abolition of corporal punishment. That is a clear sign that they have no need to return to the pre-European Court judgment.

7.30 pm

I do not know whether the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) intends to seek to catch your eye again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to reply to the debate —

Mr. Pawsey *indicated assent.*

Mr. Ewing: I note that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth is nodding his head. I hope that he will take my point on board.

I accept that the hon. Member for Enfield, North and others are in favour of corporal punishment. I accept that they are sincere and I do not complain about their sincerity. However, I profoundly disagree with their views. I recognise that the main thrust of their argument is: if we remove corporal punishment, what shall we put in its place? No one can come up with a hard and fast package to replace corporal punishment and guarantee that it would work. No one, including the hon. Member for Enfield, North, can prove that corporal punishment works effectively to control indiscipline in schools.

If we are to remove the system we must accept that we should try various remedies to deal with unruliness in schools. We must also accept that some of these will fail. What is wrong with trying and failing? By trying, we might find a remedy that will succeed. However the biggest obstacle to trying a new approach is the retention of the old system. As long as we retain corporal punishment in schools — the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth made this point concisely — with the cane standing in the corner to frighten the life out of a child, we shall not make progress. The cane on the table does not and will not work. As long as we retain the cane in the corner, there will be less of an incentive to try to find new approaches, remedies and cures. We shall not find the new approaches without removing the threat of corporal punishment.

I have not been convinced that the need for corporal punishment arises as a result of an unruly child or through an inadequate teacher. There is a fine line between these two factors. I do not believe for a minute that we should disregard the possibility that the problem is not so much about unruly children as about inadequate teaching.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): How would the hon. Gentleman equate his remarks with the degree of violence that we have all read about against teachers and the sheer terror to which some teachers have been subjected by children?

Mr. Ewing: I do not think that it does any good to overstate the problem. I have acknowledged that the probem exists. However, it is pointless for the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) to use such emotive language in stating the problem that he presented to me in his intervention. His emotive language implies that such violence is almost a daily occurrence in almost every school in the country.

I trust that the hon. Member for Stafford will bear with me. This is an opportune moment for me to deal with one of the points raised by the hon. Member for Enfield, North. Pupils who attack teachers will not be controlled by corporal punishment. There must be other remedies and I would be the first to accept that. Those pupils

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): What kind of remedies?

Mr. Ewing: The hon. Member for Leicester, East thinks that he is being clever by asking about the remedies. I have already said that we shall have to try various remedies and that we must accept that some will fail and some will succeed. As long as we retain corporal punishment, we will be lazy in our approach and will not try the alternatives.

Mr. Greenway: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) for giving way and I remind him that I am the hon. Member for Ealing, North and not Enfield, North. In my experience I remember occasions when teachers have been attacked by pupils and reasonable corporal punishment proved to be the satisfactory form of punishment.

Mr. Radice: The hon. Gentleman cannot prove that.

Mr. Greenway: I most certainly can prove that. It happened in one case at a school for 2,200 pupils in which I had responsibility for school discipline. The House is entitled to ask, what precisely would the hon. Member for Falkirk, East do? It is no good him saying he would do this or that. What would he do?

Mr. Ewing: I apologise to the electorate of Enfield, North and to the hon. Member for Ealing, North. However, the hon. Gentleman wants everything in a nice

package but that is not possible. Corporal punishment does not fit into a nice package. That is why this country is in such difficulty over the question of corporal punishment.

The hon. Member for Ealing, North will discover in the Lobby when the vote is taken, that this is not a Labour party versus Tory party versus alliance issue. There are many opinions on this issue. We have been talking about deterrents. I have been here long enough to know that the three-line Whip is no more a deterrent than the cane standing in the corner. The hon. Member for Ealing, North knows that.

My central point is that the education authorities in Scotland do not want to return to the pre-1982, pre-European Court position. When the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth replies, I hope that he will not press amendment No. 165 and that he will seek leave to withdraw it. It is significant that no Scottish Member of Parliament has supported the amendment. I do not mean that as criticism, it is simply a fact. I do not want to be accused of carping criticism, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw the amendment. If he does not, I hope that we shall be allowed a separate vote on amendment No. 165 as we in Scotland do not need to return to the pre-European Court position.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I shall be very brief as I know that many hon. Members wish to intervene in the debate. Left entirely to myself, and if we were not concerned with the European Court, I would substantially agree with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). I believe that corporal punishment in England, as possibly the punishment of last resort, should be determined by the governing bodies of individual schools. I would like that to be the position. However, I do not think that it can be the position and I do not believe that the House or any sensible person can ignore the decision of the European Court.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West) *rose*—

Mr. Hogg: The decision of the European Court has made it clear that, unless we respect what are called the philosophical views of parents, we are in breach of the convention. That leaves us with two choices. Either we have a policy of complete abolition as contained in the Bill or we have a system designed to enable parents to elect that their children should not be punished in that way.

The Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill 1985 was an attempt to enable parents to opt their children out of punishment. I served on the Standing Committee on that Bill and with the greatest respect to the then Secretary of State, I believe that it was nonsense. There cannot be two classes of punishment in one school. I conclude, therefore, that to discharge what is a duty to the convention, the treaty and the accord, we must pursue a policy of total abolition.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North says that these matters should be left to the governing bodies. In principle, I am in favour of that policy, but I do not see how governing bodies can achieve that objective and at the same time comply with the European convention and the European Court's ruling without providing some form of dual discipline within the schools, and that is not acceptable.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend knows that I agree with much of what he says, but for those of us who wish to be rid of this foreign interference and who wish to ensure that the British people have the right to make these decisions, for better or for worse, is there not something to be said for voting for a nonsense, in the hope that the British people will realise that a nonsense has been foisted upon them and that it is far better that domestic matters should be decided by this House?

Mr. Hogg: I am never in favour of voting for nonsenses, and I should be sorry to think that my hon. Friend is in favour of voting for nonsenses. Perhaps this demonstrates that the European convention ought to be incorporated in our municipal and domestic law, when British judges would decide the issue and I suspect, would come to a quite different decision. However, today we are deciding whether on the one hand to pursue a policy of complete abolition or, on the other hand, to devise a system that will enable parents to elect whether or not their children should be punished in this way. As that would lead to a dual kind of discipline in schools, which would be a nonsense, I favour the policy of complete abolition.

Mr. Flannery: It is very sad that we are spending all this time discussing one aspect of an 81-page Bill containing 61 clauses and six schedules. It is the biggest Bill since the Education Act 1944. We are devoting all this time to discussing something that was decided as long as 100 years ago in certain European countries. I have served with the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on many Committees, including the bizarre one last year which considered corporal punishment. It is unbelievable that any party could put forward such nonsense.

The hon. Member for Ealing, North referred to bad practice. There would be no bad practie if corporal punishment were made illegal. I taught for far longer than the hon. Gentleman did but he knows as well as I do that one blow in anger always begets another and that it often gets out of hand. The number of cases that have got out of hand would fill the newspapers. We do not come across many of these cases personally. Indeed, I have come across only one or two of them. What the hon. Gentleman calls bad practice is the actual practice of corporal punishment.

Teachers have to try to create a relaxed atmosphere, as best they can. In such an atmosphere, children have their senses wide open to knowledge and to the channels of learning. It is not always in the head teacher's room that caning takes place. Although I have not taught for 12 or 13 years, I know that caning usually takes place in the classroom, in front of other children, and that it is not recorded.

Mr. Winnick: Does my hon. Friend agree that if the House decided tonight to abolish caning it is unlikely that corporal punishment would be reintroduced and that it would decide the matter for generations to come?

7.45 pm

Mr. Flannery: Indeed. I am sure that that is what would happen, and that is what most Opposition Members, whether whipped or not, would like to happen. Earlier in these proceedings it saddened me to note that the Government Benches were quite empty, compared with now. As soon as the amendment dealing with corporal punishment was moved, the Government Benches filled up.

[Mr. Flannery]

A relaxed school atmosphere means that learning goes on at a faster rate than happens if children are frightened. Many sensitive children are terrified when they see a weapon—a cane—being wielded. Conservative Members may smile, but many of them stand alone on this issue. The hon. Member for Ealing, North referred to this country being as embattled as it was in 1940, during the Dunkirk operation, but thousands of teachers are against corporal punishment.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman was not paying attention. All I said was that we should not fear to stand alone on this issue and to be the only nation in Europe that administers corporal punishment. We stood alone in 1940 on a quite separate issue. I was not drawing an analogy between then and now.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman's interventions are always welcome. They spur me on in following the line that I correctly take.

The lengths to which certain Conservative Members have to go to justify this barbaric practice are unbelievable. They are driven from position to position, and their arguments become more and more bizarre. Eventually, they end up with what happened last year—a Bill that said to parents, "If you sign a document saying that we must not cane your Tommy we will not cane him, no matter what he does, but if you sign another document saying that we can cane him, we will cane him." Tommy and Billy then do the same thing, and the teacher says to Tommy and Billy, "By the way, did your mums sign a document saying that I could cane you, or did they say that I could not cane you?" What nonsense. This wrong and backward argument drives one to resort to all kinds of measures in an effort to justify something that is outdated.

Mr. Budgen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Flannery: Other hon. Members want to speak. I know the hon. Gentleman's viewpoint. He has voiced it very often.

It is necessary to examine not only the question of teaching and learning, but the question of human dignity. The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) was ready to get the sjambok out for all of us if we disagreed with him over corporal punishment. I have no doubt that he would have done that in Soweto. Corporal punishment demeans the teacher and the taught. It demeans the society in which it occurs and closes the channels of learning.

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Flannery: I will in a moment. The hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) was a member of the Committee on the Bill. Now he is on the Select Committee, and I know that he has a good viewpoint, although I do not think that he agrees with me on this. People who use the expression in loco parentis, meaning in place of a parent, are really talking in loco draconis. They are talking as Draco and frightening children, and making teaching and learning extremely difficult.

Mr. Evennett: I am always interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's point of view, because he had years of experience in the classroom. Those of us who have been teachers have all had experience of the playground bully. Does the hon. Gentleman not think that the playground bully might benefit from corporal punishment and that other children in the playground might be deterred from bullying if they knew that the outcome could be a touch of the cane from the headmaster? Does he not think that in an instance like that there is a case for corporal punishment?

Mr. Flannery: No, there is no case for corporal punishment in dealing with a playground bully, though I agree that we have to think carefully about how to deal with that problem. Later I shall come to the vexed question of what ought to replace corporal punishment. This form of punishment is far less acceptable than a wide range of alternative sanctions that are available. Many people would disagree with some of them, but the teachers organisations have issued pamphlets about this and in essence they ask for smaller classes, more resources, more teachers, better schools and more equipment—for all the things that mean more learning and more teaching. They are difficult things to provide because they are expensive, but they are the replacements for corporal punishment.

There always have been and always will be awkward children. The hon. Member for Ealing, North talked about attacks on teachers. It has been proved that where corporal punishment ceases, attacks on teachers decrease. The Inner London education authority conducted some research into this which showed that when the cane was banned attacks on teachers dropped. The director of education in Brent reported that the abolition of corporal punishment led to a decrease in bullying in the borough's schools.

There are solutions to this difficult problem. Some of the solutions and some of the problems have been discussed endlessly, not only by us, but by the teachers, who have to discuss them in the staffrooms and in other places where they get together. The Government propose to leave the initiative to parents whether or not children should be caned, but by doing that the Government are not facing their responsibilities. The responsibilities have to be faced in teaching, and the idea that one can have some schools in which the governors decide to have corporal punishment and others where the governors decide not to have it is unworkable. It is as bizarre as last year's Bill.

I think that a few Government Members support the stance that we are taking, and I hope they will realise that not only is corporal punishment a lonely business and wrong, but that it is not good for teaching. They should face the real alternative, which is more money for education.

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and I spend many hours talking about education. We agree on most things but on some things we disagree. I always find it fascinating to discuss such things with my hon. Friend against the background of the memory of Arnold of Rugby, that great educational reformer who did so much for education in Britain in the last century.

Caning has failed. It is an irony that in recent years when caning has been legal we have seen the most rapid ever deterioration in discipline and a growth of violence. It is turning the argument on its head to say that we must keep the cane in order to impose discipline and see an end

to violence. I fear that many of my hon. Friends wish to perpetuate a system which 40 years on they claim did them no harm and which many of them preferred as a punishment in their young days. Of course they preferred it: it was far easier and more acceptable than other sanctions which they might have had inflicted on them. It was much preferable to loss of privileges, loss of status and loss of time at school. Indeed, it would have added to their status as heroes against authority. The sensitive ones among my hon. Friends — probably at their public schools — were humiliated. The tougher ones were beaten again and again, to the enhancement of their Rambo reputations.

Ever since judicial flogging was outlawed in Britain in 1948, the evidence has been growing, and is now irrefutable, that corporal punishment is counter-productive because it breeds hostility and resentment and legitimises violence at a time when we are urgently trying to reduce violence in society.

Parents expect rules and sanctions in other professions, such as the law, banking and medicine, to change and improve with the years, but some people seem to think that this should not be so in education, especially when it comes to beating. It is hard to find a single public school where the cane is still in use and any headmaster or master, will testify that the quality of human relationships between people of all ages in those schools has seen an enormous advance on days gone by.

Mr. Cash: I think that for some time my hon. Friend was a teacher at Harrow school. At least one other signatory to new clause 20 was a contemporary of his at Harrow school as a master. He has signed the motion in favour of corporal punishment. Can my hon. Friend enlighten me about the position that he and that other hon. Member took?

Mr. Key: I take it that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is talking about our hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter). Neither of us was allowed to beat children and children were very rarely beaten. Just yesterday I talked to the headmaster of Harrow school and he confirmed that beating is not part of the curriculum there. It is in the schools in Britain where the cane was outlawed many years ago that we have the most successful academic results and motivation of the pupils. There are a number of alternative sanctions which can be used.

Mr. Evennett *rose*——

Mr. Key: I must proceed, or I shall detain the House for a long time.

The quality of humen relationships which develop in school when the cane is not just put in the cupboard but snapped and burned and the advance that one sees in those schools are so great that those things alone would be enough to convince me that we should abolish the cane.

Some of my hon. Friends have said that the issue of corporal punishment should be left for schools to decide. The matter cannot possibly be left to schools, because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has made it clear that if corporal punishment is retained, one way or another schools will be forced to allow parents to exempt their children from it. That will create two classes of pupils, the beatable and the unbeatable. In a way, the choice facing the House is which policy to impose on schools—abolition or the ludicrous exemption scheme.

Some of my hon. Friends have also spoken aout the serious problem of assaults on teachers. Figures collected by education authorities show that since certain authorities abolished corporal punishment in their schools, there has been a measurable decline in the number of recorded assaults on teachers. For instance, in 1978 in ILEA, there were 62 recorded instances of assaults on teachers. The following year, the authority announced that it would work towards the abolition of corporal punishment in 1981. That was a transition time of three years in which schools could adapt to the new disciplinary procedures. From 1979, annual figures for assaults fell, and there was a drop of nearly 40 per cent. between 1978 and 1981. The schools that abolished corporal punishment included both those schools at which my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North taught.

8 pm

I have also heard it said that the abolition of corporal punishment would lead to more pupils being suspended. The evidence points in exactly the opposite direction. Because teacher-pupil relationships are better in the absence of corporal punishment, fewer pupils are suspended than otherwise would be. This is not conjecture. For instance, the level of suspension has fallen in Birmingham, in Haringey

Mr. Radice: In Northamptonshire.

Mr. Key: in Waltham Forest, and, as the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) has said, in Northamptonshire. In 1984, its education committee reported:

"if any conclusion is to be drawn from these statistics it is that the abolition of corporal punishment gradually, and now as a matter of policy, has had the effect of reducing, rather than increasing, the number of suspensions."

It is also said that corporal punishment should be retained because it is used only infrequently, as a last resort, or as the ultimate deterrent for serious offences. This is nonsense. Both official education authority statistics and inspectorate reports have shown that in some schools there are hundreds of canings a year. Many of these must be for trivial offences. This was admitted by the Government in the 1985 White Paper "Better Schools", which acknowledged that corporal punishment

"is in many schools used only for relatively minor offences."

As long as corporal punishment is legal in some schools, it will continue to be used extremely frequently.

Mr. Pawsey: I have no desire to provoke my hon. Friend into the long speech with which he has threatened us, but does he not agree that the schools to which he referred are a small minority? Does he also agree that, increasingly, corporal punishment is being used more infrequently every year?

Mr. Key: I wish that I could agree with my hon. Friend, but the facts do not support what he is saying. He has encouraged me to insert a huge chunk into my speech of numerous examples of exactly what I mean.

Corporal punishment is still widespread and often frequent. It has been abolished by 34 of our 125 education authorities, and is retained by 91. I am delighted that my county education authority in Wiltshire has recently seen the light. The abolitionist authorities include those of all types across the country, whether they are county councils, London boroughs, Welsh county councils or Scottish

[Mr. Key]

regional councils. They are diverse politically, and include Conservative-controlled Berkshire and alliance-controlled Richmond.

I find disturbing the rules in the retentionist authorities. Some 84 allow corporal punishment for primary school children, 87 allow it for sixth formers, 77 allow it for handicapped children. Some 86 place no limit on the number of blows allowed, 80 allow corporal punishment to be carried out in public, 60 allow male teachers to give corporal punishment to girls and 89 allow female teachers to give corporal punishment to boys. It is an interesting concept that it is more acceptable to allow women to beat boys than to allow men to beat girls. Let us not go too far down that intriguing road.

Local authority bans protect about 3 million schoolchildren from corporal punishment, roughly one third of our school population. In Scotland, over 90 per cent. of the school population is safe from corporal punishment.

Maintained schools in England and Wales keep punishment books. These have been referred to, but generally without statistics, so I feel obliged to put the statistics in front of my hon. Friends so that they can judge them. Some 35 of the 104 English and Welsh LEAs have published statistics from these books. They show that in many areas, corporal punishment in schools is still frequent. Extrapolating nationally from the published figures suggests that there are about 200,000 officially recorded instances of corporal punishment each year.

For instance, in Mid Glamorgan there were 9,994 recorded instances in secondary schools in 1979-81, and 516 in primary schools. In Cleveland, 12,369 were recorded in secondary schools from September 1980 to May 1983. In one comprehensive, Dyke House comprehensive in Cleveland, 1,260 canings were recorded between September 1980 and May 1983. *[Interruption.]* I would be grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North would listen to me. I had the courtesy to listen to him in silence.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend is only reading from the STOPP brief.

Mr. Key: The STOPP organisation has the finest statistics available to prove the point that I am trying to make, so of course I shall quote it. I shall quote it even more if I am encouraged in this way.

Mr. Greenway: Make your own speech.

Mr. Key: I shall be making my speech at greater length unless my hon. Friend does me the courtesy of listening to me.

One could go on quoting examples, but certain themes emerge from the statistics that are unpalatable to my hon. Friends. First, there is a tremendous variation from education authority to education authority. Secondly, some children get corporal punishment again and again. The Cleveland figures show that two boys were caned 25 times in one year and another 24 times in the following year. Thirdly, children of all ages are liable to corporal punishment. The sad fact is that even physically and mentally handicapped children are subject to this. We have seen that the corporal punishment of girls is practised, but is less common, although by no means rare.

I referred earlier to judicial corporal punishment, which was abolished in 1948 because the Cadogan report of 1938, after a thorough study of young offenders, concluded that those who were birched were more likley to re-offend than those who were not. It said:

"as a court penalty, corporal punishment is not an effective method of dealing with young offenders."

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*

Mr. Key: No, I shall not give way. I have already given way many times.

Flogging in the Army was banned in 1906, but was not finally outlawed in the Navy until 1957. Corporal punishment in borstals and prisons was banned in 1967. We should not beat convicted criminals, but innocent children are fair game.

The campaign to persuade Parliament to end corporal punishment in schools began in 1669, when a schoolboy presented Mr. Speaker with the Children's Petition.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: My hon. Friend said that corporal punishment does not deter. On one occasion when I was appearing in court, two probation officers were discussing that point. One of them said that his defendant was from the Isle of Man, where he had been birched, but he was in court again. The young man said from the corner, "But I wouldn't do it again in the Isle of Man."

Mr. Key: That may be so, but unfortunately for my hon. Friend, birching has been abolished in the Isle of Man. I am surprised that she is advocating the use of the birch. That is going a bit far, even for some of my hon. Friends.

The campaign to persuade Parliament to end corporal punishment to schools began in 1669 with the Children's Petition, which suggests that a teacher who

"is not able to awe and keep a company of youth in obedience without violence and stripes should judge himself no more fit for that function."

Times have not changed in that respect. Beating is a dangerous form of punishment, which is not even successful as a means of discipline. We have seen that corporal punishment is counter-productive. Schools which use the cane have the worst classroom misbehaviour, the highest juvenile delinquency, the most vandalism and the worst attendance rates. The cane breeds resentment and fosters hostile teacher-pupil relationships and a negative and antagonistic atmosphere in schools.

None of the education authorities which banned corporal punishment has been forced to reintroduce it. The practical experience of doing without it in Britain and overseas makes it clear that corporal punishment is not only undesirable but unnecessary.

As a Conservative, I believe in levelling up. Few of my colleagues would disagree that the highest educational standards, the strongest motivation and the best discipline are still to be found in traditional schools, which they probably attended. Those schools have, almost without exception, ceased to use the cane. The parliamentary victims of the cane who say that no harm was done to them were lucky, because beating causes physical and mental damage to a significant minority. Of course, as I said earlier, they preferred it.

The last ditch argument is always: what, in the face of increasing indiscipline, can be put in place of the cane? During my 16 years' experience of teaching, without exception, the best headmasters, housemasters and

teachers used punishment least and the inadequate indulged in it. Any teacher worth his or her salt will say that good discipline results from a host of complex, interacting factors and is not achieved by the simplistic hitting of a child with a stick. It is no good saying that we must get away from emotional language and that we must stop talking about beating, flogging or hitting children with sticks. I have heard several hon. Members talking about a sharp tap on the bottom as a euphemism for corporal punishment. We cannot quibble about the delivery of that punishment.

A rich harvest of alternatives to corporal punishment has been gleaned. I pay tribute to David Fontana, the senior lecturer at University college, Cardiff for stating the best practice for teachers in his book "Classroom Control". The book encapsulates the best practice of all those, perhaps good, schoolmasters who taught Tory Back-Bench Members all those years ago—those hon. Members who ask constantly what can be put in place of the cane. I refer them to that book. I even refer my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster to it. I wish that she would read it and discover the alternatives to corporal punishment. The book encapsulates the best teaching practice.

What is that best practice? It means good schools, where rules are few but are clear and are consistently applied. It means rules that are subject to change and development and a school with clear and efficient lines of communications between pupils and teachers at all levels and between the staff. It also means decisions which are taken by the head and staff in a way which is never arbitrary but is related to the need for children to learn standards and values. Such a school will have a positive purpose which is sensitive to all the ability-related differences between the children and to cultural factors.

If the small print of the problems facing us bores my hon. Friends, I must say that frequently many of them say, "What will you put in its place?" We must put those measures in the place of corporal punishment. If something is to be put in the place of corporal punishment, it is the teachers who will do it and it is their experience and good will upon which we must, to a large extent, rely.

Most punishment arouses negative feelings in a child and usually draws attention to bad behaviour. Praise and encouragement are accepted and practised by parents and teachers. Teachers may add material rewards such as good marks, term reports, house points, privileges and special responsibilities, all of which are immediate, realistic, consistent and attractive to children. The withdrawal of those privileges and the denial of time are among the most effective sanctions available to a teacher. The ridiculous fantasies creeping into our schools, such as the abandonment of egg-and-spoon races and the absurdity of denigrating football as a sport and calling it an invasion game, do nothing to help discipline any more than the abandoning of school uniform.

8.15 pm

As ex-pupils and as parents, hon. Members know that teachers should be confident, careful, consistent, fair, aware and firm. They should set realistic standards and should, above all, enjoy teaching. Sarcasm and humiliation in the classroom elicit nothing but rudeness and disobedience. If we wish our teachers to carry prestige and status and deliver to our children their educational birthright, we must look to the ACAS talks now in progress to set us on the road beyond the tragic dispute that we have experienced, and to the Secretary of State to implement the new partnership envisaged by the Bill, which I warmly congratulate the Government on introducing.

Mrs. Elizabeth Shields (Ryedale): I agree with the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key). I, like many other hon. Members, have been in the teaching profession, and I may have a little more experience than some. During the past 10 years I have taught in a mixed comprehensive school. During that period the use of the cane, which was never frequent, has become even less frequent. There are alternative ways of correcting children. There are no complete answers to the problems set by disruptive children. We must work those things out as we go along. There are positive ways of considering the problem but corporal punishment is a negative way, as it tends to breed resentment.

If one uses suspension, there is a cooling-off period. A child who is out of school for three or five days gets bored and wishes to return to the school environment, because he has been away from his friends. That is much preferable to, and more positive than, corporal punishment.

Many in the teaching profession, and most of the unions, now believe that corporal punishment should be phased out, on the ground that it is ineffectual and does not produce the results claimed. To retain it on a voluntary basis would create an almost impossible position in many schools. It would be divisive, in that different pupils would be punished differently for the same offence.

I wonder whether those hon. Members who are in favour of corporal punishment would be willing to accept it if you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or Mr. Speaker, were to decide that you could inflict it when the House is noisy and when hon. Members are not listening to the Opposition.

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): I did not wish to intervene but there is one argument to which I feel I must draw attention. The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields) said that the school in which she had taught had corporal punishment, but that its use had diminished, and that she foresaw a time when it would be phased out. I do not disagree with that general approach, but it seems that the people involved in education must make decisions for themselves.

I would prefer, and I intend to vote on this basis, that schools should decide for themselves in conjunction with the governors. However, I do not wish to argue that point tonight as much passion has been devoted to it and the arguments made on both sides of the House have gone over the top.

There is freedom of manoeuvre in this House and it is wrong for hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who unfortunately is not in his place, to suggest that we are constrained by the European Court of Human Rights. We are neither legally for morally obliged to make this change tonight. I say that as, I think, the only Conservative Member to vote against the last Education Bill, because it is nonsense. I do not take the view adopted by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), which is that the more nonsense we vote for, the better. On the whole it is better to vote against it if possible.

I have often made my next point, and I know that it is a failing cause, although it should be put on the record.

[Mr. Fred Silvester]

The treaty that gives authority to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has never been debated or voted upon in the House. Therefore, there is no moral obligation on this Parliament. It happens that because the original derived from a treaty, it passes through the House under the Ponsonby rules, and was therefore not subject to debate. All Governments have failed to bring this matter to the House, even though they have an opportunity to do so everyfive years when the right to make private petitions to the court is brought up for renewal.

Thus there is no moral obligation, although the question whether there is a legal obligation is more complex. I shall outline what I believe to be the position. The Government have entered into a treaty. They are undoubtedly bound by the decisions of the court. However, this Parliament cannot be bound by the court's decisions. It remains a sovereign Parliament and can pass what laws it pleases. The Government come to Parliament to put the case for a change in the law so that they are not embarrassed by cases that go before the court. Thus, we are talking about the Government's embarrassment, and it is not up to this Parliament to bail them out unless the Government come to us with a proposition that we can accept in its own right. So far, the Government have not come to us with such a proposition.

As has been pointed out, the Government came to us with a ludicrous proposition. On that occasion, many of my hon. Friends thought it appropriate to vote for that nonsense, although I did not. I do not propose to vote for this nonsense either. If the European Court of Human Rights believes that a person who has a philosophical objection to having his child beaten should be protected, why, as is the case in my constituency, do 80 per cent. or more of the parents involved in some schools believe that it is to their children's advantage to be brought up in the disciplined atmosphere of a school that still has that sanction, and why should they not be able to have that right exercised?

The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) keeps saying that I am talking about the impossible. But if he is anxious to reconcile the decision of the European Court of Human Rights, there is one clear and obvious solution. If the schools are left to decide for themselves, parents can choose which school to send their children to. The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields) would no doubt say that fewer and fewer schools would retain corporal punishment. Indeed, if the argument is convincing, more and more parents would choose to send their children to schools that did not have corporal punishment.

Mr. Budgen: What would happen if a parent sent his child to a school and then changed his mind just before the child was about to be beaten? If the child was beaten, the parent might go off to the European Court of Human Rights on the basis that his right not to have his child beaten had been infringed by the school and that the British Government had, in effect, reneged on an order from the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. Silvester: My hon. Friend has made his reputation in the House by thinking up extreme examples in order to ridicule Bills. Indeed, he is fairly good at it. But I do not for a moment believe that any court would regard that as responsible behaviour by a citizen who had been given the opportunity to choose his school. I think that my hon. Friend understands that point.

My hon. Friends may believe and vote as they wish on this matter, but there is no constraint on them to take one decision or another as a result of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): In trying to avoid what others have described as the mess of previous legislation and of attempts to deal with this issue, the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) suggested that responsibility should lie with the parents and that there should be absolute parental choice. In other words, he believes that parents should be able to choose between a school that inflicts corporal punishment and one that does not.

Mr. Silvester: I was talking about the parents, governors and teachers who are responsible for a particular school.

Mr. Fatchett: I accept that intervention, although it rather changes the hon. Gentleman's argument. I was going to say that parental choice would not be absolute in terms of the amendment, or in practice. From our constituency experience we all know that there are substantial constraints on choice, in the form of school catchment areas, school buildings, school sizes, and so on. Consequently parents cannot exercise any absolute choice. I think that it was the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) who said that we had two choices: to go for absolute abolition, or to allow parents to exercise their philosophical right to allow their children to opt out of corporal punishment. The hon. Member for Grantham then said that that was an unacceptable approach, because it would involve two classes of children and two classes of punishment. That strong argument has yet to be answered.

I am also worried about the possible damage to the relationship between a parent and his child. If parents are to be able to choose whether their child should receive corporal punishment in certain circumstances — I shall not use emotive language such as "I want my child to be beaten" — a dangerous wedge may be driven between them and their child. Might not a child say to his parents that other children do not have to suffer corporal punishment? I hope that the House will take the clear line outlined by the hon. Member for Grantham and that it will go for total abolition.

I listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key). In Committee, I listened on occasions when he was allowed to make some interesting interventions. I did not always agree with him, but tonight I almost totally agreed with him. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) turned round and said that we would only disagree with him in his passing references to the value of this Bill. We may fundamentally disagree on that point, but there is much agreement between us on the issue of corporal punishment.

However, I was disappointed by the reception that Conservative Members gave the hon. Gentleman's speech. It is a commentary on the modern Conservative party that it cannot listen to debate without constant comment or childish behaviour. The hon. Gentleman made a powerful case, and I hope that those who speak in favour of the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Rugby and

Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) or, indeed, the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth himself, will answer some of his points. As yet, no hon. Member has done so. I shall list the arguments, and I hope that those who speak in this debate will try to meet them.

For instance, why do we reserve corporal punishment only for the young? What justification is there for that? That point has not been answered. Why is there evidence that in schools where there are high levels of corporal punishment, there is also evidence of increasing unruly and antisocial behaviour? No one has answered that point. The hon. Member for Salisbury made that argument effectively. No one has answered the point that when corporal punishment has been abolished, there is no deterioration in behaviour and discipline. Often there is the opposite, in that there is an improvement as there is a better atmosphere.

8.30 pm

In the debate no one has answered the argument that there is a substantial difference between schools that have corporal punishment and schools that do not. If the evidence suggests any difference, it is that schools that do not have corporal punishment have the better atmosphere and behaviour, and the better disciplinary record. I look forward to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) dealing with those points. No one has said why no individual local authority that has decided to abandon corporal punishment has gone back on that decision. No one has told us why that is a historical fact. I suspect that the reason is that, when local authorities take that decision, they recognise that it is right and stick by it. During the debate, I should like to hear answers to those arguments, which have not yet been given.

Three basic arguments have been put forward for retaining corporal punishment. First, there is the ear-clipping analogy, that it is a good idea to be clipped round the ear by one's parents, the local bobby or perhaps occasionally the teacher. That is good for the child. It teaches him right from wrong, and is a beneficial process. That is used as a basis for saying that we need corporal punishment, and has been used in the debate.

Even if one subscribes to the notion that the ear clip is a good thing in itself — I am not wholly of that persuasion — there is a substantial difference between an ear clip and the process of corporal punishment. The clipping of an ear by a parent is a spontaneous reaction — an understandable reaction in many circumstances. The process of corporal punishment is a deliberate act of violence to achieve certain objectives and ends. One cannot put the argument on the basis of the ear clipping analogy. One must recognise that when one goes for deliberate violence, it has its own culture and atmosphere, and one must consider the implications. My argument is that when one creates that culture and atmosphere, one creates a set of reactions against it, which are not necessarily beneficial for our society.

The second argument is that we do not need the cane; it is just a deterrent. I have heard the deterrent argument in other contexts. There is a point in that argument when one has to say that if the weapon is a deterrent, one is prepared to use it. Then the argument shifts its ground because the weapon is no longer a deterrent — the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) used this expression — but it becomes a symbol of fear in the classroom. It is a way of frightening young people.

I have a very different view of education and the educational processes from those that are based upon fear. There is something wrong with our society, our education and our teaching profession if the only way in which we can provide education and learning is on the basis of fear. All the available evidence shows that if we can provide a different atmosphere in which people learn from each other and with each other, we shall get much better results. I do not believe for a moment that one can educate through fear; one can educate only through challenge, initiative and opportunity. Fear is not the basis upon which one enhances people's view of the world and their willingness to learn.

That argument falls, as does the third, which is simple. Those who want to retain corporal punishment simply say, "What is the alternative? We have run out of arguments and ideas, so we'll throw the ball into your court." That cry for an alternative has come from those who have spoken in favour of corporal punishment tonight. It is incumbent upon those who want to change the Bill as it stands to come forward with some arguments. The "What is the alternative?" argument is a negative but easy argument because the cane is the non-thinking, easy response that says, "It has always happened, so it must always happen." I do not believe that that is the right response.

The hon. Member for Salisbury gave a series of constructive suggestions. I make just two points. First, if we want teachers to do a job in our classrooms, we have to train them and provide resources for them to do it. We shall not overcome the problems that teachers face in relation to individual pupils simply by not providing the resources. We shall not overcome those problems by providing the cane. Teachers need to be trained to do the job.

Secondly, there is no easy answer. Resources will often be needed to deal with those of our children who are difficult to educate, but certain local authorities and schools, and many teachers, have experimented successfully in that direction. I say to those who simply parrot the words "What is the alternative?": go around the country, take a deep interest in education, look at what our educationists have done, and you will find the alternative. It is much more civilised, humane and effective for individual children.

In introducing the amendment, the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth spent a few moments knocking the other place. I hope that he continues to do that throughout what may be a relatively short political career, because there will be some consistency if he does. What he wanted to do in that knockabout opening session was show the House that he had an argument. The reality of his speech was that he had no argument. It was a threadbare speech.

I hope that the House has the courage tonight to say that we do not deal with the problems of our society by falling back on deliberate acts of violence, as are enshrined and embodied in corporal punishment, and to abolish corporal punishment and bring this country, not through legislation, not through the courts, but through the Act of this Parliament, into line with all other countries in western Europe. That will be the civilised way and a great improvement for our education system.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I am pleased to be associated with my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) in this excellent amendment. Tonight the

[Mr. Peter Bruinvels]

subject for debate is discipline, or lack of it, in our schools. All that we are trying to do is to rectify the situation where some standards are falling because of lack of discipline, while the good schools are continuing to do extremely well.

My friend the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) said that I was liable to make a moralising speech. I have no regret about doing such a thing, because I believe that we are trying to bring discipline back into our schools. Good discipline in our schools breeds respect. I believe that corporal punishment, when used properly, and properly controlled, can bring that respect, just as good teachers earn respect. Of course one does not want corporal punishment to be used on every occasion. Indeed, teachers who have to use it on every occasion might be considered to have failed, but perhaps it is better to receive corporal punishment than to spend one's life having cold showers, doing 500 lines, going on cross-country runs or facing the ultimate problem of expulsion.

Our children should stay in school for as long as possible, so that they can learn and get a job after having had proper training. If a pupil is expelled the school has failed, but if a child is caned he has a second chance. There is nothing wrong in allowing a child that opportunity. It is a deterrent for children to be caned. I have had the experience of being in both the state and the private sector of education, and both schools had the cane available. Indeed, I think that I am the youngest member to take part in the debate—I did not leave school that many years ago. Without any doubt, it was better for me to be in school than out and about.

It is important to try to improve the standards of discipline in schools. How will corporal punishment be conducted? I believe that it should be conducted in front of the class and under proper control. It should be carried out in front of the class so that they know full well that a certain child is a miscreant. It is a quick way in which to deal with him. The decision to cane the child should be instant, so that he does not have to wait all day, queuing outside the headmaster's door, as we had to.

A record of the use of the cane should be kept so that there is no question of an illegal caning. It is important that the decision on corporal punishment should be made locally. In that way, the governors, the head and the parents are involved in a local decision.

On occasions, a caning can rehabilitate a child extremely quickly. Some people have said that a good whacking has done no one any harm, and I like to think that it has not done me any harm yet. I can remember children going scrumping. In the old days, the local bobby would take them to one side and clip them around the ear, but they did not go before the beak. The children were taken to their parents, who were informed that they had been scrumping. The children received the punishment there and then. That saved court time and, I believe, reduced juvenile crime. We have heard of some of the idiots at universities who have stolen policemen's helmets and cannot become barristers because their record has been blotted for life.

Of the parents whose children attend English-speaking schools, 63 per cent. favour the occasional use of corporal punishment. We are trying to make it available when a local school wants it. I am a governor of a couple of schools, and in one school a girl kicked a teacher in the stomach. I should have thought that that child could be sorted out at the school, but she has been expelled. Does that succeed? Instant discipline could have been used to control that child and would have ensured that she had a second chance. That is what we are talking about—giving our young children a second chance.

I do not like the idea of cane-free zones, rather like nuclear-free zones, so that one can shop around for a school that does not have the cane. I accept that if we have corporal punishment, some schools will not have it. That is not a retrograde step, because parents can move their children on to schools that have corporal punishment.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*—

Mr. Bruinvels: I feel that some parents are copping out and that some are unprepared to discipline their children. They are putting too much responsibility on teachers to discipline their children. That is not the best way. Discipline begins at home, as does respect.

Many hon. Members have referred to the European Court of Human Rights, and it is a big bugbear tonight. We are the United Kingdom, and we do not have to do whatever the European Court tells us. I believe that it would be better if we could forget what the European Court has said. The Isle of Man had the birch until the European Court interfered, and until then the behaviour rate had been considerably better than it is now. There is a British way of doing things, a British tradition, and that is lost if we listen to everything that is said by the European Court.

What is wrong with punishment fitting the crime? We all believe in trying to improve the lot of our fellow people and in making our children better citizens. A good point came out of "Better Schools" which in summary says that schools must secure good order and create positive attitudes towards good behaviour in all that they do. The effectiveness of schools in promoting good behaviour, and more importantly, self discipline, has an effect on wider social problems, such as juvenile crime.

The public expect little Joe or little Jill to behave better than he or she does, and this amendment may ensure that. We have heard a lot of what STOPP has said, and I recognised certain comments that were read out by hon. Friends. I do not believe any child has been physically abused by the cane, and, more important, the use of the cane has not been abused.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): The hon. Member talks about children not being abused, but if he looks at *The Standard* for this evening he will see a horrific photograph. I have two daughters in the teaching profession and I represent part of Strathclyde region, which governs more than half the educational population of Scotland. The region has departed from corporal punishment and my daughters have found that to be an effective and successful move.

8.45 pm

Mr. Bruinvels: We have already had the photograph in *The Standard* drawn to our attention tonight. I have read the report, and it is a shocking indictment. There is obviously a sub judice rule, and as we do not have the whole report we should wait and see. If the hon. Gentleman has listened to my speech he will have heard me say that caning must be conducted under proper control, in proper circumstances, and should be properly

recorded. I believe the case reported in *The Standard* should not have happened, but I believe that it is an isolated one.

We must ensure that the standard of behaviour in our schools is acceptable to society. We must ensure that it is retained as a local decision, and that each head, parent, and governing body can decide on what must be done. There is nothing wrong in giving the head that power to impose discipline. Many head teachers want that power. They will not get a great deal of excitement out of using it, and indeed its use may show up a failure in the school, but it may have a shattering effect and immediately improve discipline. That is what we want to see.

Tonight we have a free vote on this issue, and that is very unusual. This is a darned good amendment, which will ensure proper standards in our schools. If the amendment saves young people from being beaten up and enables them to gain a qualification by staying on at school instead of being treated as a social failure, it will achieve a great deal. I support the amendment.

Mr. Bell: It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels). In his private life he is a magnanimous person but he finds himself in the Chamber defending causes which must be difficult to defend.

I think he has been overtaken by events. Earlier the hon. Gentleman said that he did not believe there was an abuse of the caning procedure. He had to be referred to the article in tonight's *London Standard*, which is a clear abuse of that procedure. The hon. Gentleman sought refuge in the law of sub judice but there is no sub judice about this case, as no court action is pending. Therefore, we are entitled to refer to the photograph in *The London Standard* and to refer to this example of the worst aspects of caning.

We have heard a great deal of anecdotal evidence. The hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) referred to an anecdotal experience when she was a magistrate. She said that someone from the Isle of Man said that he would not repeat an offence because of the birch. Such anecdotal evidence does not add to the argument. I believe the argument has been cogently put tonight and I believe that those who are against corporal punishment have won the argument. It is my intention to seek to assist the House in voting so that if the argument has been won on the Floor of the House, the vote may also be won in the Division Lobby.

I was the vice-chairman of the Newcastle education committee when it abolished corporal punishment in 1982. The Committee did so against great local opposition and against a referendum which had been enacted by the bureaucracy in education in Newcastle. That referendum sought to show that 82 per cent. of those who were canvassed believed in corporal punishment. We on Newcastle city council took our decision seriously and we abolished corporal punishment. Newcastle's system of education has been much improved and discipline has not lapsed. Indeed, we now have a better system of discipline in Newcastle than we had before.

I was quite startled by the figures that the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) gave. He mentioned Cleveland, which is my county, and high levels of corporal punishment there. I hope that the figures have diminished since 1983 and that caning is now rare. I am aware that the education committee there has gone to some lengths to ameliorate matters.

The hon. Member for Salisbury also took us through the historic arguments. Anybody who reads the memoirs of Lord Curzon will realise the impact that severe caning had on him and how it affected his approach to life. We also know what canings did to Winston Churchill. I am sure that St. John's, Leatherhead, the school of the hon. Member for Leicester, East, will be pleased to see him here tonight, caning or otherwise. We know that caning leaves deep mental and physical impressions on those who are subjected to it. It is clear what psychological effect regular beatings had on Lord Curzon. The hon. Member for Salisbury said that judicial flogging ended in 1948. We hope to end caning tonight.

We have had a great deal of argument about the European Court of Human Rights. The hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) took an astonishing approach. He seemed to say that morality and law could be distinguished, that law is not based on morality and that the fact that we have signed the European Convention on Human Rights does not oblige us morally to follow the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. Signing that convention means that we are honour bound and legally bound to follow the Court's decisions.

Since the 1982 decision involving Campbell and Cosans, the Government have not come to terms with the moral dilemma or with the legal obligation to make corporal punishment illegal. The result is that we are debating the Bill. The Secretary of State believes that these matters should be left to governing bodies and heads. He has not mentioned pupils. It is for the Government to take a moral stand. They must take account of the decision of the European Court of Human Rights and stop the present dual system of discipline in schools. The Government are obliged to take the lead and not to try to hedge their bets with some of their Back Benchers.

Corporal punishment is not necessary. Other systems of discipline have been referred to. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) mentioned France, where social security payments are withheld for truancy. The French have said that that punishment is used only rarely. Corporal punishment has, however, been abolished in France and the Republic of Ireland. Other means of dealing with discipline problems have been found.

Mr. Pawsey: When the hon. Gentleman says that the penalty in France is not used frequently, is he not underlining the case for the cane, in that both have a deterrent effect? Neither has to be used frequently for there to be a deterrent effect.

Mr. Bell: We have heard a great deal about deterrent effect. There is no way in which to show that corporal punishment has a deterrent effect. I was subjected to corporal punishment at school, and it did not deter me—it made me more obtuse and difficult. I was a less good pupil as a result. Some teacher counselling would have had a much greater impact. I say that in no sense of recrimination against the school—it was the logic of the time—but it did not do me any good.

We have won the argument in favour of abolishing corporal punishment, and I hope that we win the vote. This has been an interesting and useful debate. It has had its historical analogies and its anecdotal evidence. We have

[Mr. Bell]

had arguments for and against, in the best traditions of the House. The House has a free vote tonight. The Opposition are whipped because we strongly oppose corporal punishment, but the House has a unique opportunity at this late stage in the session to make a mark and to get rid of corporal punishment and thus a dual system of discipline. We can make it clear to every school, every headmaster, every board of governors and every education committee what their obligations are. Other forms of discipline can be found. That would be in the interests of pupils, who have been referred to least during the debate. I will gladly vote for the abolition of corporal punishment, and I urge the House to do the same.

Mr. Evennett: In view of the length of the debate and the lateness of the hour, I shall be extremely brief.

This is an important issue, but it is not as important as many other education issues which we could have debated, such as standards, finance and excellence. I am a product of a grammar school, as many Conservative Members are, and a former teacher. Experiences in the public school system are not really relevant to the majority of people, because 95 per cent. of children go to state schools. We must never forget that the public school system, excellent though it is, has the ultimate right to expel pupils who are badly behaved or who commit indiscipline. It is not so easy in the state system. Where can they be expelled to from there?

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Australia.

9 pm

Mr. Evennett: My support for the retention of corporal punishment rests on two principles. First, I believe that the majority of parents in this country and certainly in my part of the country favour the retention of corporal punishment. Secondly, we have heard about certain offences in schools such as assaults on teachers and bullying fellow pupils in the playground, which I believe are extremely serious and deserve serious punishment. I believe that in such cases the cane can be effective both as a deterrent and as a punishment.

Members have referred to the article in *The London Standard* today. No-one would support such rare but well-publicised abuses of corporal punishment. The use of the cane must be reasonable and administered by the headmaster. It is for the school and the head of the school to determine what punishment is used for children who commit certain offences at school, and I believe that the cane has a very limited role to play in the modern school.

I am glad that Conservative Members have a free vote on this. It is interesting that the Opposition, who supposedly believe in freedom of choice on moral issues, have imposed a Whip. That is highly regrettable.

In my view it is for the head, for the school and for parents to ensure that the discipline in the school is adequate to allow education to continue. From my experience in London, as a parent, a governor and a teacher, I am well aware of some of the problems in inner London schools which do not have the cane and do not have adequate discipline. Regrettably, there are some schools in which very little education takes place because there is no discipline. It will not do for anyone in the House to pass the buck and say that there are alternatives when no one has told the people of this country of any real alternative. There has been talk of expulsion, money and other measures but in certain circumstances those alternatives may not be so effective as the cane.

Conservative contributions today have shown that we want a good education for all children in this country. That necessitates good discipline, because without it good education is impossible. Without discipline in the classroom and in the playground, there will be fear—children who cannot learn because they are frightened to go to school and teachers who are frightened to teach because of the indiscipline in some schools.

Regrettable though corporal punishment may be, I believe that its maintenance in the state school system is essential as a deterrent and as a punishment, but it must be used reasonably and rarely. I support the amendment.

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): I wish to answer just one point about what does or does not make a good discipline in schools.

Having trained teachers for 10 years, I assure the House that it is almost impossible to say what makes one teacher a good disciplinarian and another teacher a poor disciplinarian. I believe that good classroom disciplinarians are born and not made. If a teacher does not have any natural sense of authority over the pupils nothing very much will be taught. It has also been my experience that if a teacher is a weak disciplinarian the availability of the cane will not make that teacher a strong disciplinarian.

I listened carefully to the speech of the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) because he has been a practitioner and in these matters an ounce of experience is worth a ton of indignant theory. A good many teachers in this country believe that there are certain marginal circumstances in which the use of the cane may make a difference. There are teachers who use the cane but are by no means brutal or uncaring. They use the cane sparingly and they openly say that they use it as one of the tools of professional control which they rightly see as part of the framework of professional responsibility in the classroom.

Nevertheless, we ought now to do without corporal punishment in our schools. Some of the circumstances have already been described accurately, because I have experienced them myself. I have seen situations in which a teacher wishes to take the lesson but can get no order or decent quiet. What is to be done in such a situation? I can assure the House that it is not the cane. That will not restore order, because fundamental indiscipline in a school is due to fundamental factors, and the use of the cane is only effective, if at all, in marginal circumstances.

In the old Victorian board schools, the cane was kept on the desk and physical punishment was meted out instantly. In some of our schools there is no corporal punishment because they would not have it as part of the ethos of those schools. I have been in schools where great use is made of the cane, and the discipline is very bad. I have been in other schools in which the cane has been used moderately and the discipline has been fair to good. I am saying that there is no correlation between the use of the cane and good order and discipline in a school.

Hon. Members are right: unless we have discipline—that is the old-fashioned but right word—there must be order and discipline, peace and quiet for kids to learn. But

at the end of the day, a weak disciplinarian is not fortified by the cane. He or she will continue to be bad, and nothing is restored by the cane.

Conservative Members have challenged my hon. Friends to suggest alternatives, but the alternative goes to the root of the training of teachers. We must be much more careful whom we select to do this very important job. Part and parcel of a teacher's mental make-up must be that sense of authority that brings about law and order. If the wrong people are put into classrooms, we can give them a great bundle of canes but it will make no difference whatsoever.

We are debating fundamental matters. When we talk about the cane as an instrument of discipline, we are talking about something that is on the fringe of the problem. If we concentrate only on what good the stick will do, we shall have missed the fundamentals altogether.

Mr. Budgen: The House ought to be very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) for the careful way in which he set out the obligations that the Government have and the obligations, if any, that the House has.

The Government find themselves in an interesting position. In 1982, they were ordered by the European Court of Human Rights to abolish corporal punishment, but the natural instincts of the Tory party are to retain corporal punishment. The Government were caught between their treaty obligations to the European convention on human rights and the natural prejudices and views of the Tory party, and since 1982, have been delaying and tackling hither and thither in an attempt to reconcile two irreconcilable groups of people.

They now find that the other place has come to much the same conclusion as my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), and has said that a sort of halfway house is of no logical significance at all, that it is a nonsense, that the best way to demonstrate that we are prepared to obey this order of a foreign court is to abolish the whole thing. Indeed, that is what the court order of 1982 leads to.

My hon. Friend the Member for Withington was absolutely right. The Government are under an obligation to introduce legislation which will cause the law to conform to the order of the court. On the other hand, the House is not under any obligation to be persuaded by the arguments of the Executive. We are in this strange position because the Executive is drawn from the legislature and it is difficult for a Minister to say to the House, especially to his Conservative colleagues, "I know that there is not a majority in the Conservative party for the complete abolition of corporal punishment, I know that for better or for worse the prejudice of my hon. Friends will be in favour of keeping this form of discipline, even if it is rarely used. Although I would prefer to retain corporal punishment, I ask you to vote against corporal punishment so that we may obey a foreign court." The Secretary of State does not say that. The Government must tack from position to position, trying to do the impossible, as, indeed, they have done since 1982.

My hon. Friend the Member for Withington said that I was being too clever and awkward in anticipating that if the House voted for new clause 20, it would give rise to further litigation. My hon. Friend may not have had the pleasure of dealing with many litigants. One of the common characteristics of litigants is that they are nearly as awkward as I am. He should understand that the Mrs. Gillicks of this world feel strongly and are often looking for an issue to fight for.

If the House decides to agree to new clause 20, some parents in future who send their child, for example, to a local comprehensive, will agree that their child may be beaten, if that child breaches the discipline of the school. They will do so in the usual inconsistent way in which many of us go along with things of which we disapprove, perhaps because that school is the best disciplined school or because they think that their child will do well there and go on to a good university. None of us send our children to school expecting that our little Johnny will be beaten. We all think that somebody else's little Johnny will be beaten. When their little Johnny is lined up to be beaten, they will try to withdraw their consent, but many teachers will say, "You have consented to your child being beaten and you can jolly well take the consequences of that because that consent will not be withdrawn."

My hon. Friend has said that I am too speculative about this, but if these proposals are accepted, some parent will go to the European Court of Human Rights and say, "You are a supervisory body. You have told the British people that they should abolish corporal punishment. With the usual hypocrisy and evasion of the British people they have tried to get round your direct order and that arrogant sovereign House of Commons has thought up some subterfuge. It is about time it was put in its place."

I hope that the House votes for new clause 20, and I anticipate that somebody will go to the European Court of Human Rights because anyone who has heard this and previous debates knows that people feel strongly about corporal punishment. It is almost inevitable that some parent will go to the European Court.

This is something which the House should decide. In future, when a Left-wing Government comes into power, of whatever coalition grouping, corporal punishment may be abolished. That would be a reasonable thing for a sovereign House of Commons to do. What is not right is that a Tory Government, against their instinct and against the wishes of those who elected them, should be forced by an external court to do something which goes against the present instincts of the majority of the British people.

I shall vote for new clause 20 in the clear knowledge that it probably will not stick. I salute now the future equivalent of Mrs. Gillick, or someone whom my hon. Friend the Member for Withington would describe as unreasonable—the litigant, the unreasonable person—who will take the matter to the European Court. Sooner or later the House and the nation will realise that this sort of sensitive and important issue is best decided here.

9.15 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I am sorry that we have spent so much time on what I consider to be a rather unimportant clause in what is generally a good Bill. I remind the House that earlier this week we spent two and half hours, and only that, on the fight against crime. Last week we spent three hours on the problems of the tin industry. Tonight we have spent over four hours on corporal punishment in schools. It is fair to say, if only to prove wrong the claim of the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett), that the alliance is not whipped for the vote on the amendment. It is for us, as it is for Conservative Members, a free vote. I believe

[Mr. Clement Freud]

that the majority of alliance Members are deeply and fundamentally opposed to corporal punishment in schools.

I am personally opposed to corporal punishment in schools. I do not think that it does any good. I have yet to meet an educationist for whom I have respect who believes that corporal punishment is a good way of combating indiscipline or making pupils better.

I have listened to the entire debate with great care, and it is significant that only a minority of Members they are all sitting on the Government Benches have spoken in favour of corporal punishment. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) seemed to feel that if a teacher kept a cane in a corner of a classroom his purpose would somehow be served. Education by fear is not an acceptable way of education and I oppose it.

The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) seemed to say that a teacher should hit, but not hard. He felt that crime was best dealt with by violence. I have little faith in that solution.

The hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) suggested in an intervention that if a majority of parents or governors wanted corporal punishment, they should have it. I am sorry that someone who comes from Burke's old constituency should feel that there is that special knowledge in a majority which wants anything. If we obtained opinions from the majority of people, we would find that they were against income tax and many other things which we, with our superior knowledge, know that we cannot do without.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) advanced an interesting argument when he said that a clip around the ear has never harmed anyone. For every 20 children who received a clip around the ear as a summary form of justice, half a dozen of them were not guilty and grew up with a deep resentment against the law, which gave the right, without any sort of jury system, to hit children, including the old-fashioned clip around the ear. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there was the odd child who became better for it, but there were many who felt, "That man has done something to me that was unjust." Instead of becoming good citizens, they became that much worse.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I wonder how many children, not having suffered instant retribution for whatever they were guilty of, have been led to believe that they could commit further sins—or indeed, crimes—and get off?

Mr. Freud: That is an entertaining argument. I believe that any child who got off was enormously grateful for his or her good luck; but he may have felt guilty. We would wish to encourage a feeling of guilt rather than to beat children into submission.

Hitting children is the easy option. It does not wash. I have yet to meet a good schoolmaster who favoured it. I refer to the speech by the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), who was by all accounts a good schoolmaster. Many years ago, the hon. Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson) made the memorable remark that there are schoolmasters who can do a brilliant job of work with a class of 30 or 35, and there are those who will have a riot with one dead rabbit. I believe that he was right. Schoolmasters who beat from a sense of weakness bring education into ill repute.

Finally, those who believe that beating or caning children performs some function should realise that that is not what we are voting on tonight. We have two alternatives this evening. One is to abolish corporal punishment. The other is to create a divisive system in which two children who have committed the same crime are given different punishments. We must consider not what we think might be good or bad but the amendment paper and the alternatives. I ask the House to vote for the retention of clauses 44 and 45 and to reject the amendments.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): In the city of Bradford there is considerable interest in education and in the issue of corporal punishment. On Friday, our evening newspaper, the Bradford *Telegraph and Argus*, published a survey of the views of a number of headmasters of upper schools in Bradford, including their views on corporal punishment. I was glad to see the Secretary of State return to the Chamber. He was pictured in Saturday's edition of the newspaper reading the survey which had been driven to him at a conference that he was attending in the midlands.

Seventeen of the 24 head teachers responded to the survey. Fourteen of the 17 did not want corporal punishment

"even as a last resort."

The summary of the survey's findings stated:

"the balance of opinion narrowly says today's standards . . . are at least as good as they were two decades ago. And if discipline is necessary it shouldn't be with a cane or slipper, say 82 per cent. But while Bradford Council takes legal advice on scrapping corporal punishment, only 18 per cent. want it kept as a final deterrent."

The survey also revealed:

"16 out of 17 say staff morale has taken a tumble since the year-long teachers' strike . . . 16 out of 17 say links with parents have suffered in the last year."

I believe that if we vote against corporal punishment tonight, many of those matters will be improved. Staff morale will be improved, and so will classroom discipline and relations with parents. During our debate it has become clear that there is considerable evidence that corporal punishment is counterproductive, fostering bitterness, alienation and hostility. It is the cause of bad discipline, not the cure for it. There is ample academic evidence to show that that is the case.

There is considerable evidence to show that pupil-teacher relationships are improved if there is an absence of corporal punishment. Certainly there is considerable evidence to show that in areas where corporal punishment has been abolished there is no sign of classroom discipline deteriorating or suspensions increasing.

We have heard from many who have come from teaching backgrounds in the debate, what many of us know from our own experience at school, that only bad teachers need to resort to corporal punishment — the cane and other means—to impose any sort of discipline or order in their classrooms.

We also know that teachers have gone beyond what is defined as reasonable and moderate corporal punishment. There have been many references to the case reported in *The London Standard* today. We also know of the cases which have gone to the courts where teachers have been found not guilty after beating boys with a riding crop;

caning a 12-year-old boy to bleeding point for shoddy work, bursting a boy's eardrum by slapping him around the face, and caning a nine-year-old boy on the thighs so severely that a police surgeon said in court that "excessive force" had been used causing weals and deep abrasions.

Commenting on the survey to which I referred in my opening comments, the newspaper's editoral said:

"We don't want our young people to get on their bikes and seek work in Slough or Reading. We want them to stay here and help revitalize our city with energy and imagination.

But first we need to give them an education to prepare them for that task. We want to turn out people equipped to help the city to march forward with hope, rather than stand in the dole queue with despair.

We can't do that in schools that are falling down, with staff who are so demoralized that vision as educators is replaced by thoughts of an early pension.

We have asked often enough for help. Now is the time to demand that the Government raises its eyes from the Home Counties, looks Northward, and gives major provincial centres like Bradford the cash to repair the launch pads from which their educational systems, and their futures, can soar."

I agree with the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) that the debate will be seen by many parents as a complete irrelevance to the plight of the schools which their children are attending. The concerns of parents are with standards in our schools, their fabric and equipment, the sufficiency of teachers, their quality and pay and the quality of books available to their children. Those are the issues that lie at the centre of the concern of so many of our constituents about the education services that we provide.

If tonight we sweep away corporal punishment for ever, we shall have done a service to our schools. We shall certainly have done a service to our pupils in those schools, to teachers and to parents. It is time for the House to take a decision; and I am sure that that decision will be to abolish corporal punishment in our schools.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: We have had a useful debate, although I regret that we have spent so much time talking about one aspect of discipline in schools, corporal punishment, and not more time on all the other issues. I am sure that the House is united in wanting there to be good order and discipline in our schools.

If the amendment that was moved by the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) is carried, not only will the House have spent a great deal of time talking about one aspect of discipline, but a lot of school governors will be encouraged in the next few months to spend a lot of time talking about corporal punishment rather than talking about the much wider issues of good order and discipline in schools. I hope at least that the governing bodies will realise that they should give as much, if not more, time to other aspects of discipline in their schools rather than to simply concentrate on corporal punishment.

I must also stress that we are not really talking about whether we are in favour or against corporal punishment. We are talking about the problems that have been created as a result of the European Convention and the European Court's Judgment. The hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) made that point. We have to face up to the fact that the Government have attempted to legislate on this issue. Last year, through the intellectual skills of the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph), the former Secretary of State, and the skills of the Department of Education and Science, the Government tried to find a scheme which was workable and within the law as it was laid down as a result of the judgment of the European Court. The House was extremely sceptical about the scheme and whether it was workable. The House of Lords correctly threw the Bill out as totally unworkable.

9.30 pm

The present Secretary of State is choosing to say that the Government, having failed to find a workable solution to the problem, will hand the problem over to the governors of individual schools. It may be that some governors will be more able than the Government machine to produce a solution. However, Ministers will be copping out if the clause comes out of the Bill as Ministers wish. If the clause comes out, they can leave it to the governors. However, very few governors will have among their number a lawyer who can work out whether the actions that they might propose to retain corporal punishment will or will not be legal. I would at least suggest that if the Government want to retain corporal punishment as a choice for governors, they should present governors with a workable scheme which would be legal. It would be unfortunate if governors spent a great deal of time arguing about the merits of corporal punishment and then found that they could not turn it into a workable scheme or that they could not gain the confidence of the teachers who would have to adminster it, because they feared that there would be a court action and the whole thing would degenerate into farce.

Good discipline in schools involves maintaining the authority of the school. Nothing destroys the authority of a school more than the uncertainty of the law and the possibility of individual parents taking teachers to court with the chance of winning their court action.

Conservative Members have referred to corporal punishment but have said that they do not want to use it, they merely want to have it present as a deterrent. Anyone with practical school experience knows that the vast majority of pupils who misbehave do not do so thinking that they might be caught. They misbehave in the belief that they will get away with it. A deterrent only works if they assume that they will be caught. Very few pupils who misbehave do so on the assumption that they will be caught. A very small number do assume that they will be caught but misbehave because they wish to draw attention to themselves and seek to be punished. There are other ways to deal with these pupils, and it would be foolish to make martyrs of them by using corporal punishment.

It has also been suggested that one survey shows that many parents are in favour of corporal punishment. I suspect that the majority of parents are in favour of corporal punishment for other people's children and not for their own. I once worked in a school where the head insisted that he should write to parents to inform them that he was thinking of applying corporal punishment to their child for misbehaviour. This was a most sensible procedure. However, he was amazed at the number of parents who wrote back to say that although they were in favour of corporal punishment, for one reason or another, it should not be applied to their child. The real test is, how many people would be in favour of corporal punishment for their child? I suspect that not too many would be in favour.

I would also like to consider the question about the choice of school. Conservative Members have argued that one solution to the problem is to allow people to have a choice between a school in which corporal punishment will

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

be administered and one where it will not. That is nonsense. In many parts of rural Britain, these choices do not exist. In fact, we are getting rid of the nearest school for most children, the local village school. It is nonsense to think that they will have a choice of school. That applies to many urban areas. Because of the problems connected with walking to school on account of traffic and other difficulties, the idea that parents can be offered a choice between a school that uses corporal punishment and a school that does not use it is also nonsense.

As a young teacher I administered corporal punishment. I felt then that it was unsatisfactory and wrong, and I was not happy about it. I am still not happy about it. My excuse is that the ethos of the school where I taught put pressure on the teachers. Also I taught groups of 40 or more pupils. Most teachers do not have to do that today. But corporal punishment did not solve any of the problems.

Conservative Members have to face up to certain problems connected with corporal punishment. Is it to be administered because it is a disgrace to the pupil who receives it? If that is the reason for administering corporal punishment, there are alternatives to it that signify that the pupil is in disgrace. Or is corporal punishment to be administered not because it disgraces the pupil but because it inflicts pain? Major problems are involved if the intention is to inflict pain.

Furthermore, the alert secondary school pupil knows how to counter corporal punishment. He says, "It didn't hurt, Sir." Many pupils refuse to accept corporal punishment; they will not obey the instruction to hold out their hand or to bend over. In my early teaching career I witnessed some very undignified incidents when teachers tried to administer corporal punishment without the consent of the pupil. In certain schools pupils manage to glory in the number of their beatings; they call themselves the cocks of the school because of the number of beatings that they have received. That does not improve discipline in schools. Those who have seen corporal punishment administered in schools where general discipline is poor must feel as strongly as I that it should be abolished. We must try to teach self-discipline in schools. We must demonstrate to young people that they ought to want to behave and co-operate and that if their consent cannot be won a series of sanctions can be applied which, far more effectively than corporal punishment, will achieve good discipline in schools.

As for the judgment, I ask those hon. Members who are to speak after me in the debate to demonstrate that the governors could introduce a workable, legal scheme that would not create two classes of child, to one of which corporal punishment could be applied although it could not be applied to the other.

Mr. Marlow: Were this House to pass a scheme of corporal punishment, is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that it would not be legal?

Mr. Bennett: This amendment does not ask us to pass a scheme. We are being asked to remove the abolition of corporal punishment from the Bill. Last year the Government put forward a scheme which they thought would meet the requirements laid down in the judgments of the European Court. Everybody believed that scheme to be a nonsense. Conservative Members were very reluctant to vote for it at second Reading. However, the Bill made progress through this House. However, the other place threw it out. No hon. Member really believes that the other place was not right to throw out an unworkable scheme. If the Government were introducing a workable alternative scheme, that might be satisfactory, but they are not. They imply that the governors will have to dream up a scheme that is more practical than the one that the Government put forward last year and that is also legal.

As I said earlier, if the Minister with a whole Government Department behind him cannot produce a scheme it is a little unrealistic to expect individual governing bodies to produce one that is legal and workable. It is difficult to produce a legal and workable scheme. We have two alternatives: we can continue to leave it to governing bodies, and in practice that will lead to slow abolition after a great deal of time wasted in debate, or we can accept the clear opportunity to rid ourselves of corporal punishment and to take a major step in concentrating everybody's mind on genuinely improving discipline in schools rather than exacting retribution on a small number of people.

Mr. Chris Patten: There are two things on which we can at least all agree. First, we all agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) that no litigant could conceivably be as awkward as he. Secondly, we would all agree that this has been a long debate. I commend the way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) opened the debate several hours ago. We have heard some interesting speeches; I refer especially to the speech by the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) which was extremely calm and clear. I should also mention the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester). I agree with his comment about a number of the arguments having gone considerably over the top.

I said the debate has been long and some people might take the view that it has been overlong. I shall be as brief as possible, because I know that the House wants to decide the matter. I do not think that many of the things said in the debate will change the minds of hon. Members one way or another.

I shall speak first to amendments Nos. 153 and 165, which seek to delete clauses 44 and 45. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said on Second Reading, every hon. Member has a view about whether corporal punishment should be retained as an available sanction. It is an entirely proper subject for a free vote and I am sorry that that view is not shared by the Opposition Front Bench. I have made that point before.

I emphasise that there is no question of any pressure being applied to any of my right hon. or hon. Friends about how they should vote. I want to stress that, because it was suggested from time to time on Second Reading. There were a number of winks and nudges and nose strokings going on, implying that there were free votes and free votes. I make it clear that this is a free free vote and I am sorry that that is not the case with the Opposition. I am glad that they have therefore found something on which they can agree.

The House will recall the recent history of this subject. Last session we introduced a Bill to give parents of pupils educated at state expense the right to exempt them from

corporal punishment. That Bill fell, following an amendment narrowly carried on Report in another place, which in effect abolished corporal punishment. This session, an amendment abolishing corporal punishment was made to the present Bill in another place and this time the amendment was carried by an even narrower majority, of two. In Committee the Government have remedied deficiencies in the provision which was inserted.

Clauses 44 and 45 introduce five significant changes. First, they provide for the abolition of corporal punishment in Scotland and pave the way for similar action in Northern Ireland by Order in Council. Secondly, they cover pupils being educated otherwise than at school, and thirdly, they leave independent schools free to retain corporal punishment, except for pupils who are being educated at public expense, under the assisted places scheme for example, who would not be subject to the sanction. Fourthly, the clauses restrict the liability of a teacher who imposes corporal punishment to an action through the civil courts rather than, as proposed in another place, through the civil or criminal courts. I stress that this is where the punishment is moderate and reasonable. If it is not, the teacher, as now, can face criminal proceedings.

Fifth and last, subsection (3) of each clause provides for a teacher to be able to restrain pupils to avert an immediate danger of personal injury or damage to property. In those circumstances, the teacher must be able to use all reasonable measures, including the actions that could come under the heading of reasonable corporal punishment. Teachers need this important provision to be able to deal with outbreaks of violence and other emergencies.

9.45 pm

The House can take a decision on two clauses that, if they remain in the Bill, will abolish corporal punishment in the maintained sector in England, Wales and Scotland and make teachers who use it liable to civil proceedings. If the clauses are passed, abolition will be extended to Northern Ireland, by means of an Order in Council. The date on which abolition will come into effect will be laid down by a commencement order under clause 60. The Government would propose 15 August 1987 — that is, from the beginning of the school year after next, so that the schools affected have time to adjust their disciplinary policies and procedures.

However, if the House agrees with the amendments and deletes clauses 44 and 45, the legal position will remain unchanged. Teachers will continue to have the right, by virtue of being in loco parentis, to use moderate and reasonable corporal punishment. I should emphasise that we are talking only about moderate and reasonable punishment. If it is not, the teacher can be prosecuted.

Mr. Bell: The hon. Gentleman used the words "moderate and reasonable". What would he say of the picture that was in *The London Standard* tonight?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman knows that I am not dodging the question in saying that that may well be a matter for the courts and it would be wholly improper for me to offer an observation. The position is clear about moderate and reasonable punishment. If it is not moderate and reasonable, the teacher can be prosecuted.

If the House agrees with the amendments, then, as my right hon. Friend said on Second Reading, the Government would look to the new governing bodies in England and Wales to make arrangements in accordance with the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights that philosophical convictions of parents should be respected. It will be for the governing body to work out with the head teacher and parents what arrangements will be most appropriate for the particular school. However, when the governing body has laid down the general policy for the school, it will of course be for the head teacher, using his professional judgement, to decide within the framework of the policy how to deal with each individual case.

The Government cannot accept new clause 20, moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). I pay tribute to his knowledge of these matters and to his knowledge of more positive aspects of education policy. We do not agree with the principles that the new clause embodies. The principles on which the disciplinary regime are founded are a key part of the conduct of the school. This is a point that we discussed at great length in Committee. The Bill gives a general responsibility for the conduct of the school to the governing body. It would fatally flaw this responsibility if, in the matter of the principles of discipline, the judgment of the head teacher could overrule that of the governing body.

I accept that the day-to-day responsibility for discipline should rest with the head teacher, but the availability of corporal punishment as a sanction in schools must be a matter for the governing body to decide, although in consultation with the head teacher, and taking account of the views of parents. Clause 22(1)*(b)* requires the head teacher to have regard to any written statement of general principles provided by the governing body, and it would run counter to that requirement if the head teacher were to go against the preference of a governing body not to have corporal punishment in a school. In some cases, the governing body, having regard to the views of parents, might be content to leave the decision to the head teacher, but that is clearly not the situation that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North has in mind.

Reverting to clauses 44 and 45, we would, if the amendments were carried, keep a close watch on how governing bodies handled the matter. In the circular which would follow the Act, we would explain to all governing bodies the necessity of respecting parents' philosophical convictions. That guidance will apply not only to the newly constituted governing bodies which were not in prospect when we promoted the Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill last Session, but also to existing governing bodies while they continue.

Moreover, we should take advantage of the fact that, as soon as the Bill comes into force, the provision for the annual parents' meeting will apply to every governing body. Our circular would ask the governing body of a school which now applies corporal punishment to put the issue, including the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights, to the first annual parents' meeting so as to assist the governing body in reaching a decision which respects that ruling.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister make it clear when he talks about the governing body that that applies to England and Wales? In Scotland, presumably that function would be carried out by the local education authority.

Mr. Patten: Quite so. The hon. Member for Falkirk, East, in his admirable speech, put the position much more clearly than I could.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made it clear in his speech on Second Reading that, in his personal view, the decision on the retention or abolition of corporal punishment should be left to the governing body, the head teacher and the parents. I share that opinion, for two reasons. First, some head teachers and staff face considerable difficulties in maintaining discipline. I do not believe that those head teachers who wish to retain corporal punishment regard it as the ultimate sanction. I do not regard it as that, but it is one possible sanction. Its retention or abolition does not constitute an issue of conscience of the first magnitude.

I put it on record that I agree with some of the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Withington on that issue. Many other controversies raise much greater issues of conscience, but corporal punishment is regarded by many knowledgable and responsible educationists as a valuable disciplinary instrument. We should not lightly deprive them of it.

I go further: at a time when there is justified anxiety about disruption in our schools, the abolition of corporal punishment would send out the wrong signals. It might be considered a weakening of the position of head teachers, which is the last thing we want.

Secondly, if we wish to strengthen the position of governing bodies and parents in matters connected with the conduct of the school—I realise that the Opposition are somewhat schizophrenic on that point, but that is what the Bill seeks to do—it would make no sense to take the decision on a matter such as corporal punishment away from governing bodies and parents. That would be contrary to the entire thrust of the Bill.

I do not suggest that corporal punishment should be retained if the governing body does not believe it is necessary. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) was not suggesting earlier that that was my opinion. I do suggest, however, that it should be for the governing body to decide. I am prepared to trust the good sense of governing bodies and head teachers and their willingness to act in accordance with the guidance we shall give them on the respect due to the philosophical convictions of parents. Those convictions would be respected, and we shall check whether they are. If that belief proved ill-founded, the Government would need to consider further legislative measures.

I respect the sincerely held opinion of those who take a different view, but, on balance—I repeat that, for me, it is a question of balance—that is the conclusion which I reach. I therefore support Amendments Nos. 153 and 165 which were moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth.

I hope that, if the amendments are passed, in due course my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North will not feel obliged to press his new clause 20 to a vote. If he does, I shall have to vote against it for the reasons which I sought to adduce earlier. I repeat that, on balance, there is an argument for voting for amendments Nos. 153 and 165. I am delighted that the Leader of the Opposition is with us tonight. On this issue at least he has united his party on a three-line Whip.

Mr. Pawsey: I have sat throughout the whole of this long and interesting debate. Speeches may occasionally have contained a measure of exaggeration and may have sometimes, as my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) said, gone over the top, but in general they were sincere.

I was educated wholly in the state sector and so were my children. My experience suggests that schools know their pupils best and know the best method of ensuring discipline. Therefore, I remain convinced that abolition of corporal punishment would result in more suspensions, more expulsions and more detentions. Incidentally, there can be no justification for severe caning, as described by the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). That is not acting in loco parentis as a moderate and reasonable parent would.

The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) called for abolition, but I doubt whether many Members on this side were convinced by his arguments. He certainly did not make any real suggestions for maintaining discipline in our schools. My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) gave several examples of the improper use of the cane. But it is an exaggeration to say that two or three bad cases blacken the case for corporal punishment. After all, would he condemn the 400,000 teachers in this country on the basis of how 10 or 12 of them behave?

It is not true that a vote for the amendments is a vote for chaos. A vote for the amendments is a vote for choice. Does the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) honestly believe that an analogy can be drawn between corporal punishment and slavery and votes for women? On reflection, he may agree that he went over the top and was less than fair. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North made a speech full of conviction. He spoke with knowledge that is based on long experience as a teacher—*[Interruption.]* He rightly emphasised that corporal punishment was used only in the most exceptional and severe cases. As he correctly said, corporal punishment is the backstop that is used in our schools.

I come to the speech of the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing)—*[Interruption.]*—who rightly chided me for failing——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman moved the amendment and has a right to be heard when uttering his final brief words.

Mr. Pawsey: I can take a judicious hint, but I must say that the hon. Member for Falkirk, East was right to chide me and I thank him for the courteous and friendly way in which he did so. I accept what he said.

I can assure my right hon. and hon. Friends that if they vote for the amendment they will allow governing bodies to decide on positive use of corporal punishment for themselves. The local education authorities will not be able to impose their will on governing bodies by using the articles of government. These amendments are about freedom of choice, discipline, and standards in education, and I urge my hon. Friends to vote for them this evening.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 230, Noes 231.

Division No. 274] **[9.58 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Alexander, Richard	Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Amess, David	Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Arnold, Tom	Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*

Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Shersby and
Mr. Peter Brunvels.

NOES

Alton, David
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bright, Graham
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Fletcher, Alexander
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gourlay, Harry
Grist, Ian

Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Newton, Tony
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Waldegrave, Hon William
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Watson, John
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wheeler, John
White, James
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

Question accordingly negatived.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Education Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Chris Patten.]*

New Clause 1

EDUCATIONAL MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE

"The Secretary of State may by regulations make provisions requiring local education authorities to provide educational maintenance allowances for pupils aged 16 to 19". —*[Mr. Radice.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Radice: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I am afraid that I am slightly overcome by the victory. It is right that, in a Bill which has considerable pretensions, we should be able to debate important education issues. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will right hon. and hon. Members who are not staying for the debate on new clause 1 kindly leave quietly?

Mr. Radice: In the 1970s, the case for educational maintenance allowances was argued in terms of widening working class participation in full-time and higher education. The staying-on rate in Britain is extremely low and compares very poorly with our continental rivals. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members leave quietly, please? It is unfair to the Oppostion Front Bench not to do so.

10.15 pm

Mr. Radice: In the 1970s, we argued that despite the expansion of higher education working class participation had risen only marginally. I know that in my constituency a number of young people have been deterred from staying on at school or in full-time education. One of the main reasons for that is finance. In strongly working class areas such as Tameside and Durham, 25 per cent. of pupils with 5 O-levels or equivalent do not stay on at school. The comparable figure for leafy suburbs such as Harrow is about 10 per cent. Clearly, there is a major problem and it is related to factors other than ability. We seek to explore those other factors today.

I do not argue that lack of money is the only deterrent. Clearly, there are other factors, such as the kind of institutions that schools are, the prospect of other kinds of work and the youth training scheme. Nevertheless, there is plenty of evidence that the financial considerations are important.

The case for educational maintenance allowances is even stronger in the 1980s with the growth in youth unemployment *[Interruption.]* I appreciate that Ministers, reeling from the result of the last Division, have other things to discuss, but perhaps we could continue with the business. Youth unemployment is extremely high, especially in areas such as the north, the north west, Scotland and Wales. Youth unemployment in this country is higher than in many other countries. The YTS has also been expanded. I believe that we should have a youth training scheme, but the YTS presents a problem in that it carries an allowance whereas remaining in full-time education carries no reward at all.

The proportion of pupils staying on in full-time education is actually declining and is lower than in most other western European countries. We believe that those who stay on should receive educational maintenance allowances, first, because it would encourage more people to stay on and, secondly, because it would recognise the importance of education and the fact that its contribution to the economy is as important as that of training.

For those reasons, we believe that there is a strong case for educational maintenance allowances. I accept that there are cost factors and that in the first instance we may need to target such allowances towards regions or local authorities that are worse off or individuals who are most deprived.

We recognise that this Government, particularly in their dying hours, are not likely to accept the case for educational maintenance allowances — *[Interruption.]* "Dying moments" is perhaps a more accurate summary. However, even after the excitement of what has just happened, when we voted to abolish corporal punishment, it is right that the House should have the opportunity to discuss educational maintenance allowances as a trailer to the real thing when the next Labour Government introduce their own education Bill.

Mr. Chris Patten: We come back to rather more mundane matters. It is ironic that those who have tabled the new clause, who are usually so resistant to anything that hints of central Government restriction of local authority freedom, should now be trying to increase the control that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can exercise over the action of local authorities.

Although we are flattered by the concern of the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) to increase the influence of my Department, we must resist the new clause. I see no need whatsoever to interfere with the existing discretion of local authorities over maintenance allowances for 16 to 19-year-olds. Our policy in this respect does not differ from that of previous Governments of both political persuasions. Young people in non-advanced full-time education have traditionally been regarded as primarily dependent upon their parents for financial support until their 19th birthday. As such, child benefit is paid in respect of these students, and local education authorities can add to this with discretionary grants—for example, to those in financial hardship.

This policy is sometimes contrasted with the Government's policy on financial support to higher education students, where local education authorities are required by law to provide grants. Courses for 16 to 19-year-olds at the non-advanced level are, however, much more concerned with meeting purely local needs than is higher education. The Government recognise that the latter is more of a national service, by paying 90 per cent. of the cost of mandatory awards through a DES specific grant. For non-advanced courses, local education authorities are in the best position to judge need in the light of the individual circumstances of both the student and the course—which may vary quite considerably—and to weigh this against other priorities within the local education service.

The hon. Member for Durham, North referred, perfectly understandably, to the post-16 participation rate——

Mr. Radice: To the staying-on rate.

Mr. Patten: I accept that paying maintenance allowances to all those staying on in full-time education might have some effect on the overall participation rate. The question is whether that would be sufficient to

[Mr. Patten]

warrant the expenditure involved in paying such allowances. The limited studies that have been conducted suggest that the effect on the participation rate would not be that great, but we know that the expenditure would be. The net additional cost of paying an allowance of £27 a week to all 16 to 19-year-olds in full-time education—as recommended from time to time by the Labour party—would be around £600 million per annum in England alone. That would be deadweight expenditure. It would be paid in respect of young people who would stay on in full-time education anyway, and I personally can think of far better ways than that of spending £600 million.

Mr. Radice: The hon. Gentleman and I have discussed this matter on different occasions, and have done so before the television cameras. I pointed out to him on that occasion that to begin with this would not necessarily be introduced for all students and that it might have to be concentrated. Obviously, that affects the cost. It would not initially have the deadweight factor that the Minister has been talking about. He accepts that it may have some impact on the participation rate.

Mr. Patten: I am not sure how the hon. Gentleman would avoid the deadweight factor by introducing this scheme in a limited way, or how he would propose targeting it to avoid the deadweight factor. If he will forgive a moment of uncharacteristic controversy on my part, I find it curious how his price tags go up and down according to the conversations he has had recently with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). Sometimes his policies are more expensive and expansive than they are on other occasions.

The expenditure would not be justified, and we expect the participation rate to increase overall in the next few years when the number of those aged 16 and above will be falling, for demographic reasons. That argues the case strongly for taking a more coherent view of our 16 to 19-year-old provision in education and training. It does not argue the case for the new clause, which was moved in a spirit of euphoria by the hon. Gentleman, who was buoyed up by the proceeds of a three-line Whip.

Mr. Freud: One would have thought that the Government, having been let off the hook by one vote in the Division, would now lean forward to accommodate the Opposition and let some small, useful measure, such as the educational maintenance allowance, have a fairer wind than they intended.

The Minister said that £600 million was a deadweight expenditure in that it was paying children to stay on at school who would anyway stay on at school. He is wrong.

Mr. Chris Patten: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that none of those who would receive the allowance would anyway stay on at school? That is what the words "deadweight expenditure" mean.

Mr. Freud: No. The Minister knows perfectly well that there is a disincentive for many children to stay on at school. He knows that jobs for 16-year-olds are hard to come by. The average 16-year-old has three choices: to stay on at school, to go into training or to receive unemployment benefit. I am saying that without an educational maintenance allowance the financial attractions of unemployment benefit outstrip those of staying on in education or taking up training.

Obviously the great majority of those children would stay on at school anyway, but a proportion of children leave school for the greater financial security of unemployment benefit. That is wrong. The Child Poverty Action Group has looked into the matter, and there is no question but that the Manpower Services Commission would not now be doing a survey on payment to 16 to 19-year-olds if that were not relevant.

Staying in education involves a double cost for poorer families, in that they already have to pay for school materials, such as books and trips, and they lack the contribution to the family income from the young person who would otherwise be at work or in training. I hope that the Minister will consider, not giving away a deadweight £600 million, but formulating a structure whereby the most attractive financial option for a child will not be to become unemployed.

There is room for argument about the best way to act, but the case for some sort of allowance is absolutely clear. I realise that the Minister is at present discussing with the Whip what time he will go to bed, but I hope he will realise that for thousands of young children between 16 and 19 an educational maintenance allowance is crucial.

10.30 pm

Mr. Robert M. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Conservative Members have complained that successive Governments have maintained the existing system of discretionary awards to maintain young people who continue their education after school leaving age. I regret that that complaint has been made. It is true that nowadays young people find it more difficult than ever before to take the alternative at 16-plus-one which was available under previous Governments—of taking up a job.

I was a lecturer in colleges of further education for a quarter of a century and I know that the granting of awards by local authorities varies considerably from one area to another. The young person of 16 who lives within the compass of a generous local authority will find that discretionary grants are available. But if he lives in an area that is covered by a less generous authority, which wishes to keep down the level of the rates for its better off ratepayers, he will find that they are not available. In the north-west, the Liverpool education authority under successive party regimes was always more generous than Chester, which was miserly over a long period.

As I have said, for many years the alternative to further education, that of getting a job, was available to young people. In my constituency and in many others in the area which I represent, that alternative is all too often denied to young people. The time has come for something more than YTS. The schemes lack real training and at the end there are only Mickey Mouse qualifications. These qualifications normally have no value to most employers. The youngsters are denied the right to gain the academic qualifications for which many of them are qualified and acceptable to colleges. It is the colleges and schools which should determine whether a pupil or a student is to be dead weight. They will decide, because they have the qualifications to be able to determine whether someone is qualified or otherwise to benefit from a course. "To benefit" is a term that should not be confined to the passing of examinations because a young person can benefit without passing exams.

The discretionary grant system has no uniformity. Some local authorities, such as Chester, were unwilling to provide grants to young people taking O and A-levels on either a part-time or full-time basis. Since the arrival of the Tory Government in 1979, authorities have become increasingly unable, not unwilling, to provide the education maintenance grants for young people. The system has become sporadic and uneven.

The Education Act 1944 enabled local authorities for the first time to make regulations which provided pupils with the advantage of being able to take education courses without hardship to themselves or to their parents and to make the most of the facilities available to them. But discretionary grants have provided no surety.

It is no use saying that young people who may be the products of disadvantaged homes or whose parents may be elderly or disabled, can turn to social security. Very often, when young people who have continued their education full time have gone to the Department of Health and Social Security and obtained benefit, as soon as it is discovered that they have been attending a school or college—especially a college of further education—that benefit has immediately been stopped.

On the one hand, local authorities have not been able to provide all the discretionary grants that are necessary. On the other, as soon as the young men or women who are not prepared to sit complacently at home and receive benefit from the DHSS cross the portals of a school or college, they find that social security is not open to them.

It is nearly 30 years since the Weaver committee on educational maintenance allowances stated:

> "The object throughout was to make it possible for any pupil to take full advantage of the facilities for full-time education open to him. The value of a longer school life was recognised and, as a means of ensuring that full value was obtained from secondary education, it was held tha maintenance allowances ought to be related to the child's wage-earning capacity."

The committee felt that those were good principles.

The Weaver committee was set up to review a wide range of local authority practice and to recommend a more rational basis for support on a national scale. Nearly 30 years ago, the committee recommended that there should be educational maintenance allowances at a rate of £65 a year for a 16-year-old boy or girl. That was about 25 per cent. of the then annual wage. Today, that would be about £2,000 a year. The Weaver committee believed that there should also be £20 a year for other welfare benefits such as free milk and meals.

It is no use the Government talking about £600 million. That sum would be well spent if it were spent on training people for real qualifications and if we were providing young people with the wherewithal to widen their scope for work in the community when the day comes—no doubt only with the next Labour Government—when jobs are available again. My advice to any young person, even under the present Tory regime, would be to do his or her best, during a period of unemployment, to get an education. I do not mean the Mickey Mouse education of the YTS, but real education.

In Japan, 91 per cent. of youngsters continue their education beyond school leaving age. In this country, according to the national child development study, the figure is 71 per cent. of ordinary children but only 41 per cent. of disadvantaged children.

Mr. Chris Patten: The hon. Gentleman has twice referred to the Mickey Mouse qualifications of those who graduate from youth training schemes. I hope that he does not speak for the Labour party, because that remark strikes me as a disgraceful slur on the tens of thousands of young people who have acquired very good qualifications through the YTS. I hope that the hon. Gentleman or one of his colleagues on the Labour Front Bench will make it clear that that is not the Labour party's view on those tens of thousands of young people and the worthwhile qualifications that they have achieved.

Mr. Wareing: In the area that I represent, the youth training scheme is seen as the Tory party's attempt to provide slave labour for employers. All too often, progressive local authorities have had to step up wage payments in order to give young people a reasonable living wage. What better qualifications can YTS offer which national certificates, O and A-levels or even the GCSE which the Government are introducing cannot?

Whereas in 1978-79 only 11 local education authorities made no awards of educational maintenance allowances, in 1982-83 no fewer than 26 made no such awards. There is no reason to believe, from the cuts that have been taking place in local government expenditure as a result of penalties, targets and punitive grant-related expenditure sanctions against progressive education authorities by the Government, that the number of local authorities providing reasonable discretionary grants has increased.

The Child Poverty Action Group has recently shown that, of 72 local education authorities in England and Wales, 13 awarded fewer than 100 grants annually, and the average maximum amount was less than the then £5·25 child benefit.

The Government are not concerned with the general run of young people aged 16 and over. They want to return us to the time when only those with money in their pockets could afford private education and a public education for those over the school leaving age. Only they will be catered for. The real talents of the next generation are being sacrificed on the altar of the class prejudices of the Prime Minister and her minions on the Government Front Bench.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I support the new clause. I accept the Government's challenge that the Labour party's problem is that it has to weigh up the considerable deadweight expenditure, but my experience is that a considerable number of pupils in their fourth and fifth years at school are being pushed into working, in particular in shops on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Some of them are working to such an extent that they are not getting the full benefit from their studies. If some of them received an educational maintenance allowance, they might be persuaded not to work, which would then allow others who are unemployed to take on some of those jobs.

But if we have a problem in justifying what is called the deadweight cost, the Government must address themselves to the problem that not enough youngsters who get good qualifications are staying in education.

Mr. Stephen Dorrell (Loughborough): The hon. Gentleman has posed a real problem. Is the Labour Front Bench committing the next Labour Government to the immediate introduction of educational maintenance allowance of the type that has been described as desirable and something that should happen?

Mr. Bennett: It is clear that we are committed to introducing educational maintenance allowances. We are firmly exploring the practicalities of those and the problem that the Government addresses, which is that they are expensive. We accept that, and that is why we are looking for solutions. Just as the Opposition are looking at ways of meeting those costs, the Government must offer an alternative and perhaps a cheaper way of solving the first problem which is that many youngsters who receive good qualifications at 16 do not stay on at school. In my constituency, 24 per cent. of those who received five or more O-levels and who would benefit from remaining in full time education, leave. That is a brain drain which the country cannot afford. We must find solutions to persuade the majority of those youngsters to stay on at school or at college to further develop their skills and abilities for their benefit and for the benefit of the country.

10.45 pm

Clearly there are not enough youngsters from working class backgrounds staying on in education. The Government must also consider the fact that until 1983, more youngsters remained in education each successive year, while in the past three years youngsters have started to opt out of education at 16. There must be a reason for that. We believe that the reason is that if these youngsters go onto a youth training scheme—inadequate as some are and good as others are—they receive an allowance of £27 plus. They prefer the allowance to staying on at school.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) said, YTS is a Mickey Mouse scheme for many youngsters and it does not lead anywhere for great numbers of people. If these youngsters are lured away from education by the money, if the Government make YTS a two-year scheme and start to make the schemes work in some places in terms of providing qualifications, then more youngsters will leave school and go on to YTS. The Opposition will have to address the difficult problem of finding the resources for educational maintenance allowances, but the Government must provide an alternative solution to persuade more youngsters from areas such as Tyneside, the north-east and other areas where the proportion of those staying on in school is still too low, to stop on at school.

The Government must also consider the fact that YTS allowances are drawing youngsters into schemes away from school. I am certain that the House will return to this issue in the future on many occasions over the next few months. There is a feeling in the House that we want to make progress now. I suspect that if my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) can catch your eye Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the next moment or two, I am sure that he would seek leave to withdraw the new clause.

Mr. Radice: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 3

ADDITIONAL CATEGORIES OF SCHOOL GOVERNORS

'The Secretary of State may prescribe one or more categories of persons who may be appointed governors of schools to which sections 3 and 4 above apply.'.—*[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: New clause 11—*Involvement of pupils in the governing body*—

'In any school to which sections 3 and 4 above apply where that school admits pupils aged 16 years and over the governing body shall admit as observers to the governors' proceedings such members of the school council or other pupil-representatives as shall be specified in the articles of governance.'.

New clause 26—*Pupil observers*—

'Where the school admits pupils aged 16 years and over, the governing body shall admit two such pupils elected by the pupils over 16 in a secret ballot by proportional representation as observers and non-voting members of the governing body, subject to the articles of governance as may be adopted by the governing body to exclude pupil governors, from matters arising under sections 22 to 25 and 32 to 39 of this Act.'.

Amendment No. 2, in page 3, line 39, leave out subsections (2) to (6) and insert—

'(2) The instrument of government of such a school shall provide for the governing body to comprise equal numbers of—

(a) parent governors, including pupil representatives where the local education authority make a determination under subsection (5) below;

(b) staff governors, including at least one representative from the teaching staff and at least one representative from the support staff at the school;

(c) governors appointed by the local education authority, whether directly or on the nomination of a minor authority;

(d) (i) co-opted governors and foundation governors in the case of a controlled school including at least one co-opted governor and at least one foundation governor;

(ii) co-opted governors in any other case.

(3) The overall number of members of a governing body to which this section applies shall be decided by the relevant local education authority, providing that no governing body shall have fewer than eight members.

(4) In determining the size of each governing body under subsection (3) of this section, the local education authority shall:

(i) undertake consultation with the headteacher, existing governors and, so far as practicable, parents of registered pupils at the school;

(ii) have regard to the desirability of a broadly uniform size of governing bodies in relation to the following categories of size of schools:

(a) less than 100 registered pupils;

(b) more than 99, but less than 300, registered pupils;

(c) more than 299, but less than 600, registered pupils;

(d) more than 599 registered pupils.

(5) The local education authority may determine, for the purposes of subsection (1) of this section, that one or more of the places to be allocated to parents' representatives on any governing body of a school admitting pupils at 16 years of age and over shall be allocated to pupil representatives providing that there shall be at least a majority of parents over pupil representatives in that category on any governing body.

(6) No representative shall be elected as a pupil representative under subsection (5) of this section unless he has attained the age of 16 years and any such election shall take place among pupils who have attained the same age.'.

Amendment No. 3, in line 39, leave out from 'school' to end of line 20 on page 5 and insert

'shall provide for a governing body to include—

(a) at least two parent governors;

(b) at least two governors appointed by the local education authority;

(c) at least two teacher governors;

(d) the head teacher, unless he chooses not to be a governor; and

(e) either—

(i) at least three co-opted governors, or

(ii) at least two foundation governors and at least one co-opted governor, in the case of a controlled school.'.

Amendment No. 4, in page 4, line 2, leave out '(and no others)'.

Amendment No. 5, in line 3, leave out 'two' and insert 'four'.

Amendment No. 6, in line 6, after '*(c)*', insert 'at least'.

Amendment No. 8, in line 7, leave out '*(d)*' and insert 'who shall be'.

Amendment No. 9, in line 16, leave out '(and no others)'.

Amendment No. 10, in line 17, leave out 'three' and insert 'six'.

Amendment No. 11, in line 20, after '*(c)*', insert 'at least'.

Amendment No. 12, in line 21, leave out '*(d)*' and insert 'who shall be'.

Amendment No. 13, in line 26, at end insert—

'*(f)* two pupil governors as observers, in the case of a school admitting pupils of 16 years of age and over.'.

Amendment No. 14, in line 30, leave out '(and no others)'.

Amendment No. 15, in line 31, leave out 'four' and insert 'eight'.

Amendment No. 16, in line 34, after '*(c)*' insert 'at least'.

Amendment No. 17, in line 35, leave out '*(d)*' and insert

'one of whom shall be'.

Amendment No. 18, in line 40, at end insert—

'*(f)* two pupil governors as observers, in the case of a school admitting pupils of 16 years of age and over.'.

Amendment No. 19, in page 5, line 3, leave out '(and no others)'.

Amendment No. 20, in line 5, leave out 'five' and insert 'eight'.

Amendment No. 21, in line 8, after '(*c*)', insert, 'at least'.

Amendment No. 22, in line 9, leave out '(*d*)' and insert 'one of whom shall be'.

Amendment No. 23, in line 14, at end insert—

'*(f)* two pupil governors as observers, in the case of a school admitting pupils of 16 years of age and over.'.

No. 26, in line 20, at end insert—

'(8) In any school to which this section applies where that school is a sixth-form college the instrument of government may in addition include two pupil governors aged 16 years and over, subject to the exclusion of those pupil governors from matters arising under sections 22, 23, 33 to 39 of this Act.'.

No. 27, in line 20, at end insert—

'(8) In any school to which this section applies where that school admits pupils age 16 and over, the instrument of government may in addition inculde two pupils aged 16 years and over subject to the exclusion of those pupils from matters arising under sections 22, 23, 33 to 39 of this Act.'.

No. 31, in clause 4, page 6, line 21, at end insert—

'(7) In any school to which this section applies where that school is a sixth-form college, the instrument of government may in addition include two pupil governors aged 16 years and over, subject to the exclusion of those pupil governors from matters arising under sections 22, 23, 33 to 39 of this Act.'.

No. 32, in line 21, at end add—

'(7) In any school to which this section applies where that school admits pupils aged 16 and over, the instrument of government may in addition include two pupils aged 16 years and over subject to the exclusions of those pupils from matters arising under sections 22, 23, 33 to 39 of this Act.'.

No. 59, in clause 15, page 19, line 25, leave out 'eighteen', and insert 'sixteen'.

No. 60, in line 26, at end insert

'or aged 16 and over if he is a registered pupil at the school at the date of his election or appointment'.

No. 180, in page 60, line 34, leave out Clause 56.

Government amendments Nos. 181 and 182.

Mr. Bennett: The new clause takes us directly back to matters in the Bill. It seeks to provide a measure of flexibility. The amendments that accompany the clause address the problems which the Opposition believe are contained in the Government's scheme.

We were a little unhappy that the Government, having passed the Education Act 1980, which set up new provisions for governing bodies, shortly afterwards produced a Green Paper in which they suggesteded conferring greater powers on parents in relation to governing bodies and reducing the powers of almost everyone else. We felt that the Government were rather premature. In producing their Green Paper they took evidence on the position that applied before the 1980 Act was implemented, rather than on what had happened.

Many people believed that the 1980 Act resulted in a very good partnership on the new governing bodies between parents and teachers, the local authority and the co-opted representatives. All the evidence showed that the Government had gone overboard in their attempt to increase the number of parents on governing bodies and that the balance was not right. We welcome the fact that the Government have sought to improve the balance.

If governing bodies are to work, there has to be a partnership between parents and teachers, the local authority and the co-opted representatives. They must work together. Unfortunately, because of the way in which the Bill has been drafted, there will be conflict. The number of teachers on governing bodies is to be reduced. That is not the best way to obtain their co-operation. There is absolutely no reason for the Government not to maintain a slightly higher teacher representation on the governing bodies.

We have approached this aspect in a number of ways. Amendment No. 2 proposes that representation should be in four parts. Amendment No. 3 proposes that state schools should adopt the same formula as applies to voluntary and state-aided schools.

The Government ought to allow greater teacher representation on governing bodies. In small schools, where teachers have only one representative on the governing body, there will be occasions when that individual will be unable to be present at meetings. Teachers will then be completely unrepresented. It is an advantage if somebody is present at meetings, not necessarily formally to second a resolution, but to nod agreement, thus signifying that that is the view not just of one person but that it is supported by others. *[Interruption.]* That is a fact. Governing bodies are concerned with obtaining a consensus, not with obtaining decisions and taking votes. Narrow majority votes on governing bodies—a win of three to two, or 231 to 230 — will not produce solutions. The Secretary of State seems to be amused by all this. My impression was that he was quite relieved by the result of the vote. Governing bodies should not be pressed into taking decisions as a result of votes. We want consensus on governing bodies. Greater teacher representation would help to achieve that aim.

[Mr. Bennett]

There has also been an experiment in which pupils have participated as school governors. The evidence is that that experiment has worked well. In our Second Reading and Committee debates the Government could not provide a single example of unsuccessful pupil governors, or of pupil governors who had caused problems. It would be worth while if the Government were to introduce sufficient flexibility to allow pupil governors to participate on governing bodies.

Many local authorities have also allowed ancillary staff to be represented on governing bodies. It will cause considerable resentment in towns such as Sheffield if ancillary staff—those who provide dinners, or who work in the office, or caretakers — are pushed off the governing bodies. That is not the way to achieve co-operation and consensus. A flexible approach would allow pupils and ancillary staff to serve as governors, and it would also provide for greater teacher representation.

Even at this late stage I plead with the Government to introduce flexibility. The reforms carried out in 1980 have worked in the majority of local authority areas. The governing bodies have settled down and in most cases have produced partnership rather than conflict. It would be sad if, as a result of the passage of this Bill and the removal from governing bodies of the groups that I have mentioned, we produced a situation worse than the present one.

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): I should like to speak briefly to amendments Nos. 10, 12, 15, 17, 20 and 22 which are in my name. These amendments would increase the number of parent governors and reduce the number of teacher governors by one where the head teacher chose to be a governor. The effect would be to give parents a bigger say. Indeed, the amendments would give parents the majority say on all governing bodies before co-options were carried out.

The route towards greater parent power is popular with parents and with people who are concerned about quality in our education system. I can see no reason why we should not have the courage of our convictions and decide to trust the parents by giving them a majority on the governing bodies. A whole series of safeguards are written into other parts of the Bill and for that reason the Government ought to have the courage to give majority power to the parents.

Parent governors already make a valuable contribution to our schools but in the smaller schools the Bill would restrict the number of parent governors to two. That is too restrictive because we know that many parents are over-awed, if not diffident, about the way in which schools are run. As a result, some of them get involved on governing bodies only when their children have been pupils for some years. By increasing the number of parent governors we would increase the scope and the opportunity for parents to become involved at an earlier stage.

I appreciate that, because the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) is trying to pull the Government in one direction and I am trying to pull them in the opposite direction, my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to say that he has the balance about right. I hope this will give him an opportunity to explain why the Government do not yet feel able to give parents a majority say on all governing bodies.

Mr. Weetch: I should like to speak to amendment No. 2.

The section of the Bill that deals with governors and governor representation gives teachers a raw deal. I understand why that is so, but I do not understand why the Government have made no serious attempt to put it right. If this Bill passes without major surgery, governing bodies will emerge according to a standard pattern. I am not opposed to more of a pattern, but I am opposed to this pattern. The statistical pattern of representation on governing bodies in their new shape shows that, as the school grows, teacher representation will be at a bigger proportional disadvantage.

In a school with up to 99 pupils, the first category mentioned in the Bill, teacher representation is one, plus the headmaster. As the school increases in size to 600 or more pupils, the parent representation is increased from two to five, the local education authority representation is increased from two to five, the co-opted representation is increased from three to six, but the teacher representation goes from one to two. There is no justice in that and it is a poor way to establish, or shall I say re-establish, the partnership that must exist if education is to succeed. I am talking about the partnership of parents, the local education authority, central Government and the teachers.

Amendment No. 2 says that there shall be a principle of equality of representation, with

"equal numbers of . . . parent governors . . . staff governors . . . governors appointed by the local education authority . . .co-opted governors".

All through, there is equality of representation. I know that in this world, one cannot get mathematically equal representation without some other distortion, but as the pattern of represenation exists now, teachers have a raw deal. The nature and numbers of their representation are unjust.

11 pm

I shall not take too much more of the time of the House, because, unfortunately, I have already lost this argument. I was not impressed with the case that the Government put up in Committee against increasing teacher representation. I should like to hear the answer from the Minister, to see whether the Government have a sense of shame about the whole matter. The professional teacher organisations are dissatisifed with the gross under-representation of professional teachers, and have every reason to be so. One can see at a glance that this is unjust, and I hope that even at this late stage, the Government will put the matter right.

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): I wish to speak on new clause 26 and amendments Nos. 13 18 and 23, which stand in my name. Through these, I wish to change what is already a permissive sanction of allowing student governors as observers into a mandatory one. To do otherwise allows governing bodies to object to, and deny opportunities for, young people to participate. For what reasons do they do so? Is it because young people have nothing worth contributing? Is it because young people have nothing to say that is worth listening to? Is it part of our educational philosophy to treat young people as irresponsible? Do we give them an education, and then say that they are not capable of using it in a responsible way? If so that is an indictment of the education that they have

received. By making this a permissive sanction, we are seen to condone such arguments, which is why I wish that it were a mandatory sanction.

Perhaps if we had listened more to the view of students before, we should have done something much earlier about what is seen by many to be the irrelevant last two or three years of school life, and could have stemmed some of the disillusionment that has come from that. It is not unreasonable that the client group should have a say in the service that it is receiving. If it is accepted that pupils have a view, governing bodies should hear it.

Is not participating an education in itself, not only for those young people who are governors, but for those who elect the governors, and so all those involved in the democratic process? This is recognised by the Government, and has been recognised by my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State in his response to the Thompson report. He said:

"The Secretary of State believes that a service which is concerned with the personal development of young people must seek to encourage their involvement in decision taking, and in accepting the implication of those decisions".

At the first conference of Ministers responsible for youth in Strasbourg, recommendations endorsed by the Government include:

"enhance a dialogue between young people and public authorities at all levels on issues that concern their lives, such as education".

There was another recommendation to

"encourage the participation of young people in the decision-making process in areas that concern them".

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, speaking at a conference on participation in November of last year said:

"I therefore stress my belief in participation."

Those are fine words, and tonight we have an opportunity to apply them and to allow young people to participate in something that definitely affects them — their education. In Committee, my hon. Friend the Minister referred to his dislike of having two tiers of governors or second-class governors. But If there are only two classes on a train, it is surely better to be travelling second class than to be left behind. As governors with speaking rights but no voting rights, as I advocate, students could make a major contribution to discussions on those governing bodies. They could make their views known to the governors who are making the decisions, and could thus ensure that their views are taken into account by them.

Of course there are sensitive areas in which student governors should not be involved, and that is covered by the amendment. It is not impractical to exclude student governors from such discussions. My hon. Friend the Minister referred to young people going in and out of the room like yo-yos. As the president of a students' union, I was heavily involved in discussions on university committees, and the matter was simply dealt with by having two parts to the agenda: the first involving student representatives, and the second involving reserved business, where students were asked to leave the room. I see no reason why a similar structure should not apply to school governors' meetings.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): When I was chairman of a board of governors I found that our pupil governors were only interested in the bits from which they were excluded, and did not speak on any other subject. Will my hon. Friend take that into account?

Mr. Lawler: It is a bit difficult to speak on a subject when one has been excluded from the meeting. As a student participant, I was often very interested in the matters on the reserved part of the agenda, but I recognisd that they were not entirely appropriate for me to be involved in. I think, for example, of disciplinary matters relating to students, or matters relating to university staff. That is why I seek to exclude student governors from similar discussions on school governing bodies.

I argue that student governors may not be able to play a full part but should at least be able to play a part. It might be argued that we need only have school councils in schools. I recommend setting up such councils in schools, because they have a role to play. That is particularly true for the younger pupils, as they give practice at participation and democracy. But all school councils are only talking shops. In most schools there is no direct link between them and the governing bodies, and no direct input. That is why we need student governors as observers on the governing body.

My hon. Friend the Minister has spoken about a yob society emerging from our education system. One factor that contributes towards that is the feeling of alienation experienced by young people because they believe that no one listens to them. They believe that no one thinks that they have anything to contribute. Consequently, it is not surprising that they feel frustrated. As Hargreaves said in his report

"it is clear from the fifth form survey that a further cause of disaffection amongst some pupils is their gradually accommodated conviction that they have no real voice in matters of school policies and decision-making pertaining to the curriculum, distribution of resources, the physical environment and rules and sanctions."

One important role of education is to ensure that young people do not feel alienated and are taught how to be involved in decision-making processes and are allowed to get the most out of them.

In that way the governing bodies too would have much to gain, because they would have the benefit of young people participating.

My hon. Friend the Minister has already accepted most of my points.

As he said in Committee:

"I stress that we recognise that it is desirable for senior pupils to be involved in the work of a governing body". — [*Official Report*, Standing Committee B, 19 June 1986; c. 86.]

If my hon. Friend recognises that it is important that young people should be involved as observers in the role of our governing bodies, he should ask all schools to participate. Governing bodies and young people will benefit from the contribution that they have to make.

Mr. Freud: The lead new clause of this group is new clause 3, on additional categories of governors. Those of us who were fortunate enough to serve on the Committee, and who spent 15 sessions arguing about that, very much welcome the new voices that we hear on Report. I have considerable sympathy for the new clause that has just been spoken to by the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler).

The alliance position is that, while involvement and institution-based governorships are all very well and much better than nothing, the fundamental principle should be that of qualification by age. Although new clause 11 argues for involvement only and amendment Nos. 26 and

[Mr. Freud]

31 argue for governors in sixth form colleges, they are not the most desirable positions, although perhaps the best that we are able to get.

Our argument is that, having accepted the principle of pupil governorship in our own amendments to clause 56, on pupil governorship in colleges of further education, the Minister of State should apply the principle consistently throughout education. That consistency should either be on the principle of common factors between institutions as the basis, or of age as the basis. I do not believe that one FE college should have it, and, in the same town, a comprehensive or sixth form college should not.

It is illogical if some 16-year-olds are eligible and others are not. The institution attended does not seem a relevant way of dividing them up. It is incumbent on the Minister of State, having accepted the principle of pupil governorship, to defend the dividing line that he is seeking to draw. It is weak in the extreme, not least because of the arbitrariness of the provision that I mentioned earlier, to claim that students in further education colleges are magically and automatically wiser and more mature than those in other institutions.

When I asked the Minister of State in Committee whether he genuinely believed that, he answered with the memorable line, "I am saying what I have said."

If lines between 16-years-olds are to be drawn, the alliance wants as many young people as possible to be on the side of the angels, and thus to include those at sixth form colleges. There are overwhelming arguments in favour of statutory pupil involvement, not least that many local education authorities already include them. The Government have not produced a shred of evidence that those governors do not work well. In addition, educational evidence suggests that involvement is always a good thing.

Michael Rutter, in "15,000 Hours", wrote:

"It appears that the schools' giving of responsibility . . . plays a part in developing an overall school climate, which itself helps to shape pupil behaviour".

He also observed that children tend to live up or down to the expectations that teachers and schools have of them. That message clearly got through to the Minister of State when he spoke recently about the need to expect more of able children. Rutter continued:

"the message of confidence that the pupils can be trusted to act with maturity and responsibility is likely to encourage pupils to fulfil those expectations".

David Hargreaves of ILEA — transposed as David Hargreaves of India in the Committee *Hansard*—in his report, "Improving Secondary Schools", also wrote of the benefits of general involvement, saying:

"schools which involve people in their running are 'better schools' with better discipline and spirit, and in some better examination results . . . It is clear from the fifth form survey that a further cause of disaffection amongst some pupils is gradually accumulated conviction that they have no real voice in matters of school policies and decision making pertaining to the curriculum, distribution of resources, the physical environment and rules and sanctions."

I am sorry to take time on Report on something that I pointed to in Committee, but I am desperately disappointed, as the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said in Committee, that the Minister has taken some account of the argument and given us such an extraordinarily legally fallacious resolution.

11.15 pm

In France, each secondary school has a conseil d'établissement. In West Germany, schools have a schulkonferenz which has decision-making powers on discipline and daily routine. There is no questioning the fact that the schools in France and West Germany benefit from these bodies. I do not understand why the Minister is holding out from introducing this in Britain.

Thus, on the grounds of educating young people for citizenship and for participation in democracy, involving the real consumers of education and encouraging maturity among pupils, as well as avoiding the alienation which is all too common in some young people, there are excellent reasons for extending the principle, accepted by the Government in FE colleges, and applying it throughout education above the age of 16.

The recent Gillick judgment has implications for the issue of pupil governors, as it involved the concept of increasing quasi-legal responsibility for young people. In giving that judgment, Lord Scarman, sensibly observed, that the capacity of a young person to

"make his or her own decision depends upon the minor having sufficient understanding and intelligence to make the decision and is not to be determined by reference to any judicially fixed age limit."

The Government, having accepted the case for pupil governors in the FE institutions, should accept them for all institutions — sixth form colleges and all. The Government's position on FE institutions is not tenable without also permitting pupil governors elsewhere. If the Government accept the wider principle of pupil governors per se, they have to accept them given the application of the most relevant criterion, which is that of age.

The alliance amendments allow the governing bodies to exclude the young people from certain matters. I totally agree with the hon. Member for Bradford, North,who also referred to this. As the chairman of a court of a university I know that it is perfectly normal to have business below the line when the press and when certain members leave the court. It does not mean that pupil governors are second class but it does mean that they are on board. The amendments recognise that there are things which it would not be proper for pupil governors to discuss, but it recognises that pupils have a legitmate place regarding other matters before a governing body.

The fact that the new governing bodies will have more matters under their remit than existing ones is not a strong reason for deliberately excluding from them the consumers of education. Pupils have a legitimate point of view and can often bring a fresh opinion to matters which concern them directly.

There is a huge difference between being an observer and speaking when one is spoken to and being a full member and having the right to bring up matters of one's own accord. Education should include learning about decision taking and representation and it is difficult to believe that the Government do not recognise their duty to do something about this in the Bill.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I wish to speak in support of the amendments which have been tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope)—amendments Nos. 5, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 20 and 22.

These amendments are crucial. It is disappointing in a Bill which has done so much to increase accountability to parents and choice in education that we should be

considering the composition of the governing bodies in such a way as will result in the continued domination of the producer interest. The amendments would achieve a far better balance. At the moment, the number of parents governors is matched by the number of governors appointed by the local education authority.

My hon. Friend is looking at me rather quizzically, but people appointed by the local authority are the representatives of the administrators and the producer side of education. Teachers and head teachers are in the same category. Parents, even allowing for the co-opted governors, are clearly outnumbered on those governing bodies.

If one thing is common ground on this side of the House, it is that one of the biggest problems in our schools is that they have long since ceased to represent the interests of parents and their children. They have been captured by the producer interest. That is reflected in the debate. It is one of the reasons why we hear constantly about inputs into education, pupil-teacher ratios, the amount being spent on schools, the amount being spent on salaries, and teachers' duties, terms and conditions, and very little about the end product—the achievement of children.

The amendments are important. Parents should have representation and be able to make their voice heard. I know that some people will say that it is difficult to get parents interested in being governors, or that only certain types of parent will become involved.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is difficult to get some parents to become governors because of the lack of power exercised by governing boards? Does he agree that, if they had more control over finances, staffing and maintenance, more people, and people of a higher calibre, would be attracted?

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend has taken the argument out of my mouth. He has obviously thought about the matter carefully. I agree with him. Even if the Bill does not go as far as my hon. Friend would like in transferring power to governors, it goes a great deal further than has been possible hitherto. My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on that. It would be a pity if, at the last jump, we were to lose the opportunity to strengthen the parents' role on boards and to give them the opportunity to participate with increased powers and responsibilities.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider the amendments. They are important. If parent governors are always to be outnumbered by the vested interests and the professionals, it will be hard to get people of good calibre to serve on the boards.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I do not bring to the debate the experience that members of the Committee gained—I am sure that they are knowledgeable on these matters—I bring a more simple, but still relevant, approach.

I ponder occasionally on what I think is a special problem. It concerns what is happening in inner cities, especially with regard to governorships of schools. During the past few days, there have been some difficulties in a part of London where a governor was appointed to a school. The appointment has attracted adverse publicity in the press. Some people might wish to make political advantage out of that. It demonstrates, however, a major problem to which all political parties should address themselves. What is going on in schools and who are being made governors? What type of people are becoming governors as political appointments?

I have come to the view that the party hack often has very little to contribute. I am not saying that I would want boards of governors to be dominated by Tories. On the contrary, there are many people of my political persuasion who would never normally surface and become available for selection as governors. Such people should surface, especially in inner-city areas. They should make an effort to be appointed because only they, working with progressive elements in local authorities, can make important and necessary changes. We do not solve the problems of education simply by throwing money at the processes of education. We solve them by bringing new ideas into the consideration of all the issues as school governors make decisions.

I hope that Ministers, in observing the case that occurred in south London recently, will accept that excesses exist on all sides. Everything must be done to see that governors of the highest quality are appointed, as that will help to ensure that we are not faced with that type of embarrassment again.

What occurred in that case is part of a minority problem, in the main geared to the inner cities. There are great swathes of the country in which there is great competition among people who want to be school governors. In my constituency there is even competition in my party among people seeking nomination to be appointed school governors, and I am sure that the same applies to other parties and that the competition extends to parents and teachers. That occurs because people appreciate the great contribution that governors can play, particularly in local communities.

I say that because in many constituencies, particularly in rural ones, schools are the focus of community endeavour. The community spirit in some areas is centred round the educational establishment in the same way as in other communities it is centred round the local church and parish hall. That is why the Government should heed carefully the views of those who participate in the work of parish and town councils.

In an unashamedly constituency way, I draw the attention of hon. Members to correspondence that I have received from the members of governing bodies of schools in my constituency and members of parish councils. The people in question are deeply concerned about some aspects of the Bill and have asked me to intervene in the hope that the Government will realise that they are set on a dangerous course that could undermine the position of many governing bodies.

My correspondent from Papcastle parish council—Papcastle is near the town of Cockermouth, which borders the Lake District—writes under the heading:

"Minor authority representation on boards of governors — Bridekirk/Dovenby School and Fairfield School, Cockermouth."

The letter reads:

"The above matter has been the cause of concern for the Parish Council for some time. The last Instrument of Government has resulted in the Parish Council relinquishing its minor authority representation on the Board of Governors of Bridekirk/Dovenby School and has been the cause of a 'fight' with Cockermouth Town Council over a place on the Board of Governors of Fairfield School in Cockermouth. We understand that the Education Bill, which proposes to reduce the number of governors yet again, is under discussion in the House of Commons. This is of grave concern to the Parish

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

Council and I have today written to the Secretary of State for Education giving the Parish Council's view on the matter. I should be obliged if you would consider the above points when the Bill is being discussed."

That cannot be described as a politically motivated letter. It represents the view of people of all political persuasions who are concerned about the effect of the Bill on the number of governors who can be appointed.

A letter from the Bridekirk Dovenby school governing body, signed by Mrs. Meredyth Bell, chairman of the school governors, states:

"We are governors of Bridekirk Dovenby Primary School, which is in your constituency, and we are a voluntary controlled school. We understand that the proposed changes in the 1986 Education Bill concern, among other things, a reduction in the number of school governors from 12 to nine."

I am sure that the Minister would have risen to correct me if the writer of that letter was wrong. She goes on:

"We are totally against this proposal, as our particular school represents four parishes, all of which were in the past guaranteed an effective voice on the governing body following the closure of their own local schools."

The Minister knows what we are talking about. We have had to rationalise primary education, and local authorities and Ministers have had to take difficult decisions. They have been fought, and we all know of the arguments to and fro, the appeals and the representations to Departments. At the end of the day local authorities have taken decisions and given undertakings, mainly about the nature of representation on boards of governors to secure continuity within particular communities.

11.30 pm

Mrs. Bell continues:

"This promise has been totally disregarded and the proposed changes are calculated to undermine the support and influence of the rural communities involved. We would be grateful if you could let us know your own views on this subject and whether there is any chance of influencing this part of the proposed Education Bill."

Those letters were unsolicited by me and came from people without political motivation. They are putting a simple case to Parliament and saying, "Why reduce the number of school governors? Give us a chance. Let local authorities keep to the undertakings given when our schools were closed."

I hope that the Minister will reply specifically to those letters tonight. The local newspapers in Workington regard these matters as of great importance, and if his words tonight are pearls of wisdom, he will be well reported. They await what he has to say and I hope that he will address himself specifically to these great concerns which are being legitimately expressed by people in west Cumbria.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I rise to support the amendments in the names of my hon. Friends the Members for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) and for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). I am sure that the remark of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) that party hacks have little to offer governing bodies will have struck a chord throughout the House. That is probably at the root of these amendments.

We fear that the Government's proposed structure for governing bodies will allow the vested interests which are producers to predominate. We do not believe that this is the correct emphasis. Many parents are becoming upset at having to take what is on offer and dished out by the present governing bodies where the local education authority has a monopoly. The Bill does not tip the balance in favour of parents.

Schools should not be run for the benefit of teachers or local politicians. There is increasing evidence that the malign influence of politicians and, to a lesser extent, of local education authorities, is causing grave anxiety among parents and, in some cases, is an affront to them. In Haringey, for example, we hear that the council's new lesbian and gay unit is advising schools and colleges to develop courses to promote positive images of lesbians and gays, and to submit proposals by the end of this month. That type of development is thoroughly objected to by parents, but they have little choice because they do not have a controlling interest on the governing body. In a school in my constituency parents have even been dissuaded by the headmaster from having a parent-teacher association. That is the wrong approach and would be rejected throughout the House.

Many people tend to forget that education is not free. Parents may not pay directly by cheque to their local education authority, but they pay for it. I believe that parents are in a position to know what is best for their children, and that education is too important to be left to educationists.

Further evidence that the education system is not working and that all is not well, with grave concern that schools are not performing under the present system, comes from a MORI poll to be published next week. It was commissioned by the Audit Commission, which audits value-for-money in local services. Only 31 per cent. of those interviewed were happy with the standards of secondary education. That demonstrates that there is dissatisfaction, and that so long as we operate a system in which the consumers — the parents — are not given a major say we shall not begin to tackle the problems in our schools. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to accept the amendments moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Itchen, for in this way we shall be able to give parents more power, and they will be able to take tougher action, to produce better schools.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I should like to say a few words, particularly in support of the remarks made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) and also the speech of the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler).

In this House, we frequently enact good laws and, I suspect, frequently bad or muddled laws, but since the European Court of Human Rights started to exert its influence on the laws of this country, as we saw earlier this evening, we have from time to time enacted laws that are plain wrong.

I have a specific question for the Minister of State tonight, which I hope he will deal with in due course. Is the Minister of State satisfied — are the Government satisfied — that the proposals in relation to pupil governors in further education colleges as compared with the lack of pupil governors in schools will pass muster if it is challenged in the European Court of Human Rights?

The proposals lack logic. If a 16-year-old at a further education college is good enough to be a governor of that college and take a minority role in the decisions affecting that college, at least so far as they concern interests that

can be legitimately dealt with by pupil governors, why on earth cannot pupils in sixth forms of high schools be governors of those schools?

Indeed, it could be argued that high school sixth form pupils over the age of 16 play a far more significant role in the management of their schools than their counterparts in further education colleges. One could go further and say that we know of many cases in which pupils of 16 to 18 have gone to further education colleges because they have failed examinations and were unable to stay on in the sixth form of their schools, whereas their colleagues, who have passed examinations, are able to stay at school; yet the latter are to be deprived of the right to be governors of those schools. That is manifestly absurd and illogical.

I hope that the legal point has been carefully considered by the Government and I look forward to the Minister's assurance that it has been. Let us assume, as is likely, that a case is taken through the courts of this country on behalf of a pupil who wishes to be a governor of his or her school, and thereafter to the European Court of Human Rights. Will that court uphold the decision that the Government appear to be determined upon tonight? If not, we shall face yet another of those decisions one example of which led to the Interception of Communications Act 1985 on telephone tapping; another related to corporal punishment, which has been debated tonight.

It would do the Government and the people of this country little service if this legal problem — this is a serious question that I am putting to the Minister — were brushed aside in the hope that it will go away.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is an important group of new clauses and amendments that is directed to the composition of governing bodies. Its aim principally is to alter the key provisions in clause 3, either by substituting a new formula for the composition of governing bodies or by modifying the Bill's present proposals. I think that all of us who had the enjoyable experience of sitting through the Committee could be forgiven for a sense of déjà vu in considering the new clauses and amendments, because we gave most of the issues a pretty heavy bashing in Committee. It is always pleasant, however, to take a second tour.

I hope that the speech of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will receive the coverage in the Workington Bugle which it undoubtedly deserves. I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of governors and the contribution which they have to make. I agree wholeheartedly with him that there is no place for party hacks on school governing bodies. The effect of the Bill's provisions on the south London school to which he referred would be to reduce political nominees from about 12 to three. This should encourage local education authorities to be a good deal more discriminating in whom they appoint.

The hon. Member for Workington spoke of two particular instances, and he has correspondence on them. I shall, of course, consider these cases. The Bill preserves the minimum position that was established by the 1980 Act. I suggest that minor authority representatives, valuable though they are, no longer have to represent the community given the increased parental representation. Nevertheless, we shall address ourselves to the two instances to which the hon. Gentleman referred if he will allow us to do so.

Our aim in the Bill, as we said on a number of occasions in Committee, is to create vigorous governing bodies that will be the focus for that individuality and sense of purpose that are the invariable hallmarks of a successful school. As an integral part of this aim, we want governing bodies to be the means of encouraging and harnessing greater parental influence and involvement in the way that their children's schools develop as part of local provision. That point was addressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope). I shall respond later to his other remarks.

Consequently, we see it as essential that each governing body should, as necessary, be able to speak for the school and the wider community it serves with a voice that is separate and distinct from — though obviously informed by — the professionals in the maintaining LEA on the one hand and the staff in the school on the other. At the same time, we need to ensure that governing bodies are reasonably compact so that they can discharge their important functions effectively. If size were no object, there might well be other categories of person who might usefully be represented. But we want and need effective bodies and not mere talking shops.

The outcome of all these considerations is the carefully balanced formulae in clauses 3 and 7. Tailored to the size of school, these remove the scope for LEAs to appoint the majority of governors. They strengthen the parental voice and retain the representation of other key interests guaranteed by the 1980 Act. This is not as rigid as the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) was suggesting, but that is a point which is often wilfully misrepresented. The Bill allows a substantial degree of flexibility through the category of co-opted governors. But that flexibility is in the hands of the governing body itself. It is not to be imposed by the LEA in making the school's instrument of government. We shall trust the governors to decide what additional expertise they wish to add.

As I have said, our main aim is to set up governing bodies that are separate and distinct from LEAs on the one hand and teachers on the other. The local partnership which makes for successful schools exists principally not in the governing body itself but in the interaction of the governing body, the head teacher and the LEA, all within the framework of functions proposed in part III. I must emphasise that these functions have been carefully designed to complement the composition proposals in part II. They would probably have to look different if the composition were significantly changes.

11.45 pm

The partnership to which I have referred cannot work effectively if the governing body is, as one of the partners, dominated by the others. This is why the Bill removes the LEA's majority. Given that the LEA is at arm's length from the school it seemed right to give it a share of governorships equal to that for elected parents. By the very nature of their work, however, teachers are intimately involved in the day-to-day life of the school. While their voice should clearly be heard on the governing body, our judgment is that more than the provision proposed — which continues the representation guaranteed for the first time under our 1980 Act — would give them a disproportionate influence in the overall local partnership. That is in no way to denigrate teachers whose expertise is obviously crucial to the success of schools. Indeed, it is

[Mr. Chris Patten]

worth pointing out that, as governing bodies will be generally smaller under this Bill than previously, the teachers' voice will be proportionately stronger.

The plain fact is that the Opposition amendments generally demonstrate a fundamental disagreement between their movers and the Government over our reasoning and the conclusions that I have just outlined. I have heard nothing that has even begun to persuade me that the Government's very carefully considered conclusions in this key area are wrong. Indeed, I am more than over convinced of their soundness as a means of re-invigorating our schools. I point out again in passing—not hoping to bring Opposition Members to their feet—that the Opposition are on the one hand obsessed with increasing the involvement of this or that group on the governing body and, on the other hand, move amendments at the drop of a hat to limit the powers of governing bodies.

Amendments Nos. 5, 10, 15, 20, 8, 12, 17 and 22 were moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) and referred to by my hon. Friends the Members for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth). The amendments aim to strengthen parental representation. The Government have been persuaded—and now firmly believe—that an equal balance of places between the LEA and the parents is the right way to make progress. That was not our original view. When the Green Paper was discussed, long before I had anything to do with these weighty matters, the Government came to another conclusion. However, after taking account of the representations from parents and bodies representing parents we came to the conclusion that equal weight should be given to parents and LEAs.

The provisions of clauses 28 and 29 will also strengthen the accountability of the governing body to the parent body as a whole through the annual report and parents' meeting. We could not accept the proposed reduction in the number of teacher governors.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and his colleagues for giving weight to the representations received from parents. Many of us would be interested to know what finally persuaded him to come down in favour of a balance between the LEA and the parents, rather than a predominance of parents.

Mr. Chris Patten: I wish that I could answer that question as directly as my hon. Friend has asked it. The decision — the correct decision, I believe — to favour equal weighting was taken by my right hon. and hon. Friends when they drafted the White Paper "Better Schools". In that respect, the Bill faithfully reflects the views expressed in "Better Schools". As I said several times in Committee, I think that we have struck the right balance in the composition of the governing body and—as could not be said of the amendments moved regularly by the Opposition—between the composition and the functions of the new governing bodies.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for, albeit reluctantly, giving way. I had rather hoped that he would have had the courtesy to answer a specific question which I put to him. He has not and so I shall put it again. Has the hon. Gentleman taken and received advice on whether what is proposed will satisfy the requirements of the European Convention, and, if so, on what grounds will it do so?

Mr. Patten: I knew that I should not have given way to the hon. and learned Gentleman. I shall come to precisely that point in the course of my remarks after I have referred to the amendments moved by his ever-courteous hon. Friend, the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud).

New clauses 11 and 26 and amendments Nos. 26, 27, 31, 32, 60, 13, 18 and 23 seek to involve pupils more in school government either as observers or as governors proper. The Government fully accept — again, we had these debates in Committee — that it is desirable for senior pupils to be involved in some way in the work of the governing body. We have agreed to include guidance on this in the post-Act circular. This could well be done through observerships but there are other ways of achieving this, perhaps through separate meetings with selected groups, which would avoid observers having to keep bobbing in and out depending on the item under discussion.

However, I can see nothing in new clause 11 which would actually enable a governing body to require such observers to leave during particular items of business. Generally, it would be wrong to compel governing bodies to admit pupils or, indeed, any other observers to their meetings, though I repeat the undertaking to advise governing bodies that they should explore ways, and observerships will be one of them, of involving senior pupils and other persons as they think fit in their work.

I listened with considerable interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) developing his arguments on that point. I realise that he will be disappointed by the fact that my reply this evening is exactly the same as my reply on several occasions in Committee and I am sorry that we disagree on that point. To repeat myself, there is a strong case against second class governors coming in and out of meetings according to what is on the agenda. However, I repeat what I have said about the guidance that we shall be giving to local education authorities and governing bodies about the relationship with pupils.

Amendment No. 59 to clause 15 would allow persons aged 16 and over to be governors in any category. In this clause and in clause 56, to which I shall come shortly, we are not resting on our long-held opinion that a school or college governor holds an office of public or pecuniary trust. Such an office maynot be held by a minor. We accept that there are contrary legal opinions; that is why we have taken the opportunity to put the matter beyond doubt. I see no case for allowing LEAs to appoint 16-year-olds, as has happened, as their representatives on school governing bodies. It may be argued that 18 is an arbitrary age, but it has good legal precedents, I must remind the House again that we are giving school governors new and enhanced powers. School governorship will not be a soft option.

I therefore ask the House to reject amendment No. 59 and, for the same reason, amendment No. 180 which seeks to delete clause 56 on the minimum age for governors in further education. Given the different nature, structure and traditions of institutional government in further education and the more adult environment of that sector, however, the Government have been persuaded to make

an exception to the rule in clause 56 in the case of a governor who is a student of the college concerned. This concession must, however, be safeguarded.

There are matters, such as the appointment, promotion and discipline of staff where it would not be appropriate for a student to be involved. Amendments Nos. 181 and 182, which honour our Committee stage undertaking, therefore provide for regulations to specify the circumstances and the degree in which the participation of student governors at meetings should be limited. The notion of "reserved business" in further education is not new. Many instruments already contain provisions which will meet the new regulations' requirements.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) raised a particular point, which he came back to in an intervention, about the impact of the European Convention on Human Rights. We were not remotely aware that any problem such as he suggested existed. I should be interested to know which specific provision of the convention he had in mind and any point that he cares to bring to our attention we shall look into. However, I do not think that there is a problem such as he identified.

In conclusion, I commend Government amendments Nos. 181 and 182 to clause 56. However, I must ask the House to reject the other amendments in this group in favour of retaining the carefully constructed composition provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: It is not surprising that the Government have not changed their view. We heard the same disappointing answers in Committee. I hope that when the Minister and the Secretary of State go to the Tory party conference and announce proudly that they facilitated the ending of corporal punishment in schools and get a standing ovation for that, they will recognise that although the traditional Tory party conference gesture of allowing a 16 or 17-year-old to get to the rostrum to praise the Government's record will be made, under the Bill they will deny that youngster the right to serve on a governing body. It is a sad reflection on the Government's belief in democracy that they cannot allow a 16 or 17-year-old to participate in a governing body.

I do not think that we will be able to persuade the Government to change their mind by pursuing the matter to a Division. However, I hope that the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) will consider pressing his amendment No. 13 when it comes up for consideration. Perhaps, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will allow a Division on this amendment so that the House can express a clear wish that it would like to see pupil governors appointed as observers. I do not suggest that we vote on the amendment tonight. The amendment will be much later in our consideration of the Bill, and I do not think that we will come to it later tonight. Indeed, we may not come to it until October.

The Minister might get a few messages at the party conference, one of which might be to ask him to allow the appointment of pupil governors. After the conference he might be able to rectify the position either by supporting amendment No. 13, or even by the Government tabling their own amendment to provide for pupil governors. As we would not achieve that as a result of a vote on new clause 3, I hope that I shall have the leave of the House to withdraw the motion in a moment or two, in the hope that we can have a vote on amendment No. 13 later. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 4

SCHOOL MEALS

'It shall be the duty of local education authorities:

(a) to provide, on every school day, for every pupil in county, controlled or maintained schools who want it, a mid-day meal, suitable in all respects as the main meal of the day;

(b) to provide facilities, including drinks, for pupils who choose to bring their own food.'. — *[Mr. Fatchett.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Fatchett: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be appropriate also to discuss new clause 5 — *School Library Service*—

'(1) It shall be the duty of local education authorities to make adequate arrangements for a schools library service which should include:

(i) a school library in every secondary school, with adequate staffing including the appointment where appropriate of duly qualified staff and chartered librarians.

(ii) professional advice and expertise available to every school in the local education authority.

(iii) supplementary materials and central services to support school libraries.

(iv) the provision of any information as the Secretary of State may require to carry out his duties under this section (below).

(2) It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to:

(i) publish guidelines for school library provision, including stands for accommodation, staffing, stock provision and maintenance, after consultation with local education authorities, the relevant teachers' unions and the Library Association;

(ii) appoint sufficient professional librarians to Her Majesty's Inspectorate to ensure adequate inspection of school libraries.

(iii) the provision of adequate finance to local authorities for the production of development plans for school libraries and school library services; and

(iv) the collection and publication of statistics of primary and secondary school libraries and school library services.'.

Mr. Fatchett: I bring some novelty to the proceedings for those who served on the Committee in that I raise a new subject. New clause 4 would extend the remit and scope of the Bill by providing a statutory framework for the provision of school meals.

There is no doubt that the school meals service has been under constant and pernicious attack from the Government. The record since 1979 is clear. The Education Act 1980 removed the compulsory requirement for local authorities to provide nutritional standards in terms of school meals. Subsequently—and, many would argue, much more damaging—there have been regular cuts in the amount of money available for the school meals service. In 1978-79, the last year of the Labour Government, £693·7 million was spent on the school meals service in real terms. By 1983-84, that had been reduced to £445 million, a reduction of about 30 per cent. The impact of these Government changes are evident in the school meals service.

Children and parents are paying more for the provision of school meals. The service is changing, and many would argue that it has changed for the worse in many respects. The number of children taking school meals has declined constantly since the Government came into office. In 1974,

[Mr. Fatchett]

64·1 per cent. of children were taking school meals. By 1984, that percentage had fallen to 51·3 per cent. There was a slight increase in 1983-84, but under this Government the general pattern has been a decline in the number of children taking school meals.

There is firm evidence about the value of school meals for all children, particularly for those who come from poorer and less well-off families. A Department of Health and Social Security report of April 1986 on the diet of British schoolchildren says:

"The free school meal is an important factor in the welfare of children from families receiving state benefits. It appeared to be at least responsible for keeping the energy intakes, particularly of older children from these families, up to the levels of the rest of the schoolchild population."

12 midnight

Further support for that view comes from the British Dietetic Association in a report called "Can I afford the diet?" It makes the point that the provision of school meals is of crucial importance for individual children.

Further support for that contention came from Sir Douglas Black. He will be remembered for his report on inequalities in health. On 14 July he wrote to *The Guardian*.He quoted from his report and then said:

"In our view any reduction in the provision of school meals or in eligibility for free school meals would mean putting further at risk the development of significant numbers of children . . .Nothing has changed except the accumulation of medical evidence showing that children need to be adequately nourished to achieve their potential for healthy growth and development. In view of this and the increase in public awareness and concern about the nation's health, this move"—

I shall refer to that later in relation to the Social Security Bill—

"by the Government seems the height of folly."

That is clear evidence that school meals provide a valuable service to children and to parents.

The alternative to the school meals service can be seen in very many towns and schools. Children are eating junk food or convenience food. Their diet is unbalanced. Because of the price of school meals, children are forced to eat cheaper, convenience food that has less nutritional value. This Government are responsible for the health of the children of this country. Their school meals policy will lead to a further deterioration in the health of our children, particularly those from poorer families. The Minister appears to object to that point, but had he read the Black report he would recognise that inequalities in health are related to the factors to which I have referred. I should be delighted to hear of any evidence to the contrary that he is able to produce.

There is clear objective evidence that the school meals service is valued. There is also clear evidence that, determinedly over seven years, this Government have tried to run down the school meals service.

That is not the whole picture, however. Worse is to come. Either directly or indirectly, this Government are likely further to threaten the school meals service. It is indirect, in the sense that those local authorities that have been squeezed by the public expenditure cuts are likely to follow Hereford, Worcestershire, Lincolnshire and Dorset in reducing the school meals service.

When the Minister replies to the debate, I should like him to say whether he supports the decision that will probably be taken by Buckinghamshire county council on Thursday of this week to abolish the school meals service for those who are provided with free school meals and to substitute only a sandwich service. Are this Government, who claim to be the Government of the family, prepared to support Buckinghamshire county council's decision? It would help the deliberations of the county councillors there if the Minister made clear his views, because advice from the Minister might be heeded by his Conservative colleagues in Buckinghamshire.

There is that threat, but there is also a threat from the Social Security Bill which aims to restrict the scope of free school meals. It is estimated that those provisions will affect 470,000 children. That figure was used by the Government in the debate in the other place a few days ago. That Bill shows the lack of concern that the Government have for the school meals service. It is a valued service and it has been regularly attacked for seven years by the Government. It was attacked first by reducing the element of compulsory nutritional standards, secondly by reducing the amount of money spent on the service, and now by changes in the social security provisions which will further reduce the scope of the school meals service. I hope that the Government will give greater priority to the service, that is why we have tabled new clause 4 which would impose a statutory duty on each local authority.

At least 250,000 jobs are directly related to the school meals service and many of them are in areas where alternative employment is difficult to find. Many of the jobs provide not a second income for a family, but the first and only income. The Government seem to have no regard for those jobs, for the people who provide this important service, or for their conditions of employment, because they are keen to privatise the service. I hope that the House will support the clause and impose upon local authorities the duty to provide an adequate school meals service.

New clause 5 is somewhat different. New clause 4 deals with the body in a physical sense, while new clause 5 deals with the mind, the provision of a library service. The clause seeks to place a responsibility on local authorities and on the Department of Education and Science to provide an adequate library service in our secondary schools. The Government have cut the provision of money for the purchase of books. As a result, many school libraries have suffered and many teachers find it difficult to make the necessary provision. A library is an essential part of a secondary school and plays an essential part in a child's education. We want to encourage children to read books and to use libraries to broaden their minds. I hope that we can get support for the clause. Both clauses will help the health of children, one intellectually and one physically. I am sure that a Government who talk so much about the family will have no difficulty in accepting the clauses.

Mr. Cash: I hope that it is in order to speak to new clause 5. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) completely failed to examine the importance of having adequate and properly qualified people — chartered librarians — to run libraries, especially in schools. That must be done under the auspices of the Library Association. I mention schools, but of course the matter goes further and includes public libraries under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

For well over 10 years I have been legal adviser to the Library Association and have been much involved in many such questions as and when they have arisen. With the new technologies that are around today, and the new

opportunities that are open to people, it must be understood how important it is to have properly qualified librarians who are in a position to make an assessment, in this case on behalf of children, that will enable readers to be in receipt of well-ordered documentation, books and information.

It is often thought that libraries are about ordinary fiction, such as romantic novels, but that is far from being the case. Libraries provide the essential tools for learning and provide people, particularly children, with the means of acquiring knowledge. Therefore, it is essential to have properly qualified chartered librarians to run that service.

To believe that because they are chartered librarians there is a monopoly of work would be to misunderstand the aims and objects of the Library Association, of which Her Majesty The Queen is the patron. The association, with its code of ethics and its high professional standards, is in a position to ensure that children have at their disposal, as part of the clause says

"sufficient professional librarians"

in

"Her Majesty's Inspectorate to ensure"

that children receive the kind of education that they should have.

One of the main objects of chartered bodies, which is frequently forgotten by some of them — I shall not mention them by name, but it is a matter of first importance to record the fact — is to put the public interest first, and not remuneration. I shall not go into the merits of the clause, with which I have not been associated. In the interests of children and their education, it is important to stress the role of the chartered librarian, who conducts his affairs in a proper, professional and impartial manner on behalf of the children in the school in which he serves.

12.15 am

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I shall be brief, not just because my friendly Whip has asked me to be so, but because my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) has done such a first-class job from the Front Bench. If there is a third reason, it is that those on the Conservative Benches are becoming a little restless.

I begin by declaring my interests in this important debate—not only in the interest shared by my right hon. and hon. Friends of caring that our children have a square meal at school, but also my interest as chairman of the group of hon. Members sponsored by the National Union of Public Employees. The group has been active in ensuring that the Government recognise the need for a good schools meal service. We have been active in attempting to resist the cuts that some authorities have been proposing.

We know that soon the House will be asked to pass, in another Bill, provisions that will ensure that only children whose parents are on income support will receive free school meals, while families on family credit will receive a woefully inadequate sum for school meals per week per child. Discretionary grants will not be permitted if clause 73 of the Social Security Bill is passed into law.

Against that background, we are arguing for new clause 4. It is vital that we insert some sanity into the sorry business of the decline of our school meals service. We wish to ensure that all schoolchildren eat a nutritionally balanced meal in the middle of the day. For those who choose not to do so, our new clause states that appropriate facilities should be afforded to them to enjoy another type of meal with a drink.

I should like to believe that this is not a party political issue, but that would be naive in the extreme. However, it certainly should not be party political. Conservative Members should share our concern that the children of the parents whom they represent are fed properly. Three weeks ago the London Food Commission reported that people on low incomes were being forced to cut back on food to make ends meet. Food poverty is a growing problem as it is, without inflicting that on our very young. In 1985, despite cut-backs by certain local authorities, aided and abetted by central Government, more than 1·4 million free school meals were served each day in this country. Moreover, 680,000 such meals were served to children whose parents were on supplementary benefit, 170,000 to the children of those in receipt of family income supplement and 300,000 to those benefiting from discretionary schemes. Although pupil rolls will undoubtedly fall during the next few years, even the Department of Education and Science has estimated an overall increase in free school meals of over 100,000 between 1984-85 and 1987-88. But that will not come about if the Social Security Bill is enacted.

Those of us who support new clause 4 do so because we are aware that in our schools the junk food generation of children are already suffering nutritionally. As my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central has said, there is plenty of evidence to prove that. Indeed, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who is also a member of the NUPE group, would like to highlight the problems. We know that the Elephant and Castle is not a million miles away from Walworth road but it is not as yet under the control of the national executive committee of the Labour party. Yet the report of the DHSS shows that many of our children are putting themselves at real risk of heart disease and some cancers later in life by frequenting cafes and chip shops at lunch time.

However, the DHSS report got things wrong in one important respect. It is not the children who want to eat badly, but they are being forced to do so by certain Government and local authority actions. Those bodies are creating that risk for our youngsters. On 2 May, I asked the Under-Secretary of State to list 30 local authorities in England that are restricting the provision of free school meals to those whose parents are in receipt of supplementary benefit. He listed them, and all but one of them was Conservative controlled.

Conservative Members have been given fair warning that, if they vote to ensure that the junk food era continues, the Labour party, NUPE, and many other organisations—many of which are not used to political action—will join battle with the Government and with the Tory-controlled authorities and will closely monitor how Conservative Members stand on this issue.

Buckinghamshire county council is to make its decision on Thursday. I echo what has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central, in that we expect the Minister to come clean when he replies to the debate. The council would be extremely foolhardy to abolish the school meals service. If the council goes ahead, 1,700 hard-working school meal ladies in that county will be sacked on Thursday. They have given loyal service to the county, and have offered to talk with the authority on how best

[Mr. Tom Pendry]

to improve the service. However, no one has listened to them. It was noticeable that the private contractors who were called in could not improve on the service given by them. Before I came to the House, I had the pleasure to represent many of those ladies. I can honestly say that they are the hardest working people. During the short time that they provide those meals, they work in a clammy climate at a tremendous pace, and all for little pay. They deserve more than they will get on Thursday if Buckinghamshire county council goes ahead.

On top of that, the council is going ahead after Milton Keynes health authority stated that 60 per cent. of the 8,000 poorest children who reside in the county area are entitled to free school meals. The authority is opposed to Buckinghamshire county council's plan. Some 70 per cent. of the people in the county who responded to the consultative document have said that they are in favour of a school meal provision. I wonder whether the Tory party really believes that it will win Milton Keynes at the next election or any of the authorities that will be hit in that way. Tory Members are living in cloud cuckoo land if they believe that.

I hope that we can get the response that we want from the Government on new clause 4 so that we can stop the Buckinghamshires of this world from going down that road, because the children's health is at risk, and we have a duty in the House to ensure that they get a fair, square meal every day. That is incumbent on the Government, too. I shall listen attentively to the Minister's response.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), I declare an interest in the debate, as a sponsored Member from the National Union of Public Employees and a former full-time official of that union dealing to a large extent with the school meals service. As a former member of an education authority, I am well aware of the problems that education authorities have in dealing with the school meals system and trying to provide a decent school meal for all their children. I do not pretend that the clause does anything more than take us back in legal terms to the 1979 position. That would be an enormous improvement on what we now have because the past seven years have been ones of unremitting war, declared by central Government, against the principle of a school meals service, while at every opportunity, like Pontius Pilate, they wring their hands and say, "It is up to the local education authority to provide the service," and deliberately create the conditions in which it is almost impossible to provide a decent school meals service.

In putting forward the new clause, we have to say that the school meals service was created because many children from working class homes were not getting proper meals during the day——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. Gentleman has never been in a working class home.

Mr. Corbyn: They were therefore given — *[Interruption.]* It is easy for the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who has two jobs — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Grantham, who seems anxious to prevent hon. Members from being heard in the debate, has two jobs and therefore has an adequate income on which he can come here and abuse his position as a Member of Parliament and try to destroy the school meals service. *[Interruption.]* If he has anything to say, he could stand up and say it, but he will not prevent me from speaking. *[Interruption.]* As much as he drones on from a sedentary position—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) must restrain himself.

Mr. Corbyn: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As I was saying, the hon. Member for Grantham has an adequate income from his two jobs, and perhaps he could spend his time doing some of his job as the hon. Member for Grantham rather than his lucrative legal practice elsewhere. *[Interruption.]* I wish that some of the children who tomorrow will lose their free school meal could get hold of the hon. Gentleman and knock some sense and manners into his head. Tomorrow, those children, presumably on the vote of the hon. Member for Grantham, will lose their free school meal entitlement under the Social Security Bill. The hon. Member ought to think about what his Government and his vote will do to the school meal services.

In the past seven years, there has been, as I said before the hon. Member for Grantham started his interruptions, a process of unremitting war against the school meal service. First, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) pointed out, there was the removal of nutritional standards. Then there was the removal of the requirement to provide a free school meal service. Following the introduction of the grant-related expenditure assessment formulae, there was the process of rate capping. In every sense the pressure was on local authorities to increase the costs of the meal to the children, to reduce the number of staff providing that meal and thus contribute to a cycle of undernourished children and unemployed school meal workers. This clause is trying to halt that process.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde and myself have been involved with the school meal service and we are aware that the school meal workers, a large majority of whom are women, work extremely hard, in difficult circumstances and for low wages. When authorities, at the request of the women, asked that a bonus scheme should be considered, they discovered that many of those women were already working at bonus levels of performance. Such women have been eligible for a bonus scheme for many years because of the rate at which they were forced to work in some kitchens.

In the midst of all these attacks on the school meal services—the removal of nutritional standards and the removal of the legal requirement to provide a school meal service—those who work in the school meals service have sought to seek imaginative changes to the service.

In certain places, there has been a great improvement in the school meal service. Ethnic catering has been introduced and thus children of different religious backgrounds have been adequately catered for by the service. Breakfast, more salad dishes and a high fibre diet have also been introduced. Where it has been possible—with the agreement of the authority—there have been great improvements.

Reports on the Haringey school meal service and the service offered by the ILEA should be compared with those authorities which have destroyed the school meal service and which have substituted for it just a sandwich. A disgraceful thing to do.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde mentioned the decisions which will be taken tomorrow when the Social Security Bill comes back to the Floor of the House. The Committee on the Bill was lobbied by a group of school meal workers. They were patient and explained to those Committee members to whom it was possible to speak, what their job entailed, how important that service was and how they feared the loss of the principle of free school meals provided by the local education authorities.

Tomorrow, the House will have the opportunity to ensure that half a million children from the poorest households in Britain have the opportunity to have free school meal—it is important part of their diet. Tonight, we have the opportunity to reinstate the principle of the legal requirement on every local education authority to provide a school meal service. That would prevent Buckinghamshire county council voting, on Thursday morning, to abolish the free school meal service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde mentioned that there would be 1,700 jobs lost. It would also mean a large number of school children going without a meal—they would be forced to get chips and eat junk food. That would cause a cycle of nutritional deprivation which is prevalent among British children but which is not necessarily obvious among children of equivalent industrialised countries.

We are deliberately undernourishing a whole generation and we are deliberately destroying a valuable school meals service. I hope that we can agree that this clause would prevent Buckinghamshire county council from doing the unthinkable on Thursday. It would also call a halt to the completely vicious and illogical cycle under which we destroy a school meals service in order to dismiss the cooks and the catering workers and thus prevent the children from getting a school meal in the middle of the day.

We are in the middle of a ludicrous process. I hope that the House will recognise the importance and value of the service, and of the work that predominantly women school meal workers do. Hon. Members should contrast the comforts of their lives with the hardships of working-class women and children that will result from the destruction of the service. The service is a measure of society's concern for the health of children and for women workers, and it should be preserved.

12.30 am

Mr. Dunn: I must congratulate the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), who has turned into some sort of butterfly — perhaps a Red Admiral — since Standing Committee, when he was a caterpillar. I thought that his speech was rather good.

I shall deal with new clause 5 first. Such a clause is unacceptable because it would seek to pre-empt local decisions about spending and other priorities, by legislating for the school library service in a way which means that it is bound to take a larger proportion of resources. Local freedom to decide priorities for expenditure should not be fettered in that way.

As to new clause 4, I thought that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) displayed all the innocence, naivety and ignorance of a person who obviously came down with the last shower of rain. He was totally unrealistic, totally unfair and totally obtuse in his approach to the debate. I am glad that he declared his interest in the matter.

Mr. Corbyn: Have you ever been to a school kitchen?

Mr. Dunn: I have been to many school kitchens, and I dare say that I can swap blow for blow an account of deprivation, whether the urban or the rural variety, with the hon. Gentleman. I suspect that I know a lot more about deprivation than the hon. Member ever will should he live a thousand years.

The main effect of new clause 4 would be to place on local education authorities a duty to provide a meal as specified in the new clause, which no, or only a few, pupils might want on any given day. It would be unreasonable to compel local education authorities to set up and maintain the elaborate arrangements that would be needed in such circumstances. It would not be an efficient way in which to run a local authority or any other type of service. It is surely right for the local authority, which is responsible to its own local electorate, to decide, in the light of local circumstances, the right way in which to go about the lunchtime arrangements of pupils in its schools.

There are two other aspects of the new clause on which I ought to comment — first, the stipulation that provision should be made for a meal suitable in all respects as the main meal of the day. That is putting the clock back. The Government removed that requirement in 1980 under pressure from local education authorities, which told us that it was too restrictive and too centralist. As the law now stands, it is for local education authorities to decide what it is appropriate to provide. They can and do take the advice of community dieticians, health education and home economics advisers and catering managers and organisers.

Secondly, there is the curious paragraph *(b)*, which would impose the duty to provide drinks for those who bring their own food. Local education authorities already have a duty to provide such facilities as they consider appropriate. I do not believe that it can be necessary to legislate to the effect that pupils can have a drink of water at lunchtime. I am afraid that the new clause is misconceived, and I ask the House to reject it, and new clause 5.

Mr. Fatchett: I was fascinated by the Minister's opening imagery, because while I had difficulty in understanding it in relation to myself, I had even greater difficulty in understanding it in relation to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn).

I shall not delay the House by dealing at length with the remarks of the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who is no longer in his place. I agreed broadly with the valuable points that he made about new clause 5.

Those who read the *Official Report* of the debate will be disappointed to note that the Minister did not acknowledge the situation that is likely to develop in Buckinghamshire, that he did not show any concern for the 1,700 jobs that will be affected and that the did not refer to the effect of a decision on the children of Buckinghamshire. I assume that the Minister's silence on those issues meant that he would support any cuts in the school meals service.

There will also be disappointment at the fact that the Minister did not comment on some of the arguments that were adduced on convenience and junk foods, on the

[Mr. Fatchett]

bearing of that on the 1980 Act and on the ending of the obligations that were placed on local authorities. I had hoped that the Minister would say whether he thought the provision of sandwiches was sufficient for youngsters, or whether more should be provided. If he believes that more should be provided, the new clause is the answer.

As the hour is late, as we have had an opportunity to raise some issues that are important to us, and as we have demonstrated that a division exists between the two sides of the House on the important issue of the school meals service, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Further consideration of the Bill adjourned.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee) to be further considered this day.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 23rd July, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 4 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)), the Motion in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Social Security (S.I., 1986, No. 1250) may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after it has been entered upon, and if proceedings thereon have not been disposed of at the end of that period Mr. Speaker shall then put the Question.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

PETITION

Irena Ratushinskaya

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I beg to ask leave to present a petition signed by 51 members of St. Peter's Church, Filton, in my constituency, relating to Irena Ratushinskaya, who is the subject of two early-day motions, No. 420, which stands in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), and No. 611, in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley).

The petition relates to a poetess who is confined in a Soviet labour camp, allegedly for writing poetry. She is said to be in poor health and her husband and fellow prisoners fear that her life may be in danger.

I feel sure that hon. Members in all parts of the House will join the petitioners in asking the Foreign Secretary and other Members of the Government to make representations to the Soviet Government with the aim of obtaining the release of Mrs. Ratushinskaya and for her to receive an urgently needed medical assessment of her condition and treatment. I willingly add my support to the representations of the petitioners.

To lie upon the Table.

The British Approvals Board for Telecommunications

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

12.39 am

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I am grateful to the Minister for turning out at this late hour and for this opportunity to initiate a debate on a matter relating to high technology.

The story that I have to tell is about a small firm which has done what the Government are saying should be done but which, in the process, has been all but killed off by a Government-sponsored body. I have not chosen this particular firm because it has suffered an especial injustice or been the victim of a level of incompetence which is unusual. Unfortunately, the contrary is the case. The point of my story, which concerns Kirk Automation of Cinderford in Gloucestershire, is that it is all too chillingly typical. What Kirk Automation has suffered mirrors the experiences of many other similar high technology firms throughout Britain. Their businesses have been threatened, their employees laid off, their orders lost and their futures placed in jeopardy by the unbelievable incompetence, unacceptable delay, unreasonable expense and unimaginable bureaucracy foisted on them by the British Approvals Board for Telecommunications. The BABT is not in any way connected with British Telecom. That connection has been mistakenly made and BT has been blamed for BABT's mistakes. In this case BT is blameless.

Kirk Automation was founded by a young technologist, Kevin Kirk, in 1983. It specialises in manufacturing equipment for data communications—the very area in which the Secretary of State and the Minister have told us that Britain could and should be a world leader. It started as what is known in the trade as a legendary "garden shed" firm. Like Hewlett Packard, the giant United States hi-tech multinational, Kirk Automation started in a room so small that there was not room for both employees to work at the same time. One had to work during the day while the other came in to work in the evening.

The firm grew fast and now, less than three years after it was originally founded, employs, or employed 27 people and turns over, or did turn over before BABT got its hands on it, £500,000 a year. Last year the firm received an award for taking on more young people than any other firm of equivalent size in Gloucestershire. Turnover was predicted to double to £1 million next year. The firm has obtained orders from abroad, especially from Holland, and has significantly broken into the big market—a difficult market. The computer games giant, Atari, for example, is one of its customers.

By any definition the firm is the model of what the Prime Minister and the Government tell us a small firm should be. It is a positive fairy tale, and perhaps too much like a fairy tale, because now on cue enters stage left the wicked uncle, or, to be more precise, the bungling ogre in the shape of the BABT. The firm's mistake was to produce a piece of equipment that required BABT's approval. Last year it produced the "Magic Modem". For the benefit of the non-technically minded, a modem is a piece of equipment attached to a telephone line, enabling data to be passed through the telephone network. The Kirk

Automation Magic Modem is at the centre of our story. It is a small box, that will cost about £60 in the market place, but the final bill for testing will be no less than £10,000—two and a half times the original estimate.

Like everything the firm did, its Magic Modem proved a market winner. Prestel showed immediate interest, so the firm decided to get the modem checked over by Teleproof, the commercial consultancy arm of BT, the laboratories of which are in the same place as BABT at Wharf road in London. Not only are their laboratories in the same place, but they share the same facilities, the same people, the same tests and even the same paperwork, as I shall show later.

Teleproof's engineers commented that the modem was "a beautiful piece of kit",
and recommended that it should be passed to BABT for testing immediately. In November of last year Kirk Automation submitted the modem to BABT for testing, which was estimated at a quite staggering cost of £4,000. I shall leave that aside for the moment.

By December, absolutely nothing had happened. After several telephone calls, BABT said that the modem was still on the shelf, untouched, as I understand it, and that it did not have enough staff and was moving premises. Kevin Kirk, the founder of Kirk Automation, decided to investigate matters for himself and applied for a job at BABT. He was told that no one with less than a master's degree should apply. The pay was so low that no one with a master's degree would dream of applying. No wonder there was a staff shortage.

Meanwhile, orders and interest in the Magic Modem were building up. Unichem, the high street chemist chain, wanted to place a modem in all its shops up and down the country, but that could not be done until the modem had received BABT approval. Amstrad, the major and successful computer manufacturer, similarly showed considerable interest, but the modem required approval first.

In January of this year, Kirk frustrated because of the lack of progress, wrote to the local MP, the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland), who has done a first-class job in chasing up the case. The firm also sent letters to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and to the Prime Minister complaining about the delay.

No doubt because of that pressure, the head of BABT, who is for some unaccountable reason an ex-Army colonel, eventually contacted the firm personally. Colonel Vivers explained that the delay was all because Kirk had not filled in the application forms correctly. That was three months after submitting the forms.

Several minor questions were sorted out over the telephone. However, the main reason for the delay was revealed to be the fact that Kirk Automation had circled rather than ticked a box on one of the forms. By the end of February, still nothing had been heard from BABT. Approaches to Kirk's MP, the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West, as well as to the Secretary of State and Oftel, seemed to have no effect on Colonel Vivers and his staff.

That is not to say that BABT was not doing anything — quite the contrary. It was busy sending Kirk Automation demands for more money. The final bill for its approval turned out to be £10,000, against its original estimate of £4,000. When one looks at BABT's charges, one can understand why that happened. Every time the small front plate, which the Minister might like to notice here, was changed so that the logo could be changed, BABT charged £750 for the testing.

BABT found one single fault with the modem, in a cable clamp, which had to be replaced and re-tested according to British Standard 415. BS 415 specifies that that must take one minute and 20 seconds. BABT's charges for that one minute and 20 seconds-worth of testing were a staggering £185, which equates with an hourly rate of £8,325. That is what BABT thinks it appropriate to charge.

I digress from the main line of the story. By April, there was still nothing from BABT. At this stage, Kirk Automation ran out of money and was on the verge of bankruptcy. The firm was saved only by the faith of a friendly bank manager in what it could and might do. Barclays came to the rescue.

The result of the delays was severe. The firm had to lay off progressively 23 of its 27 employees, including the general manager. The firm was reduced to the three-man complement of the garden shed days three years previously. Kirk Automation contacted BABT every day, but always in vain.

In mid-April there was a rumour that Colonel Vivers might be leaving BABT, but that proved to be false. At last, at the end of April, Kirk Automation received interim approval for the modem, five months after it was submitted for testing.

That is not the end of the story, because interim approval means that the company can produce only a limited number of units. However, it was able to re-engage some staff, who duly worked flat out on massive overtime to save the firm and catch up on undelivered orders.

Kirk Automation has still not received final approval for its modem. It is still in BABT's laboratory at Wharf road, in an office next door to where it received a glowing report from a Teleproof engineer nine month ago. The tests that are being carried out are the same as those which took place nine months ago. The people carrying out the tests are the same as those who were undertaking the tests nine months ago. The laboratories are the same and even the paperwork, with one small exception, is exactly the same as that which was involved nine months ago. Yet nine months have passed and Kirk Automation is £10,000 the poorer. Its orders have been lost and its staff laid off. Its viability has been undermined. As a result of its inability to meet orders, I am told that the company is being sued or pursued by suppliers and customers alike.

I do not accuse BABT of trying deliberately to destroy this small high technology firm and its products. I have no doubt that it has done so by accident, but it could not have done so more efficiently if it had planned and designed this precise outcome.

Unhappily, this is not an isolated incident. Mr. Terry Bartram of the Telecom Dealers Association tells me that the problem is widespread. It appears that there is massive and broadly felt dissatisfaction in BABT and in the industry it serves. Even if all goes well, it appears that it takes six months to get approval for the most simple piece of telecommunications equipment. By the Telecom Dealers Association's calculations, at least 50 per cent. of this time is spent in administration.

Unfortunately, there is more. BABT now seems to be delaying, if not actually refusing, approval of subscriber call forwarding equipment, otherwise known as the call diverter. When approved, this equipment will be in direct

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

competition with British Telecom's exchange based call forwarding equipment, for which BT is able, as a current monopoly supplier of the service, to charge an exorbitant rental and secure a substantial income. I am advised that one can purchase a non-BT manufactured diverter from a well-known telecommunications equipment supplier for half the price of BT's annual rental charge. That is the annual rental charge. The public might justifiably ask why this equipment is not being approved. Who is pressing whom and for what reason?

I understand that Oftel has now accumulated a mounting pile of complaints about BABT, its delays, its overcharging and its inefficiencies. Things have become so bad that manufacturers are now deciding to make their new equipment outside Britain. For instance, Kirk Automation has received an order from Atari for one of its new designs, but Atari has insisted that this piece of equipment is built offshore, out of Britain, to avoid BABT's clammy hands.

Things are different abroad. The French Government have supplied 100 per cent. support for their telecommunications industry and are practically giving away free models to all telecom subscribers. A PABX exchange, which would cost £12,000 and take six weeks to receive approval in Germany, costs no less than a quarter of a million pounds and can take 18 months to obtain BABT approval in Britain. How can British industry hope to compete in this situation?

I should be grateful if the Minister would address himself specifically to the following questions. To whom, ultimately, is BABT responsible? Should it not be made responsible ultimately to a body such as Oftel? When will the Birtwistle report be published? Incidentally, Birtwistle is the name of yet another ex-Army colonel. I am not quite sure why ex-Army colonels seem to hold such important positions in our telecommunications industry, but no doubt there is a reason for that. Colonel Birtwistle has now been writing his report for nine months; surely it must now be nearing completion.

Most important of all, will the Minister understand the scale of the problem with BABT? Does he recognise that the cause is inadequacy and incompetence within BABT itself? Does he understand the damage that is being done to small high technology firms in an area where Britain still has some strength and where the Government say, quite rightly, that we can become a world leader? If the Minister understands all that, and I hope he does, what on earth does he intend to do about it?

12.54 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I thank the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) for raising this subject today. I entirely agree that unreasonable barriers should not be placed before small companies that wish to bring new products into a growth market in which there are opportunities not just domestically but internationally for British companies in high added value, high technology engineering.

I shall try to answer the three questions posed by the hon. Gentleman about the Birtwistle report, the route through which the British Approvals Board for Telecommunications should report and the rate of progress that BABT has been able to achieve over the past three years or so.

Perhaps, however, it is helpful to begin by recapping why we have an approvals system, and why it is operated as it is. Telecommunications equipment is different from almost any other set of products in that it interfaces and interacts with a public communications network, sending electrical signals across the carrier's infrastructure and receiving signals from other attachments. This raises issues concerning the safety of the equipment, not just for users but also for network operators and employees. Moreover, characteristics of particular attachments affect the performance of the network, not just for users of that attachment and those whom they are calling, but potentially also for all other users of the network. For that reason, all telecommunications administrations require that equipment to be attached to their networks meets minimum standards of safety and performance, most commonly through a type-approval scheme.

Until 1981, responsibility for equipment approval lay solely with British Telecom, which had the network monopoly. With the introduction of competition in network operation and equipment supply, it became desirable and necessary to establish an independent mechanism for setting standards for attachment equipment and adjudicating whether particular products met those standards. Hence the setting up of BABT which advises the Secretary of State, who is the formal standards and approvals authority.

The aim was to create an independent and objective system, fair and equitable to all equipment suppliers, which could ensure the integrity of public networks and the safety of users and operators. It should be appreciated that, in doing this, we were replacing well-established arrangements, which were able to operate as flexibly or indeed as arbitrarily as BT chose. One immediate feature of an objective and independent system is that it requires published and comprehensive rules and procedures, which the hon. Gentleman referred to as more bureaucracy, whilst those operating it must build up their own resources and expertise — expertise which, due to the increased demand liberalisation has helped to stimulate, is in short supply. That is the paradoxical price of opening telecommunications markets to competition. The reward is more fairness, more openness and easier access to the market for new suppliers.

In the early days of liberalisation, everyone involved was engaged on finding a way forward, both approvals applicants and regulators alike. Delays occurred whilst they familiarised themselves with the requirements. There was a learning curve to go through. The increased output of approvals shows the results of this. However, greater familiarity with the market opportunities liberalisation is bringing has itself brought new companies with new products into the market. They too, like their predecessors, are having to go through a learning process whilst BABT is dealing with more and more applications. No one denies the need for a type approvals regime. Suppliers remind us that many overseas telecommunications administrations place great store on products having been approved in the United Kingdom. Our aim in the approvals process is to protect this reputation and at the same time ensure that United Kingdom customers have

the choice of the latest technology while suppliers are able to introduce their new products with the minimal necessary constraints.

At this stage I can provide part of an answer to the hon. Gentleman's specific questions. He will wish to know the rate of approvals recommended by BABT. In 1983, at a very early stage, there were five. In 1984 there were 114. In 1985 there were 257. In the first and second quarters of 1986 there have been 163 approvals. The rate is growing dramatically, and we are here referring to the non-routine approvals. Those are major and significant new products coming into the market.

No one has denied the need for a type approvals regime, but the question is how that regime is operated. The hon. Gentleman has sought to place before the House the particular example of one company's experience in order to illustrate some of the problems.

The Kirk Automation Ltd. case illustrates the problems of transition, both for BABT and for companies. It is quite unfair to blame BABT for all the time taken, or for all the costs entailed. The hon. Gentleman may be aware that the procedure works as follows. On receipt of an application for type approval, BABT checks that the proper documentation has been supplied. It determines which standards are relevant and that may entail special exercises for novel products. It seeks tenders for testing from designated test houses, currently British Standards Institution and BT laboratories, and then advises applicants of the lowest bid and seeks their go-ahead and payment of the test fees. If a company has no previous BABT approvals, BABT checks its production and quality capabilities. BABT must then wait for the completed test results and verify them before advising OFTEL and thence the DTI to issue an approval.

That, of itself, takes time. More significantly, delays can and do arise which are not due to BABT. For example, forms may be completed incorrectly. With new products, there can be uncertainty whether appropriate standards exist. It takes time for test houses to respond to tender requests. It takes time for applicants to accept test houses' bids and to send their advance payment. It takes time to get products tested—test houses have been overloaded—or re-tested if some tests are failed and products need modification as quite often happens. Such non-BABT delays are most common for the smaller companies without experience of system. I note carefully what the hon. Gentleman has said about the needs of small companies in particular. Many of the delays in Kirk's case were outside BABT's control.

Delays and high costs are not acceptable, and I shall come on to actions in hand to reduce them. I shall first set things in context, and say a little about BABT. Most approvals still have no BABT involvement. Equipment for attachment to private circuits and enhancements to products originally approved by BT are still approved through BT. Since liberalisation, nearly 6,000 new approvals have been granted, 529 through BABT. But those 529 BABT-approved products are generally the more important ones, and the balance of new approvals will quickly shift towards BABT as the old pre-liberalisation products are replaced with new ones.

Overall, the system is working in a way which has helped achieve unprecedented consumer choice and greatly reduced real prices of attachments, while adequately safeguarding the public networks. Although approvals procedures in some other countries are on the face of it simpler and cheaper, in practice there are few other countries where all suppliers — not just those admitted to a PTT "club"—can have such a range of attachment products approved without bias or favour. That factor should be highlighted.

We do not underestimate the difficulties at BABT. The biggest single problem has been difficulties in recruiting professional engineering staff. Following a management review last year, BABT was given greater management autonomy. It moved to new offices, computerised its accounts, and recruited a further seven engineers to work on approvals and support functions. Those changes have helped reduce the backlog of applications to one third the level of last summer. A further improvement in the service offered should follow from the opening of additional new test facilities by Hull city telephone company and Standard Telephone Laboratories.

However, more radical changes are necessary to ensure further improvements. In particular, we need to reduce the bureaucracy of the approvals machinery, both in procedures and in responsibilities.

One problem to which the hon. Gentleman referred has been the overlapping interests of DTI and OFTEL since the Telecommunications Act 1984. Under that Act responsibility for the approval of contractors, approval of apparatus and designation of standards was placed with the Secretary of State, who could delegate that authority to the Director General for Telecommunications. In practice most day-to-day administrative responsibility for these matters, and hence "hands-on" expertise, has been with OFTEL, although formal responsibility has remained with the Secretary of State. In order to provide a clear focus for action, and eliminate duplicated responsibilities, the Secretary of State intends issuing a general authorisation under sections 20(1), 22(1) and 22(6) of the Act, delegating full responsibility to the Director General for approvals and standards matters—except in areas where international considerations override the requirements for domestic standards to be designated. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman for bringing this matter forward today because the debate has allowed the House to share that information which I have no doubt will be communicated to the appropriate parties.

This change should facilitate subsequent decisions over other improvements which are under consideration. I know that time is pressing. I can give the hon. Gentleman an undertaking that I will examine the blow by blow account that he has presented. If need be, the hon. Gentleman and I can talk about these matters in detail in my office, and discuss the lessons of this particular path to approval.

There are two other areas where it is legitimate for the Government to act. The first is to simplify standards, and we are hopeful that the Birtwistle report will be produced speedily. The second area in which the Government can act is to increase the options available to applicants in the number of laboratories available to do the testing. As I said earlier, we are doubling the number of laboratories from two to four.

Those are the two areas of major bottleneck. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman will wish to discuss with me the options for further reassurance on the working of BABT which has been the import of the hon. Gentleman's remarks tonight. I hope that my remarks will satisfy the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Ashdown: The Minister's remarks have been extremely helpful and they will be widely welcomed in those areas afflicted by this particular problem. I should be grateful if he would spend a little time considering the real problem, which relates to the time involved. The competitiveness of small firms has been so significantly undermined through problems related to time. As the Minister said earlier, I hope that he will press BABT to ensure that the time for approval is reduced to the level that exists in Germany and elsewhere on the continent in competitor nations.

Mr. Butcher: I am prepared to consider that point. That has exercised our attention for some time and we are anxious that we do not build non-tariff barriers against our domestic producers. We are keeping the position closely under review in relation to the interests if small firms, many of which we hope will become big firms in this growth area. The hon. Gentleman's views are echoed elsewhere and, for that reason and for the reasons that he has deployed tonight, I am prepared to become involved in discussions with him about the lessons of this story, including the question of time scale.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eight minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 23 July 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL

Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered tomorrow.

RIVER HUMBER (BURCOM OUTFALL) BILL *[LORDS]*

Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Private Rents

1. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to investigate the rents being charged by private landlords to unemployed tenants.

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): No, Sir.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister aware of evidence from Leeds and Liverpool that a considerable abuse of the fair rents system is taking place? Because the initiative lies with tenants to apply to register a fair rent, if the rent is paid through housing benefit there is no incentive for them to do so. A number of private landlords charge up to four times a fair rent and pocket a vast amount of public funds. Would it not be in the Minister's own interests to liaise with other Departments, for example, to put the initiative with the Department of Health and Social Security to register a fair rent, and to ascertain the extent of the abuse?

Mr. Patten: One or two cases of abuse have been reported to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It is a bit much to say that there is considerable evidence of abuse, so I hope that the hon. Gentleman will pick his words carefully. Local authorities have the duty and the power to deal with cases of abuse where and when they exist. Local authorities should get on and do the job.

Mr. Hill: Does my hon. Friend agree that there are so many anomalies in the Rent Acts that to try to protect any minority, whether unemployed or otherwise, is almost impossible? Is it not time that we had a general review of the Rent Acts and tried to formulate a legislative document on the Rent Acts that the normal person in the street can understand?

Mr. Patten: The Rent Acts are of enormous concern to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and myself, and we are always thinking about them.

Mr. Alton: How can the Minister justify the fact that in one area of Liverpool for nine properties a landlord is collecting over £120,000 a year, at taxpayers' expense, whereas, if a fair rent were charged, he would collect only £50,000 a year? What does the Minister intend to do about that?

Mr. Patten: I know the case to which the hon. Gentleman referred, and obviously I cannot discuss it in the House this afternoon. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing it to our attention. I know of his concern about the matter. None the less, Liverpool city council has the power and the duty to do something about it, and it should do so.

Greenfield Sites

2. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on building on greenfield sites or a ribbon development from villages and towns in southern England.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): Our policies are to encourage the fullest possible use of sites in urban areas, to protect the green belt and to avoid ribbon development. But some building on open land cannot be avoided if the demand for homes and commercial and industrial premises is to be met.

Mr. Rathbone: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the first part of his answer is reassuring, but that the second is not? Does he also accept that structure plans, as drawn by local councils, have identified, in my constituency at least, sufficient land for development for housing beyond the turn of the century? Will he encourage builders to develop that land, encourage councils and other public authorities to make that land available, and look carefully before he gives permission for development outside those village and town boundaries?

Mr. Ridley: Yes I certainly will, but I am not the planning authority. In the first instance, the district council is able to grant planning permission, and it can do so, on some occasions, with regard to open land. My policy on appeal is as I have described it.

Mr. Steen: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is sheer madness to build on greenfield sites outside towns and villages when almost a third of a million acres of land are vacant, dormant and derelict in public ownership? Should not the Government call in all structure plans that seek to eat into the greenfield sites, to ensure that all the vacant, dormant and derelict land in public ownership is filled up first?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend that vacant and derelict land in cities and towns should be the first land to be redeveloped, but it would not be acceptable locally or right to develop a hard and fast policy. I could not agree more strongly with my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Mr. Wiggin: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will, of course, always be demand for housing, but that central Government have a responsibility to ensure that the south does not finish up with concrete from Kent to Somerset? Does he agree that, in the national interest, it is important that development should be pushed further north, which everyone would welcome?

Mr. Ridley: Yes; but I make the point that I am not the only person who gives planning consent. Some 75 per cent. of consents are given by planning authorities.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not interesting that all this pressure for new housing development is in the south, not in the north? Is not the reason for the high level of demand the emphasis of the Government's economic and industrial policies on development in the south? If a switch were to take place towards the northern region of the United Kingdom, all those pressures would be relieved. That is at the heart of the problem.

Mr. Ridley: No. One of the main engines of this pressure is the high rating policies of councils in the north of England, which have driven businesses south, forcing people to follow if they are to obtain jobs. If the hon. Gentleman wants to do his constituents a service, he will encourage northern councils to impose lower rates.

Empty Houses

3. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by the London boroughs towards bringing empty residential property back into use.

Mr. John Patten: The boroughs reduced their empty dwellings from some 34,200 in 1982 to 31,600 in 1985, but further improvements should be made as soon as possible.

Dr. Twinn: I welcome my hon. Friend's reply with the good news that there has been a reduction. Is he aware that that does not apply to every authority? There is still a need to reduce the unacceptably high numbers of flats and houses which stand empty for a long time. What are the Government's proposals to ensure that councils toe the line?

Mr. Patten: We are continuing to give as much advice and guidance as we can, especially in respect of frankly delinquent boroughs such as Southwark, which is Labour-controlled, with 5 per cent. of its stock empty, Hackney, which is Labour-controlled, with 7 per cent. of its stock empty and, worst of all, Tower Hamlets, which is Liberal-controlled, with more than 8 per cent. of its stock empty.

Mr. Dubs: Does the Minister agree that one of the culprits in keeping homes empty is his beloved Tory-controlled Wandsworth council? Homes there are kept empty, much to the offence of homeless and badly housed people, because Wandsworth borough council is selling off those properties.

Mr. Patten: Wandsworth is without doubt one of the best housing authorities in this country. Through prudent management of its resources, Wandsworth is managing to spend more than almost any other London borough on the repair and renovation of housing stock.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is my hon. Friend aware that nothing will assist in alleviating the shortage of residential accommodation in London so much as the repeal of the Rent Acts, which have been the cause of much social misery as well as housing shortages for many years?

Mr. Patten: Alas, there are about 90,000 vacant private properties in London. If we could find a common sense way of bringing those properties back into use, that would be of the greatest possible assistance to the homeless. I wish that we could find some common ground about ways to achieve that without involving the confiscation of private property.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister accept that his Department, when it last studied empty properties in the public sector, concluded that 3·8 per cent. of properties in the public sector were empty, 4·2 per cent. of properties in the private sector were empty and 6·9 per cent. of Government properties were empty? Will the hon. Gentleman put his own house in order before he criticises local authorities?

Mr. Patten: It is important for Government Departments to make sure that they are getting rid of all empty property. Certainly Government Departments, to take just one example, will be rid of all their empty houses by 1988.

Mr. Heddle: Does not my hon. Friend's answer confirm that local authorities in London and elsewhere are not necessarily the best qualified to manage the nation's housing stock? Is that not further endorsed by the fact that the majority of the nation's rent arrears, now considerably in excess of £200 million, should have been collected by otherwise negligent Labour-controlled councils? What proposals does my hon. Friend have to put out the management of the nation's housing stock to housing associations, building societies and others?

Mr. Patten: We have an appalling problem of rent and rate arrears in this country, which amounts to more than £200 million. We intend to explore every avenue that we can to reduce that debt burden. In particular, we are always prepared to consider the idea that the management of council stock should be devolved to tenants, who can probably manage it a lot better than many local authorities seem to be doing at present.

Rate Support Grant

4. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce details of the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement.

Mr. Ridley: I announced details of my proposals for the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement to the House yesterday.

Mr. Fisher: Is it the Secretary of State's intention to set a deliberatly inadequate level of grant-related expenditure in order to force many local authorities to spend beyond it and so incur millions of pounds worth of loss of grant? In practice, would that not be a rather devious way of reintroducing a penalty system in another form? If it did happen like that, would not much, or perhaps all, of the £1 billion that the Secretary of State talked about yesterday be offset by such loss of grants?

Mr. Ridley: It is the Government's intention, after consultation, to set grant-related expenditure totals at a lower figure than the total of provision. The consequences that will flow from that are not those suggested by the hon. Gentleman. There will be a slightly different allocation of resources in a better direction, and I doubt whether it will make much difference to the amount of grant forfeited.

Mr. Powley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, following his generous settlement of the rate support grant yesterday, there should be no excuse for any local

authority to engage in extravagant and unnecessary spending? Does he also agree that the settlement should be used to keep rate demands down to their lowest possible level and that money should be spend only on that which is necessary and essential?

Mr. Ridley: The in word is "realistic" rather than "generous". However, I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I confirm that the results of yesterday's announcement should be that councils which spend reasonably and moderately in accordance with their needs will suffer little, if any, need for increasing rate bills.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Secretary of State aware that the London borough of Newham is still in dispute with his Department about the outturn of the borough's budget for 1985-86? As that obviously very much affects the calculation upon which he has based Newham's rate capping, it means that less agreement can be reached in favour of Newham. Next year the London borough of Newham, which is the second most deprived local authority area in the country, will have to make a reduction of about £20 million in its budget. Will the Secretary of State please tell the London borough of Newham, since he has taken over control of local government, where it should make the cuts in expenditure? Is he aware of the enormous social and economic problems in Newham, or does he not care? We pay.

Mr. Ridley: I have the deepest sympathy with the inhabitants of the borough of Newham when I think who represents them at local government and parliamentary level. So great is it that if they were to come to me with an application for redetermination of their expenditure level, we would consider it in accordance with the legislation.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Is the Secretary of State aware that the considered view of some of the associations of local authorities is that, having received approximately £1 billion of new money, £630 million will be lost by the abolition of recycling? Is that because the Chancellor of the Exchequer has told the Secretary of State that that will allow a half penny in the pound to come off income tax, or is it because the Secretary of State will make sure that the money lost will be put back into the kitty and the Government will not suffer a net loss, despite the announcement made yesterday?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman has mixed up two different years. The figure for the current year is £628 million of lost grant, but, with a great increase in both provision and aggregate Exchequer grant next year, the figure of grant lost must, by definition, be much smaller than that. If authorities do not spend up at all, it will be zero. It is up to them.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I recognise that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was unable to rate-cap Leicester, because, as he said in his statement yesterday, there was something wrong with the formula. However, I reassure him that the people of Leicester are sad that they have not been re-rate capped. Will he look at the formula again and possibly include Leicester later, because the council is borrowing money unfairly? Rates are shooting up by the 80 per cent. I mentioned yesterday, and the people of Leicester feel let down.

Mr. Ridley: The people of Leicester have one consolation for the unfortunate nature of their local authority, and that is that they are extremely well represented in Parliament.

Mr. Straw: I sympathise with the Secretary of State's problems in relation to Leicester, and particularly the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), but is he aware that his statement, that the amount of holdback under the system is bound to be less than the £628 million last year, shows how little he understands the system over which he presides? The amount of holdback could be more than £628 million for this year if he sets the levels of GREA substantially below the £25·2 billion at which he has set current expenditure. Will he come clean and tell the House at what level he will set the GREA?

Mr. Ridley: I made it clear that the Government thought that an increase in the totals of GREAs by the amount of the GDP deflator would be appropriate, although we have increased the total provision by 8·5 per cent. The figures are 3·5 per cent. on GREAs and 5 per cent. extra provision above that, which means an increase of 3·75 per cent. over this year's budgets. If authorities have provision to spend at 3·75 per cent. over this year's budget, not this year's provision, they are able to survive without forfeit of grant. The cash figure for GREA is 95 per cent. of the cash figure for provision.

Rate Capping

5. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to seek further powers to prevent local authorities taking action aimed at circumventing rate-capping legislation; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government (Mr. William Waldegrave): My right hon. Friend announced yesterday that he would be seeking to block one major loophole which has up to now been used by some authorities to avoid the effect of rate capping. We keep the position under review.

Mr. Hayes: I hope that my hon. Friend will take careful note that the Left-wing loonies who run Harlow council recently banned the playing of the national anthem. The council has arranged a loan facility with a merchant bank for £50 million, which will cost the ratepayers over £20 million in bank charges. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to do something about it.

Mr. Waldegrave: Harlow is one of the authorities which, by manoeuvreing their balances, have just kept out of rate capping by keeping below the threshold of £11 million. The only thing that one can say to such authorities is that the penalties for all this will be visited on the people in the end. They will be paying not only the cost of the Left-wing high expenditure, but the profit margins of the people who are enabling them to undertake these manoeuvres.

Mr. Cartwright: Rate capping has not prevented the London borough of Greenwich from budgeting to spend 25 per cent. more this year than it spent last year, so is the Minister not shutting the stable door long after the horse has well and truly bolted? Will he confirm that whatever fancy borrowing the council is undertaking, there will be a day of reckoning when the bill has to be paid, not by the

councillors, but by the ratepayers? What help can the ratepayers get from the measures to which the Minister has just referred?

Mr. Waldegrave: We have blocked off one of the major measures. A leader of one of the Labour-controlled London boroughs, Mrs. Hodge, has explicitly said that she believes that this is a very high risk strategy, because it rests upon being bailed out by a future Labour Government. That is indeed a very high risk strategy, particularly as the Labour Front Bench has taken great care not to say that Labour will bail them out. The costs will fall on the ratepayers in the end. It is very irresponsible of those authorities to act like that.

Mr. Squire: I welcomed yesterday's announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Does my hon. Friend not think it strange that some of the most Left-wing councils have been prepared to embrace capitalism in some of its more extreme forms, including overseas banks and offshore funds?

Mr. Waldegrave: They will also learn, as some countries in South America and elsewhere have learnt, that, although one can borrow, in the end it catches up with one.

Mr. Pavitt: In the first part of his answer to me yesterday the Secretary of State referred to rate capping in Brent. In my innocence, I thought that he understood the intense social problems in that inner city area. If he was sincere, will he now make sure that no attempt is made to prevent creative accounting or steps being taken to ease rather than circumvent rate capping, and provide some services for the very hard-pressed people in my area? Yesterday the Secretary of State referred to rent arrears, but they occurred under a Tory administration. I assure him that now that Labour has gained control again, they will be rapidly dealt with.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not believe that the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question can be quite right, because there was only one year of Tory administration in Brent. What stands between the hon. Gentleman and my right hon. Friend and me is a completely different analysis of what will help the people of Brent. We do not believe that high spending, high taxing inner city authorities are the best way out for problem areas like Brent. Brent needs enterprise, low taxes and new jobs.

Mr. Stern: Has my hon. Friend noted the recent decision of Bristol city council, which is under Labour control, to seek funds from an overseas bank for wasteful expenditure, which funds will no doubt arise from that bank's investments in South Africa? Does he agree that this is just a sign of the new-found desire of Bristol city council, at the prodding of the Transport and General Workers Union, to increase trade links with South Africa?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is very ingenious in going a little bit wider than my Department's responsibilities. I am aware that Bristol city council has been seeking the re-financing of some of its dock debt, but I am not certain that I am aware of what my hon. Friend is referring to today.

Mr. Straw: Will the Minister confirm that the admission that we dragged out of the Secretary of State a few moments ago means that authorities' GREAs will be £1,260 million less than the £25·2 billion that he said he was accepting as their current spending? That is bound to mean that not just rate-capped authorities will suffer penalties, but that virtually every authority will suffer major penalties and that the total of those penalties could well, arithmetically, exceed the £628 million of grant money that was recycled this year.

Mr. Waldegrave: When the hon. Gentleman has done the sums more carefully, I think he will find that it is exceedingly unlikely that the grant penalty money will be comparable to that for this year. Neither he nor I can say yet what the likelihood will be, because it will depend upon the spending levels and upon the GREs that are ultimately set.

Fire Resistance Tests

6. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to comply with European Economic Community draft directive 1202 on fire resistance tests.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): Commission document 1202 contained simply a preliminary draft directive. Since then work has been undertaken by the Commission to develop the proposals further. We shall be consulting industry when a formal proposal is made as a further step in the Community's programme for removing barriers to trade.

Mr. Ashdown: The Minister will know that the Government's publicly stated objective, while they hold the presidency of the EEC, is to remove technical barriers to trade. As the Minister rightly says, draft directive 1202 does that by absolving manufacturers and exporters from having a second fire test. We all understand why the fire laboratories, which make a fat living from this testing, should want to drag their feet, but why are the Minister and the Government dragging their feet?

Sir George Young: Neither the Minister nor the Government are dragging their feet. The high standards in Britain are maintained through the building regulations. We are waiting for the Commission to follow up its draft directive with firm proposals, and the moment that it does that we shall respond.

Multiple Occupation Houses

7. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take in the light of the findings of the first part of his Department's research study of houses in multiple occupation in England and Wales; and when he hopes to publish the second part of the study.

18. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about his Department's policy towards houses in multiple occupation.

Mr. John Patten: We have already strengthened local authorities' powers in this area and issued guidance. They should use those powers and follow that guidance. We are considering the need for further measures in the light of the current research and representations to the Department. We hope to publish the second part of the study before the end of the year.

Mr. Knox: As over 1 million people live in multi-occupied accommodation, and as at the present rate of progress it will take between 70 and 85 years to bring it up to acceptable minimum standards, does my hon. Friend not think that there is a strong case for introducing legislation to compel local authorities to direct resources into this important but neglected area?

Mr. Patten: This is an extrememly important area and one in which my hon. Friend has shown a considerable interest for many years. Progress is patchy. Some local authorities have made good progress, but, alas, others have not used the powers that have been theirs for between 20 and 25 years. We are waiting for the results of the research examination that we are making. Those results will be published by the end of the year and at that time we shall consider whether to issue strengthened guidance, or perhaps even to introduce legislation, which is what my hon. Friend wants.

Mr. John Fraser: Does the Minister agree that such information from his Department's survey as we have received confirms all the warnings of death, danger and dereliction in houses in mulitple occupation? On his Departments' figures, one in two is in a poor state of physical repair, one in four is badly managed and one in six is overcrowded. Why wait? Why not allow the Bill that has completed its passage through the other place to pass through this House so that at the third attempt we can have some tougher legislation about houses in multiple occupation?

Mr. Patten: We should wait for the research results, which, as I have said, will be published before the end of the year. If we do that we can take decisions on the basis of properly evaluated examination. I ask the hon. Gentleman not to forget that since 1979 we have given local authorities additional powers, and in certain circumstances we have placed duties on them to use those powers. We have made it possible for grant to be paid for the installation of fire escapes. I wonder why it is that so many local authorities have not used the powers that have been available to them for a quarter of a century?

Mr. Squire: Will my hon. Friend consider making it a requirement on landlords of houses in multiple occupation to post a notice stating the relevant fire risk within the property, so that at least the tenants can be aware of the dangers they face?

Mr. Patten: That is a valuable suggestion by my hon. Friend and we shall consider it when considering the results of the research at the end of the year.

Homelessness

8. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for homeless families.

14. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what initiatives he intends to take to solve the problems of homelessness.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on 21 July.

Mr. Dubs: Does the Minister accept that there is a real crisis of homelessness, especially in the London area? According to Shelter figures, which are better than his Department's, there are 4,400 homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in London. That is an increase of 16 per cent. in three months. Over a year the cost to local authorities in London has doubled from £13 million to £26 million. Keeping families with young children in bed-and-breakfast accommodation is humiliating and degrading and ought to be brought to an end immediately.

Sir George Young: The Government have made it clear that bed-and-breakfast accommodation should be used only as a last resort and for as short a period as possible until permanent accommodation is secured. This year we have increased by £200 million the provision for housing investment, and we have redistributed it in such a way as to give more benefit to those boroughs that have a homelessness problem. We have asked the boroughs to give specific priority to the homeless when they make their investment decisions. It is interesting to note that many London boroughs, such as Brent, are not taking up the offers under the Greater London mobility scheme that are available to meet the needs of those in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, there is a large amount of empty public authority housing stock in London. We are determined to bring that back into use to help the homeless.

Mr. Hamilton: Does the Minister recognise that probably the Government's greatest social crime is that since 1979 housing expenditure has been slashed by very nearly half? At this moment 400,000 building trade workers are unemployed, but hundreds of thousands of people are out searching for a house and cannot find one. It is not only me and my hon. Friends who are objecting to those obscene policies, but the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Charles, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Queen herself.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before the Minister answers I remind the hon. Member and the House that we never introduce the royal family to support our arguments. We stand on our own.

Sir George Young: The major reduction in public investment in housing took place under a Labour, not a Conservative Government, and the hon. Gentleman's statistics ignore the recovery in the private housebuilding sector, which meets real housing needs.

Mr. Lyell: Might not the way to bring the private rented sector back into operation be to abolish the Rent Acts and institute a limited form of control along the lines of business tenancy controls under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954?

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), the then Secretary of State for the Environment, said in June last year that we would have no major proposals for rent reform in this Parliament, but that we were interested in proposals after the next election.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend say to the House that the way that Labour Members, especially in the way they make references to members of the Royal Family, seek to distort the facts and mislead our nation is shameful? Is it not true that if all the council accommodation in Britain which is currently vacant because of inefficient management, mainly by Socialist

local authorities, were put to use, virtually all Britain's homeless could be given a home immediately? Remarks by the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Shut up, you old windbag.

Mr. Winterton: Well, that is the pot calling the kettle black.

Is it not shameful how the hon. Gentleman will seek to use our royal family

Mr. Speaker: Order. The same rules apply on both sides of the House.

Sir George Young: Arithmetically, my hon. Friend is correct.

Mr. Janner: Is not the real problem for local authorities, not that they have a statutory duty to house the homeless, but that the number of homeless people is growing, that the amount of money available for councils to build, as they want to do, is evaporating — so that, for example, some 30,000 people in Leicester are on the housing list — and councils are then forced to spend revenue instead of capital on housing people temporarily in bed and breakfast accommodation, which is a rotten

Sir George Young: I do not have the figures for Leicester in front of me, but in London it is the case that the number of relets of council housing has gone up since 1978-79, in spite of the right to buy. So it is not the case that there is a decreasing number of local authority flats available to help the homeless. Certainly in most major cities more and more homeless people are being given priority under the Acts and are getting permanent accommodation.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Minister accept, notwithstanding the figures that he used earlier, that in the best year of the national housebuilding programme under this Government there were 50,000 fewer new dwellings than in the worst year under the Labour Government? As next year is the international year of shelter for the homeless, could not the Government take some special measures to talk about the new initiatives, which were implied in one of the questions that he refused to answer, to deal with the misallocation of money that is implied in funding bed-and-breakfast accommodation when there are a vast number of unfit empty dwellings in the public and the private sectors?

Sir George Young: One of the top priorities for any local authority with its HIP allocation should be to bring back into use the empty properties that it has, many of which have been empty for more than a year. I suspect that the figure that the hon. Gentleman gave was just for the public sector.

Mr. Rooker: No, total.

Sir George Young: There has been a recovery in private sector starts. The figures are at the highest level for 10 years, apart from one year. Local authorities of all persuasions are rightly using their allocations to modernise and to bring up to standard properties that they already own rather than embarking on programmes of new build.

Environmental Services

9. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received seeking additional resources for authorities to enable them to increase expenditure on environmental services.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): The local authority associations through the Consultative Council for Local Government Finance are consulted about local authority relevant expenditure, including that on local environmental services.

I also receive representations from individual authorities.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister not accept that some areas need more resources in order to make swifter environmental improvements to compensate for rapid economic decline? Is she aware that the Minister responsible for sport recently visited South Yorkshire and is reported as having realised that the position is grave? Indeed, I believe that he used the word tragic. If his visit does not lead to increased support for my area, may we command the attention of the organ grinder rather than of the monkey?

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1986-87 the hon. Gentleman's local authority is receiving some £400,000 in derelict land grant compared with the sum of only £300,000 that it received collectively for the previous three years. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced a very realistic settlement yesterday. Consequently, it is to be hoped that the hon. Gentleman's local authority will be able to find adequate provision for local environmental services.

Sir Dudley Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that some of the money could well be used by local authorities to preserve the integrity of the green belt, which is constantly under attack? Is she aware that the green belt is particularly vulnerable when big and desirable projects such as motorways are put forward for development on the fringes, where people are trying to convert the green belt into extra work?

Mrs. Rumbold: It is to be hoped that local planning authorities take great care not to infringe the green belt unless there is general consent for that among the local population.

Dr. David Clark: Does the Minister not realise that her assurances fly in the face of reality? Will she confirm that the number of those employed in the key environmental agencies — the Countryside Commission, the Nature Conservancy Council, the Countryside Commission for Scotland, the Forestry Commission, and the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas has fallen by more than 2,000 during the seven years in which the Government have been in office?

Mrs. Rumbold: All those organisations have managed to increase their services and to improve on their excellence in discussion and consultation with central Government. Staffing numbers are adequate, according to their own lights.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Is my hon. Friend aware that there has been a suspension of European regional development fund non-quota grants to local enterprise

boards which wish to carry out environmental improvements in, for example, Lancaster? Will she affirm that such boards are eligible for grants from the ERDF, and expedite them?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend knows that ERDF funds have to be matched by funds from the local authority. I note what my hon. Friend says, and will take it into account.

Beaches (Pollution)

10. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further steps he proposes to take to guarantee the safety from coastal pollution of bathers on beaches at holiday resorts in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the next five years it is expected that some 80 schemes to improve the quality of coastal waters, costing over £300 million, will be in progress and completed throughout the United Kingdom. This is roughly double the rate of expenditure of the last four years.

Mr. Kirkwood: That is a helpful answer. However, does the Minister agree that it is a matter of some concern that many of our resorts that have served the country well for years are being despoiled by raw sewage in our coastal waters? Will he comment on the reports produced by Greenpeace, whose independent analyses have shown that the level of pollution off Blackpool beach may meet Department of the Environment requirements but is five times higher than European limits? What does the Minister have to say about that?

Mr. Waldegrave: I announced last year that we were undertaking a survey of all bathing beaches. The survey will be completed next spring. The preliminary results are quite encouraging and show that up to half the beaches probably meet European directive standards. There has been a problem at Blackpool and a project has been launched, with expenditure of over £30 million to put things right.

Sir Peter Blaker: Would it not be rather more appropriate if the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) confined his remarks to the beaches in Berwickshire and did not make disparaging remarks about the finest beach in the country, which is at Blackpool? May I congratulate the Government on their plans for improving the beach at Blackpool? I ask my hon. Friend to elaborate on what he said about that, as his remarks were rather difficult to hear.

Mr. Waldegrave: I find it rather more natural to be talking about Blackpool in reply to my right hon. Friend. I hasten to say that there is nothing seriously wrong with the Blackpool beaches. There is no health hazard. As part of the improvement of Blackpool beaches, and a number of other beaches, we are bringing forward a scheme that will cost about £35 million to make further improvements. I can confirm that the already fine beaches will be even better.

Mr. Boyes: Is it not a fact that the Government have abused their powers under the Water Act 1973, with the result that in real terms capital investment has declined by 12 per cent. since 1978-79? Even worse, it was reported in the Brighton *Evening Argus* of 15 July that in the Southern water authority area gross pollution of many of the traditional holiday spots is the result of capital investment declining by 28 per cent. between 1980 and 1985. It is no wonder that Mrs. Hargreaves found herself swimming in neat sewage off Seaford. She said that it was absolutely disgusting—just like the Government's policy towards the water industry.

Mr. Waldegrave: Without the steady guidance of the leader of the Opposition's environment team, the hon. Member for Copeland, (Dr. Cunningham), things are getting rather out of control. Investment in the water industry is at the highest level that it has ever been. I have given figures to show that the investment in coastal water improvements is about to be doubled.

Mr. Harris: I recognise that progress is being made, but does my hon. Friend not find it incredible that raw sewage is still discharged into the sea and on to beaches, especially in parts of the south-west that are dependent on tourism? Surely this is an area that should be given top priority in any capital spending programme.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is for that very reason that considerable resources are now being committed. The programme will not be finished at the end of five years and the expending of £35 million. Further resources will be committed after that. A steady programme of improvement will ensure that by the end of the century virtually all the remaining problems will have been removed.

Strategic Planning Policies

11. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the operation of strategic planning policies in the former metropolitan county council areas.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): Yes, Sir. My right hon. Friend is satisfied.

Mr. Lloyd: I regret that I shall not be able to bring Mrs. Hargreaves into this supplementary question. Is the Minister aware that in the Greater Manchester area a number of property developers are seeking to develop large shopping sites in the different boroughs? The problem is that each local authority has an incentive to ensure that it is not the last to allow such development to go ahead. As the Government have taken away the strategic planning role of the Greater Manchester council, what does the Minister intend to do to ensure that we have a co-ordinated approach to what could be a serious development problem?

Mr. Tracey: The local authorities must conform with the current local plans and, indeed, the Greater Manchester structure plan, the alterations to which were approved in January 1986. As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is not our practice to discuss current cases at the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Favell: I am afraid that I know nothing about Mrs. Hargreaves, but I know that we do not need a thumping great county hall to exercise overall strategic planning control. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment can do just that. Bearing that in mind, will my hon. Friend call in the seven planning applications for out-of-town shopping centres now being applied for in the Greater Manchester area, one of which is for over 1 million sq ft? At a time when we are trying to regenerate

the inner cities, would it not be foolhardy to put our town centre shopping areas in jeopardy, and all the jobs that go with them?

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will look at all material considerations before calling in any planning applications, but I repeat that we cannot discuss current planning applications at the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Skinner: Is Mrs. Hargreaves involved in these strategic planning policies? Is she a floating voter, and who will get her out of it?

Mr. Tracey: I fear that that has nothing to do with planning.

Local Government Finance

12. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact of the Local Government Act 1986 on the activities of local councils, with particular reference to political publicity and information campaigns.

Mr. Ridley: No formal procedures have been instituted to monitor the effects of the 1986 Act, but I am watching its operation carefully.

Mr. Amess: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Basildon district council continues to flout the law by spending ratepayers' money on propaganda to bolster Labour councillors' chances in marginal seats and by telling the editor of *Link* magazine not to photograph local Conservative Members of Parliament or report their presence at any event? Does my right hon. Friend agree that such bias is quite wrong?

Mr. Ridley: I entirely agree that such bias as my hon. Friend alleges is quite wrong, but I encourage him to use the remedies of the civil law, which are there to interpret the 1986 Act. Even if we strengthen those powers it will still be a civil law requirement to enforce them. That is where my hon. Friend's remedies should properly lie.

County Structure Plans

13. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will describe the administrative process by which he negotiates with county councils on their structure plans.

Mr. Ridley: County councils must submit to me for my approval their proposals for alteration or replacement of their structure plans. Normally an examination in public is held, at which the council can explain its proposals. I may then publish draft modifications for comment before the plan is approved.

Mr. Adley: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer and, indeed, for answering the question itself. Will he confirm that the initiation of structure plans and, indeed, the initiation of the revision of structure plans, is primarily the responsibility of the county council, and not his Department? Will my right hon. Friend further confirm that his Department responds after the county council has produced its proposals, and does not pressurise county councils before they produce their proposals? Finally, will he confirm that Dorset county council's revised structure plan for south-east Dorset is entirely its own responsibility?

Mr. Ridley: I can confirm that all that my hon. Friend has said is correct.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he will not seek to impose higher levels of development upon county councils presenting such structure plans? Does he recognise that in counties such as Dorset, whose present structure plans, development, and population levels have already been substantially exceeded, any suggestion that new structure plan proposals, levels of development or population should be exceeded would be greeted with great dismay and would be contrary to the wishes of the residents of such places?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend will not expect me to comment on any specific county plan or on any planning application. The description of the system which I outlined to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) is accurate and the policy on the green belt is well known. It is difficult to discuss any general concept of planning without reference to the particular. However, I note what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. John Browne: Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is deep concern among the people of Hampshire, including Winchester, and possibly a certain Mrs. Hargreaves, about the fact that his Department has decided to impose an increase of 65,000 additional houses on the south Hampshire structure plan, which is greatly in excess of the infrastructure available and which is drawing much-needed resources from city centres in the south and north of England? Will he please assure the House and the people of Hampshire that he will look into this matter and ensure that the locally and democratically expressed views of the people of Hampshire about housing are adhered to?

Mr. Ridley: I note what my hon. Friend has said. However, it appears that Mrs. Hargreaves comes from the north, and I am sure that my hon. Friend would not be grudging about affording her a house if she were to arrive in his constituency.

London Residuary Body

15. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what matters were discussed at the meeting with the chairman of the London Residuary Body on 19 May 1986.

Mrs. Rumbold: Matters relevant to the residuary body's functions under the Local Government Act 1985 were discussed.

Mr. Banks: Does the Minister recall the answer that she gave to me on 11 July regarding the timing of distribution of balances from the London Residuary Body to the London boroughs? She said:

"The timing . . . is a matter for the"——

[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] At least I can read. It appears that an awful lot of liquid lunches have been consumed by Conservative Members. The Minister said:

"The timing of the distribution is a matter for the LRB."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1986; Vol. 101, c. *310*.]

However, it is equally clear from the meeting that the Secretary of State had with the chairman of the London Residuary Body on 19 May—which was duly recorded—that the Government have been directing the London Residuary Body about the timing of the distribution of

those balances. That is not unconnected with the local council elections on 8 May. Would the Minister now care to recorrect her position and stop misleading the House?

Mrs. Rumbold: The chairman of the London Residuary Body came to see the former Secretary of State on 19 May about an announcement that he was to make on the balances, which he subsequently made on 20 May following his discussions with the then Secretary of State. In relation to the further balances, following the Law Lords' decision striking down the GLC's last-minute forward funding package, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the LRB has the power to distribute balances to the boroughs and to decide the timing as and when it pleases.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Is my hon. Friend aware that, despite our local representations, the residuary body has placed Hainault Forest under the control of three different authorities? Is she further aware that this is bad management and is making it more difficult to deal with the problem of the gipsy intrusion? Will my hon. Friend consider this problem?

Mrs. Rumbold: As my hon. Friend is aware, this is a matter for the London Residuary Body. I shall, however, consider the matter.

Mr. Straw: When the chairman of the London Residuary Body next meets the Secretary of State and asks why he and the House were tricked by the Secretary of State yesterday about the total of the rate support grant settlement, what answer will he receive? Specifically, what answer will he receive when he asks why the Secretary of State yesterday deliberately withheld from the House information that the level of grant-related expenditure assessments will be £1,260 million below the level of current expenditure? It means that £1 billion is being given to local authorities, yet £1,260 million will be taken away from them.

Mrs. Rumbold: That was an unworthy question and the hon. Gentleman is totally incorrect.

Buildings (Cleaning Technique)

16. **Mr. Dalyell:** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer, 25 June, *Official Report*, column 320, he will recommend the wet, dripping water technique rather than dry blasting for cleaning all buildings for which he is responsible.

Sir George Young: No. The most appropriate method will be used in each case.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the Minister aware that this is not a joking question, as the dry blasting technique has been an absolute disaster? Is not the wet healing technique much better?

Sir George Young: I am advised by the English Heritage Commission on technical matters of this kind, and I understand that in a few cases the dry method is preferable.

Rate Support Grant (Wales)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about my proposals for the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement for Wales.

Local authorities have begun to plan their budgets for next year. To help them, I am today circulating to them my proposals for the key elements of the settlement. Copies of the material sent to Welsh councils have been placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

Before outlining my proposals, I should like to comment briefly on the spending decisions of Welsh local authorities in the present year, particularly those of county councils.

The rate support grant settlement for 1986-87 made provision for overall total expenditure to increase by 4·9 per cent., or slightly more than the then forecast rate of inflation. County councils generally have budgeted to increase their spending in 1986-87 on average by 7·6 per cent. — far in excess of provision and inflation. Their decision resulted in high and damaging rate rises. District councils' spending was broadly in line with the settlement and they were able to limit their rate rises to an average of just over 5 per cent. Nevertheless, ratepayers in the Principality have had to face a combined rate rise averaging nearly 12·5 per cent. in 1986-87.

More than 50 per cent. of the rate income in Wales comes from non-domestic ratepayers. High and unpredictable rate rises are bad for business, hinder expansion and put jobs at risk. Earlier this month the CBI in Wales wrote to council leaders asking them to recognise the needs of business ratepayers and to set low rates in 1987. I endorse and repeat that plea on behalf of all ratepayers.

When the public expenditure White Paper was published in January, no decision had been taken about provision for local authorities' current expenditure for 1987-88, and the White Paper showed the same provision in cash terms for 1987-88 as for 1986-87. I now propose a current expenditure figure of £1,496 million. That is £67·8 million, or 4·75 per cent. more than authorities have budgeted to spend this year. I shall give details of the distribution of this sum between services in the autumn. Once again, I intend to make additional provision for local authority capital spending and this, too, will be detailed in the autumn.

Total relevant expenditure for RSG purposes is expected to be £1,732 million. That is almost £135 million more than total relevant expenditure at the main report stage for 1986-87 and £97 million, or 5·9 per cent., more than the amount that authorities have budgeted to spend in the current year.

Aggregate Exchequer grant in support of relevant expenditure will be £1,157 million, £90 million higher than the level in the main RSG report for 1986-87. The grant percentage is 66·8 per cent. — the same as that in the 1986-87 main report. Comparisons with the grant position for 1986-87, taking into account the effect of authorities' budget decisions, will not be possible until the Supplementary report for that year is published in the autumn.

In my discussions with the local authority associations about the 1987-88 settlement, they have stressed to me the need for as much stability as possible between years in the grant distribution mechanisms. At the same time, the mechanisms must be such as to exert pressure to keep spending in line with our plans. I have, therefore, decided to retain the basic block grant mechanisms used in the present year, with no expenditure targets for individual councils and the slope of the grant-related poundage schedule both above and below the 10 per cent. threshold remaining unchanged, but GRE will be set in line with overall provision.

The effect of this will be that, at the margin of spending, decisions to increase it will result in a cash reduction in grant and decisions to reduce it will produce considerable rating benefits. Furthermore, I have decided that there will be no recycling of any under-claim on grant in Wales in 1987-88. Wales will therefore be covered by the legislation to be introduced in the autumn announced yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Authorities will be able to plan ahead with certainty knowing that the grant they receive will be directly linked to their own spending decisions. This will assist in forward budgeting.

In his statement to the House yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced his intention to take action to prevent local authorities from circumventing the present local authority capital expenditure control system by using devices such as advanced and deferred purchase agreements to incur prescribed expenditure in earlier or later years than would ordinarily be the case. The requirement, which applies equally in Wales, became effective from midnight last night.

The Government's proposals for an improved capital control system were set out in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government". Responses have been received from the local authority associations and other interested bodies in Wales. With my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, I am urgently considering what steps should be taken. These proposals clearly offer local authorities in Wales a further opportunity to plan for stable expenditure levels while enabling them to pass on real benefits in services and low rate increases to their ratepayers. I sincerely hope that they will do so, and I commend my proposals to the House.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The right hon. Gentleman presents the settlement with evident relief this year because the expenditure assumption will be nearer to what authorities have said they need to spend than has previously been the case. Whether the statement achieves the objective of low rent increases remains to be seen. I am sceptical.

I note that, in the second table in the material mentioned in the statement, the county of West Glamorgan has a 9 per cent. increase in rate poundage. Among the districts, the increase goes as high as 30 per cent. while, in Meirionnydd, it is down by 10 per cent. The variation is as high as 40 per cent. on the Secretary of State's figures, and there is an increase as high as 30 per cent. I calculate that three quarters of the Welsh districts have increases of more than 4·75 per cent. — the right hon. Gentleman's provision for inflation. Some 15 authorities have a 10 per cent. increase or more.

Will the right hon. Gentleman respond concerning his assumptions on inflation? Does he understand that local government is labour-intensive? He calculates price inflation at 4·75 per cent., but wage inflation is certainly 7·5 per cent. I understand that the police forces have been

awarded more than 7 per cent. We know that there is to be a major restructuring of teachers' salaries. Will the Government meet the previous Secretary of State for Education and Science's commitment to fund the teachers' pay award? There is insufficient funding for the new general certificate of secondary education examination. There is insufficient cash for joint financing in the Health Service.

How does the right hon. Gentleman propose to meet the severe pressures on social services caused by major increases in the elderly population in Wales? Does he agree that, if there are more clients, there is a reduction in real terms in provision? He might agree that every community wants better roads and buildings maintenance. Such pressures can unhinge the statement's arithmetic.

There have been cuts in local government finance. Does the right hon. Gentleman know that, between 1978-79 and 1986-87, the cut in rate support grant has been as high as 12·5 per cent.? Put another way, rate support grant paid to Wales is £556 million less in real terms now than in 1978-79.

I deeply regret what the Secretary of State said about recycled grants. That is major money lost to Wales. Does he remember that when he got the reluctant agreement of Welsh local authorities to change from targets to the toughened grant poundage system it was with the promise that any grant withheld as a result of toughened poundage would not be lost to Wales? That was an important consideration. Can he assure me that that cash will not be lost to the people of Wales? If he cannot promise that it is in some respects a betrayal.

I wish to deal with matters relating to changes in the grant mechanism. Does the Secretary of State remember the requests for the schedule to be lowered, for nil safety nets, for nil gain caps and for the level of threshold to reach 20 per cent.? Some 10 districts will have negative marginal rates of grant at 100 per cent. or more as a result of the grant mechanisms which he is using.

On capital, why did the Secretary of State not increase the proportion of housing receipts from 15 per cent. to 33 per cent., as he was requested to do? Even if our proportionate share in Wales was simply upgraded to the English 20 per cent., we would gain £16 million annually, and the right hon. Gentleman will agree that we have major problems in housing.

Does the Secretary of State know that the overall level of spending will provide too little scope for councils to tackle the decaying infrastructure of our communities? May I remind him that Her Majesty's inspectorate depicted disrepair at every level in our education service, especially in our valley communities?

This appears to be a settlement from the cosmetician's angle. It does not repair the severe damage of yesteryear. The ministerial version of the status quo is unacceptable. The settlement has not commanded the support of Welsh local authorities, and contains in its detail a shabby deal on the recycling of grants. It is gravely defective on estimated inflation levels for next year. It does not address itself to the urgent need for comprehensive, major investment in schools, hospitals and houses. There are glaring omissions concerning the funding of teachers' and firemen's pay. It will not save the Conservative party. A Labour Government will restore the freedoms of local government in Wales.

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman has always considered himself to be rather good at theatre, and that was certainly a theatrical, if unrealistic, performance. He talked about cosmetics. My announcement was that there will be aggregate Exchequer grant amounting to about £1,200 to every household in Wales.

The hon. Gentleman had to admit at the beginning of his remarks that the statement might be greeted with relief, but the extent to which it will be greeted with relief by ratepayers entirely depends on the decisions of local authorities. Apart from the fact that the base of the settlement is extremely generous—I shall return to that—the negative marginal rates mean that if local authorities spend high above the settlement, their ratepayers will have a high bill to pay, while if local authorities spend below the level of the settlement—I believe that that is certainly within the power of many districts—there can be substantial rate reductions.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that we start from a base which itself involves reductions, because the £5 million of recycled grant from last year was given back to local authorities on the understanding, which they fully accepted, that that money would be used first to reduce rate bills. Therefore, there is that reduction to feed into the system even before the effects of this settlement.

The hon. Gentleman drew attention to the fact that there are differences between local authorities. The overall rating effects vary from council to council and from district to district. The higher impact is usually on those authorities that have taken action in the previous year which affects the marginal rate in the current year. Therefore, it is substantially a consequence of past decisions. The overall effect of the settlement for Wales is for nil or very low rate increases. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the rate effects in individual districts, he will see that that is so.

The hon. Gentleman talked about pay. He seemed to assume that pay increases are unrelated to the increase in inflation and that they have no effect on the pattern of spending by local authorities. People must understand that high pay settlements, way above the current rate of inflation, are bound to have consequences on services and employment. That must be borne in mind.

The hon. Gentleman did not seem to recognise that the increase in Wales of 4·75 per cent. of current expenditure is 1 per cent. higher than in England. That is because of the substantially better and lower spending performance of Welsh local authorities in the past. As they have performed better than the English authorities, it would have been wrong for them not to receive some recognition in the statement. I expect to be able to make additional capital allocations later in the year.

The hon. Gentleman asked about recycled grant. Local authorities asked for stability. It was not sensible to continue with a system that meant that individual local authorities' decisions could be severely affected by the spending decisions of other local authorities. If Welsh local authorities collectively spend on the lines of the settlement, no grant will be lost to Wales. It is very much up to the local authorities. The hon. Gentleman commented on grant mechanisms. I have pointed out that the principal request we received was for stability. I have commented on the hon. Gentleman's point about negative marginal rate.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about capital and housing allocations. No decisions on capital spending have been

[Mr. Edwards]

announced. I made it perfectly clear in my statement that we are still reviewing the capital control system. We shall make announcements about capital spending later in the year, after we have considered the points that the hon. Gentleman has made, as well as local government representations.

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): Does my right hon. Friend find it disheartening that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) is apparently reconciled to the inevitability of permanent high inflation — certainly in the foreseeable future — far above the ordinary figure of inflation? Is it not a fact that the figures cited by my right hon. Friend deserve a welcome by local authorities, as they should be able to avoid the excessive increases that caused so much distress last year?

Mr. Edwards: I acknowledge that they start from a much sounder, stronger base. They acknowledge that relevant expenditure will be 8·4 per cent. higher than total relevant expenditure at the main report stage in 1986-87, and nearly 6 per cent. higher than budgets.

My hon. Friend referred to the expected inflation rate. Most people, when they talk about 3·75 per cent., talk about the projected growth in costs in the economy as a whole, as spelt out in the Budget statement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The settlement gives Wales a further 1 per cent. on top of that.

If my right hon. Friend were to do a further forecast at this time, the figure would be significantly lower than at the time of the Budget. That factor is working entirely in favour of the local authorities. I remind my hon. Friend that the £5 million recycled grant this year was the base, and that there is an opportunity for local government to have low rate increases, or even rate reductions, in Wales.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): As the rate support grant system is obviously designed to prevent everyone, including possibly the Secretary of State, from knowing exactly what is going on, is the right hon. Gentleman willing to make a wild guess at how much he purports to restore to, say, the council of Blaenau Gwent of the money which his previous rate support grant system took away from it?

Mr. Edwards: This is an extremely generous settlement. We have maintained grants at the same percentage as last year. The decisions on spending will depend on local authorities. Our proposals for reforms of local government finance have been spelt out in detail. We have been consulting in detail on them. We wait with fascination to see when the Labour party gets around to putting forward some reform proposals of its own.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd North-West): Is not the ungainly floundering of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) a tribute to the skill with which my right hon. Friend has managed to tinker with the manifestly unroadworthy vehicle of local government finance to keep it on the road? Is my right hon. Friend aware how welcome will be his decision not to proceed with the ludicrous and complicated system of recycling, which made it impossible for local authorities to plan ahead with foreknowledge?

Mr. Edwards: I think that many people will welcome the stability it gives and the certainty in planning. Because Clwyd acted responsibly last year, it has come out well in the settlement. The rate increases which can be expected should be low, and reductions are possible.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): The Secretary of State has announced a 4·75 per cent. increase. Compared with what has happened in the past, that is a vast improvement, but we must consider it in its historical context. Our experience in previous years has not been good. There has been a crisis in the education sector — [HON MEMBERS: "Reading."] — which has suffered tremendously, and in housing. There is a crisis in one of the boroughs which I represent — Brecknock — where 1,000 people are on the housing waiting list. I would welcome the right hon. Gentleman's assurance that more money will be recycled into the housing sector. In addition, there is a crisis in respect of road bridges, with 23 out of action in Powys. I hope——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must ask a question.

Mr. Livsey: Is the Secretary of State aware that 23 bridges in Powys are out of action? Will he assure me that resources will be made available to repair them so that hardship can be alleviated?

Mr. Edwards: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's declaration that this settlement represents a vast improvement, but I wish that the same could be said of the line of his questioning. The hon. Gentleman talks about a crisis in education. I well remember the entirely false allegation which he put around during his by-election campaign that a school was to be closed which no one intended to close. That is the type of myth that the Liberal party likes to put around. As for housing and other capital projects, including bridges, I have said that this is not an announcement on capital expenditure. That will come later.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his excellent statement and on the extremely generous settlement. Does he agree that, if local authorities are to take full advantage of it, they must make a concerted effort to keep pay settlements down, which may mean getting tough with the National and Local Government Officers Association? Following on from the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), will my right hon. Friend give just one assurance that for Clwyd this year there will be no repeat of what his officials called the "unfortunately" wide difference last year between the provisional and final block grant figures?

Mr. Edwards: It is precisely to avoid such change and uncertainty that we are doing away with recycling and going for stability. There is no doubt that local authorities find it difficult to plan. They now know that they can succeed on the basis that what they will get will be a direct consequence of their decisions. That is a great step forward.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the calculation of block grants is based on rateable values obtaining on 30 September? Why is no allowance made if the rateable value is subsequently reduced unless the reduction is greater than the figure which has been determined by the Secretary of State, which is at present 2·5 per cent.? Is the right hon. Genteman aware that, in many cases, substantial

reductions in rateable value take place? Is he further aware that, in the case of the borough of Neath — [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] Grow up, will you please? I beg your pardon, Mr. Speaker. I was referring to Conservative Members. Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that the contraction of the BP oil refinery in Neath is an example of that problem? Will he undertake to look urgently at this matter to see what can be done?

Mr. Edwards: Adjustments are made as a result of the closure of industrial premises. However, I shall certainly look specifically at the constituency point raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he should be congratulated on his handling of local government finance in that he is able to come before the House with this welcome statement? Would he like to hazard a guess at what South Glamorgan county council is likely to do having followed its irresponsible record rate rise last year?

Mr. Edwards: I fear that one of the consequences of the sort of decisions taken by South Glamorgan may continue to affect those who live in the area. I hope that with this generous and soundly based settlement in front of them, the local authority will recognise that, but by the sort of rate increases it went for last year, it is discouraging the very sort of development that elsewhere it is trying to get going. Therefore, I hope that the message that the confederation of British Industry gave so clearly about the impact of high rating will be heeded on this occasion.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): How will the Secretary of State's statement help the 29 per cent. of men who are unemployed in my constituency, and how will it help Mid Glamorgan with its massive social and economic problems? Will he confirm that the amount announced is a mere fraction of the amount taken away from Welsh local authorities since 1979? Will he tell us how much the Treasury intends to claw back from this amount?

Mr. Edwards: Because the settlement is realistic, it will give Welsh local authorities, including that in the hon. Lady's constituency, every scope for maintaining social provision and services and keeping rate increases down, which will help to attract the industry and jobs she so badly wants. The only circumstance in which there will be claw back, that is to say where there will not be the full benefit because of grant recycling, is if local authorities generally in Wales go above the spending pattern that the settlement indicates. It is certainly within the power of the Welsh local government to ensure that there is no loss through that.

Mr. Keith Best: (Ynys Môn): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that his statement is much more generous than the one he made on 25 July last year, for two reasons? First, his proposals will assist forward budgeting, the absence of which has so badly hampered local authorities in planning in the past? Secondly, will he confirm that total relevant expenditure for RSG purposes is this year 5·9 per cent. more than budgeted for by local authorities, whereas last year it was only 5 per cent. more? Would the pontifications of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) about the effect of wage increases not be much more persuasive if he were to take the same realistic view that the Trades Union Congress now seems to be taking which is that it should intervene in wage negotiations between local authorities and employees to ensure that there are moderate wage settlements because of the effect they have on expenditure?

Mr. Edwards: As my hon. Friend knows, last year we hoped that Welsh local government would maintain the good spending record that it had previously. In those circumstances, there may be some who feel that this settlement is over-generous. The fact is that we have taken account of actual spending patterns in the past and have now made generous provision against the expectation of the increase in costs in the current year. Therefore, there is no doubt that this settlement gives Welsh local government a considerable opportunity to maintain services and lower the rate burden. There is still plenty of scope for Welsh local government to prove its efficiency on the lines that it is beginning to acknowledge and which has been pointed out by the Audit Commission and others.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Can I put it to the Secretary of State that this is not a good settlement for Wales — just not quite as bad as we have come to expect from him? His claim that local authorities in Wales will be the prime determinant of rate increases comes a bit rich from a member of a Cabinet which is forcing through the House measures which will result in a 20 per cent. increase in the rate bills of the poorest people in our communities. As he was so complimentary about Welsh local authorities, why has he not decided to fight to exempt them from the recycling provision?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman can put it to me, but he is wrong. This is a good settlement. It is one thing to argue that everyone living in a local authority area should make some contribution to the rating costs so that they are aware that there are costs to be paid for the services provided, and another to argue for lowering the rate bills and rate costs generally. The people who are paying that percentage will benefit from the lower costs just as much as others.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. I trust that he agrees that this year's sharp practices by local councils in Wales should never again be repeated. I press him on the answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist), which disturbed me. Will he give further consideration to the plight of my constituents, so that they will not again be the worst hit in Wales by South Glamorgan county council, a council that is notorious for its monstrous rate increases? Recent years have included increases of 94, 54 and 24 per cent., the latter being for this year. That burden seems to get better only because of the Government's success in conquering inflation.

Mr. Edwards: I agree with my hon. Friend that the record of that authority in recent years has been disgraceful. If the local authorities in my hon. Friend's area spend in line with the settlement, there is no reason why rate increases should be more than 1 or 2 per cent.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the Secretary of State accept that maintaining the status quo is not good enough when the status quo involved potholes in the roads, social services that cannot be delivered to those who need them, and a substantial bill for the education settlement coming through soon? Will he confirm that at 4·75 per cent., 1 per cent. above the GDP deflator, the figure is still 0·5 per cent. short of what is needed for the

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

education settlement? That means that Wales will be £7 to £8 million short of what is needed to pay the teachers. That being so, shall we not either lose teachers or cut other services to finance the settlement?

Mr. Edwards: No, I think that this is untrue. The hon. Gentleman failed to listen to the answer that I gave earlier, when I pointed out that not only is the settlement above the GDP deflator, but the GDP deflator was a forecast made a considerable time ago, since when inflation has continued to fall. What is more, there has been a substantial increase in the amount allocated as the base from which local authorities start this year. Against that background, I cannot see that local authorities have the problems that he describes.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Will the Secretary of State give the House three figures, one for Wales, one for the borough of Lliw Valley and one for Swansea city council? Will he precede the three figures by either a plus or a minus? What have been the changes in real terms in the cash awarded in the rate support settlement for 1986-87 compared to 1978-79?

Mr. Edwards: If the hon. Gentleman tables that question, I shall answer it.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): The Secretary of State can rarely answer a reasonable question. It is like his statements. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) that the rate support grant is confusing enough, but having a Secretary of State for Wales such as that which we have makes the matter even more confusing. When the right hon. Gentleman talks about recycling, I should like to suggest that he gets on his bike.

The right hon. Gentleman was asked a question by the Ogwr borough council, which appealed with him to meet it in the House and discuss with it the way that his Government and his actions have ensured that the council's development status has been down-graded in two places. I appeal to him to reconsider the matter, so that it can benefit, if there is any benefit to come out of the statement, in a proper and reasonable way.

Mr. Edwards: I know that the hon. Gentleman finds these matters difficult to understand, but his question has not the smallest connection with the statement that I have just made.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Is the Secretary of State aware that when he said that Clwyd county council behaved last year, as he put it, responsibly, it has meant for those of us who live in Clwyd worse roads, growing dereliction on the roadways, less education provision and worse social services, and a general contribution to the shabbiness and lower quality of life with which we have had to put up from the social services? As the Secretary of State knows, rate support grants taken from Wales by this Government have amounted to £500 million since 1978-79. How much more rate support grant will be lost as a result of this statement?

Mr. Edwards: Again, the hon. Gentleman has clearly not been listening, because I have already told the House several times that the rate support grant percentage is unchanged this year.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, North): Does the Secretary of State appreciate that the generosity that he is pretending to display is an exercise in duplicity, for over the years local government has had to put up with rate capping, the freezing of receipts from the sale of council houses, clawback, and restrictions of one kind or another. The latest example is the cheating over the recycling of grants.

When will the Secretary of State recognise the reality that Wales is about the most deprived area in western Europe? Heavy unemployment places a far greater burden on our local authorities and the services that they administer. Our education system is creaking at the seams, and the Secretary of State has not made clear how the teachers' award will be funded bearing in mind the inflation tendency.

Will the right hon. Gentleman also recognise that we have a massive housing problem, with thousands of properties lacking basic amenities, and that vast expenditure is required on our infrastructure to make the place a little more inviting for prospective new enterprises? Is it not sheer hypocrisy for the Secretary of State to urge local authorities to ease the burden on ratepayers when the right hon. Gentleman is the culprit who has done so much damage to local government and those whom it serves? Does he appreciate that we recognise, in the run-up to a general election, that he is trying to create a mirage of optimism? He will not be believed because the neglect and decay have gone on for too long.

Mr. Edwards: We all know that Opposition Members love to create an image of Wales in gloom, decay and depression, whatever the damage that it does to Wales, and however much it discourages job creation. The hon. Gentleman has led the field in that disreputable and damaging task.

The hon. Gentleman started by accusing me of rate-capping, when there has never been rate-capping in Wales. He accused me of cheating over recycling, but there has never been cheating over recycling. Some may think that a system under which some local authorities were penalised because of the decisions of other local authorities represented a form of cheating that we should do well to get rid of. The stability and security that this gives local authorities will be welcomed.

In his account of the relevant position between Wales and England, the hon. Gentleman failed to mention that there is a considerably higher grant percentage for Welsh local authorities than in England, that we are allocating more capital, and have done so because of the relatively good spending record of most Welsh authorities, and could have done even better if they had maintained that good record last year. Finally, I repeat that the onus for high rate bills this year will not be on the Government. If they rise, that will be solely the responsibility of local government.

Rate Support Grant (Scotland)

4.10 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make an announcement about local authority expenditure and rate support grant in Scotland.

I would first like to deal with 1987-88. For that year I propose to set the level of provision for local authority relevant current expenditure in Scotland at £3,277 million. This figure is 3·75 per cent. above local authorities' adjusted budgets for 1986-87 and is a reasonable assessment of what they are likely to spend, given the level of inflation and their past pattern of spending. It recognises the efforts made by increasing numbers of authorities to budget at or below guideline.

I propose to set aggregate Exchequer grant for 1987-88 at £2,160 million. This will maintain, on present estimates of loans charges and other financing items, the present grant percentage of 56·1 per cent.

I consider that my proposals on provision and grant represent a fair and realistic settlement for next year. In making these proposals I have taken careful account of the points made to me by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. I met the convention on 18 July when we discussed expenditure prospects for next year. My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and the Environment met the convention this morning to outline these proposals to them.

Given this realistic settlement, there is no reason for rate increases next year, unless local authorities increase their spending next year above inflation or fail to bring their spending to guideline in the current year. I very much hope that local authorities will, in the interests of their ratepayers, respond positively to these proposals.

I turn now to 1986-87. Scottish local authorities have budgeted for 1986-87 to spend £118 million, or 3·9 per cent. more than the current expenditure guidelines which were issued to them. Authorities were given ample warning that the penalties for exceeding guidelines would again be severe. I have therefore decided, having consulted the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on my proposals last week, to impose grant penalties for 1986-87 totalling £125 million. I will be laying the necessary rate support grant order shortly and grant reductions will start on 30 July. Copies of the report on the order showing how the penalties will affect each local authority are available in the Vote Office. Letters of notification are being posted to authorities today.

Penalties will again be calculated using a tariff which relates the penalty to the level of excess over guideline. The tariff will, to a greater extent than last year, concentrate the penalties on the highest overspenders. In particular, the four authorities which are responsible for 90 per cent. of the overspending will all have a penalty which is larger than in 1985-86.

Local authorities as a whole are increasingly budgeting within guidelines. In 1986-87, 40 out of the 65 authorities budgeted within guidelines and will suffer no penalty. I hope that the 25 remaining authorities which are responsible for the overspending in 1986-87 will make every effort to reduce their expenditure at outturn and thus recover the grant penalty which I have just announced. There are considerable benefits to authorities in doing so. In 1985-86, local authorities responded to penalties by bringing down their overspend from £91 million to £47 million and penalties will correspondingly be reduced from £126 million to £57 million. The advantages of spending within guideline are considerable and I hope that in 1986-87 there will again be many authorities modifying their spending to be within guideline at outturn.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I am glad to see any sign of repentance on the Government Front Bench and I take some satisfaction from the fact that the sustained campaign in defence of local services has forced the Scottish Office to pause and, hopefully, to think about what it has done in previous years. I offer a very sober and qualified welcome to part of this announcement. Undoubtedly the figures are better than those for last year. It is remarkable how entering the fourth year of a Parliament concentrates the minds of Ministers on survival.

The Government claim that the 1987-88 announcement amounts to a standstill. Typically, a status quo is the height of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's ambitions, but will he take note of our doubts about the adequacy of the inflation factor? He knows that manual workers in Scottish local authorities have rejected an offer of 6 per cent., that clerical and administrative staff have rejected an offer of 5·9 per cent. and that 55 per cent. of regional council budgets is spent on wages and salaries? Against that background, an inflation figure of 3·75 per cent. seems to me to be highly suspect. The right hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that COSLA estimates that there will have to be an increase of £70 million over and above the relevant expenditure figure that has been announced today in order to have a standstill budget.

Will the Secretary of State say a word or two about the 3·75 per cent. and how it was formulated? He will be aware that his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales announced an inflation factor of 4·75 per cent. in the Principality and suggested that this was some sort of reward, because he felt that Welsh local authorities had performed reasonably well. Will the Secretary of State confirm that the inflation factor should be an attempt genuinely to estimate what the rise in prices in terms of Scottish local authority expenditure is likely to be? Does he accept that an inflation factor of 3·75 per cent. is inadequate?

The formula for the 1986-87 penalties has been varied. The penalty is less steep, despite what the Secretary of State said. However, there is no cause for celebration. Although the figures give the impression that concessions have been made, the clawback of £125 million is almost exactly the same as it was in the previous year. Furthermore, well over half the population of Scotland — not just four authorities; that is misleading — will be penalised on what I believe to be an unjust and unjustifiable basis.

How does the Secretary of State expect Strathclyde to find £76 million in the remainder of this financial year? If it is such a reasonable system, why is Lothian being penalised by £25 million on a budget that was formulated by his political friends in the Tory administration? Will the Secretary of State also comment on the fact that, as far as I can see — although I am open to correction — no account at all has been taken of the agreement that has been reached with Edinburgh to reduce its expenditure by £6·5 million and to re-rate to that effect? That factor has been completely ignored. If it were taken into account, the

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

penalty of well over £10 million would be well under half that amount. Does that not illustrate the arbitrary nature of the system and the extraordinary way that it is operated? Why should Edinburgh have to lie out of this money, causing extra expense to its ratepayers, when an agreement has been reached between the right hon. and learned Gentleman and the district council?

Finally, on rates, will the Secretary of State note that everything depends upon the distribution formula? I hope that he will give help and lend a sympathetic ear to those authorities that face very real problems and that are genuinely struggling to meet guidelines. I hope that he will not use the increased aggregate Exchequer grant as a reward for cynical political purposes to help those who are already comfortably placed. Does he accept that, to any impartial observer, it is perfectly clear that this Government's strategy has been based upon hostility to local government—an assumption about irresponsible and profligate expenditure that cannot be justified—and that no account has been taken of the strain that has been placed on basic and essential services?

Although this announcement is better than some that we have had to endure in the past, it will do nothing to remove the pressures on many authorities in 1987-88. Although the settlement represents progress, it is very slow and grudging. I was taught very early in life to recognise that one should be thankful for small mercies, but this announcement will do nothing to undo the damage that has been done to local democracy since the right hon. and learned Gentleman's party hijacked the Scottish Office seven years ago.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. Gentleman for the general welcome that he has given to my announcement. I acknowledge the predictable qualifications that he felt it was appropriate to add to his general welcome. Nevertheless, it would be right to interpret his response as congratulating the Government on the provision that they have made for Scottish local authorities, and I am happy to accept it on that basis.

The hon. Gentleman asked for an explanation of the generous provision that we are making. There are two factors that he ought to bear in mind. For the first time, this year's settlement, in volume terms, is slightly below what it was in 1979. In addition, the budgets of two thirds of Scottish local authorities are now either at or below guideline. Therefore, it seemed to me and to my colleagues that it was right and proper that that should be reflected in the provision that we are making available. That is the explanation for that factor.

The hon. Gentleman took issue with the inflation projection. He will be aware that we have taken inflation into account at a projected rate of 3·75 per cent. for the purposes of determining provision. He is correct to say that local authorities are assuming a higher rate of inflation, but he cannot expect the taxpayer to fund any pay settlement that local authorities might choose to make. He gave the House information about pay claims made by various groups of local authority employees. We are well aware that bids and offers can be made, but it is right for local authorities to take into account the national rate of inflation and to expect their employees to take it into account. The figure of 3·75 per cent. is perfectly realistic for that purpose.

The hon. Gentleman asked about Strathclyde and about the penalties announced for the current year. Strathclyde also had a heavy penalty last year, but during that year—perhaps because of the penalty—we saw a substantial reduction in expenditure at outturn. There is no reason of which I am aware why we should not anticipate a similar reduction in expenditure by Strathclyde this year. I suspect it was anticipating a much higher penalty than has been announced, and it should find no difficulty whatever in achieving significant reductions during the financial year.

The hon. Gentleman was correct when he said that the voluntary reduction in Edinburgh district council's proposed expenditure has not affected the way in which the penalty is distributed. Edinburgh will at outturn receive repayment of rate support grant to take account of the expenditure at the end of the day. Edinburgh district council may be reducing its budget as a result of direct pressure from the Scottish Office and the threat of parliamentary action. Other local authorities may also be revising their budgets and it would be quite wrong to single out one authority that has acted on a voluntary basis to avoid the proposed penalty. If at outturn the figures for original budgets have been reduced, as we hope they will be, then the penalty based on the original budget will be revised and local authorities will receive any grant that they had forfeited.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I welcome the statement by my right hon. and learned Friend. It should help prudent local authorities to keep down their rates and propose no increase for next year. When he makes the settlement, can he ensure that it is weighted in favour of authorities that have behaved prudently in the past and have kept their rates down? Will he bear it in mind that rural areas had some catching up to do after revaluation and see that they get priority in the settlement?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for welcoming the announcement. As he knows, in recent years the whole system of penalties has been changed to ensure that those local authorities which budget at or below guideline run no risk of forfeiting any rate support grant. Therefore, the £125 million that I have announced will not in any way affect my hon. Friend's regional council which has budgeted within the guideline.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The Minister has said that this settlement is based on the past pattern of spending. Is it not plain that, despite falling school rolls, it will prevent education authorities improving education provision and will compel the closure of still more rural schools? How on earth the teachers' pay settlement will be dealt with is a mystery. Local authorities will be unable to make better provision through their social work departments, despite the enormous pressure upon them to do so.

Mr. Rifkind: I find the hon. Gentleman's intervention incomprehensible. We are all aware that in recent years pupil rolls have fallen by about 18 per cent. in Scotland. That enables local authorities to concentrate their education provision on a smaller number of pupils. That should enable them to make better provision.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the teachers' pay settlement. In determining provision for next year, account has been taken, and is incorporated in these figures, of the

settlement that local authorities have reached with the teaching unions. For that reason, that part of the hon. Gentleman's question is superfluous.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his excellent statement. Is it to be expected that anything that my right hon. and learned Friend produces will be sour grapes to the Opposition. This statement will be of considerable benefit to local authorities in Scotland, where 40 out of the 65 local authorities have met their deadline. That is a great credit to Government measures. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) made a plea on behalf of rural areas. I support that, because rural areas have to maintain an infrastructure in order to try to retain the rural population and avoid depopulation.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend should not be too upset by the carping comments of the Opposition. By the standards of the Labour party, what they said was a compliment to the Government and we can take that into account. We bear in mind the developmental needs of specific areas when determining capital allocations and provisions. The needs of each local authority are given intense scrutiny.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): The Minister's statement is a continuation of the punitive policy that the Government have pursued against local government in Scotland. Is it not the case that the guidelines are unrealistic and unworkable? Instead of inventing poll taxes, the Secretary of State would do far better to set about establishing a proper working relationship with the local authorities so that they may be properly funded.

Mr. Rifkind: If the guidelines are unrealistic, it is surprising that some two thirds of Scottish local authorities have been able to budget within them.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that the Scottish share of United Kingdom expenditure has been falling? There will be no great celebrations because the rate support grant has been kept static. *[Interruption.]* I am dealing with facts. One of the authorities omitted from the list of those which kept within the guidelines is the local authority in my constituency, the Western Isles islands council. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that all its essential services have been cut to the bone and that it has to make a drastic effort to keep to the levels to which it is tied? How will it fare if it cannot get any advance on the funds that have been available?

Mr. Rifkind: As the right hon. Gentleman acknowledges, his own islands council has felt able to budget within guidelines, and, contrary to what the right hon. Gentleman suggests, that is a factor to bear in mind. The provision that I have announced will enable that council to continue a level of expenditure consistent with that position.

Mr. Alexander Pollock (Moray): Now that the Government seem to recognise the virtue of supporting local authorities by holding public expenditure constant, can my right hon. and learned Friend tell me the implications for the capital consent programme, bids for which are due a little later this year? Will he consider especially the problem facing Grampian region? It has a road building programme that will need substantial additional capital consents. Those roads are needed to give proper support to the timber industry in that region, given the expansion at Dalcross and the other efforts by timber growers there.

Mr. Rifkind: I am aware that the timber industry in Grampian and Dumfries and Galloway is relevant to the capital allocations. No doubt there are other authorities in a similar position. We have invited regional councils to tell us the details of their requirements so that we can take them into account when capital allocations are determined.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that, after six years of serious cuts in local government grants and attacks on local government services, even this standstill settlement, although it is set at a low level, makes us all feel like cheering? In order to show his good faith and to remove the suspicion that this might be a pre-election settlement, is the right hon. and learned Gentleman prepared to look again at the clawback of the £76 million penalty that he has imposed on Strathclyde and the £50,000 penalty that he has imposed on Cunninghame district?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman, who is always a fair man, will — *[Interruption.]* I think so, even if Labour Members apparently do not. I certainly acknowledge that the hon. Gentleman is a fair man and he will know that reductions in local authority provision did not begin seven years ago but some 10 years ago under a Government whom the hon. Gentleman consistently voted against whenever the rate support grant was announced. I seem to remember that he has been consistent in each of the past 10 years in voting against local authority provision, irrespective of who proposed it.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, over the past year, certainly Strathclyde, and I suspect Cunninghame, have been able to reduce their expenditure on outturn and that has enabled significant amounts of grant to be returned. The very fact that we have imposed the heaviest penalties at the upper end of overspending will give that much greater incentive for reductions in expenditure.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Will the Secretary of State clarify what he said in response to an earlier question about the impact of the settlement of the teachers' dispute in Scotland? He gave the impression that the settlement had taken that into account and would in some way act as a ceiling upon the deliberations of Professor Main.

Mr. Rifkind: No; I think that the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood what I said. In determining provision for local authorities for 1987-88, we have taken into account not only the budgets that they fixed but the pay settlement that was reached after the budgets had been fixed with the teaching unions, because clearly that must be added to the budgets in order to achieve a realistic figure.

Mr. John Corrie (Cunninghame, North): I warmly welcome the fact that the rate support grant has not been cut again this year, as that inevitably leads to increases in rates, although it helps to control expenditure. May I take it from the statement that, with only a few exceptions, we are now reaching the sort of expediture levels that my right hon. and learned Friend wants to see in councils in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: The latter part of my hon. Friend's question must be taken into account. It is true that 40 out of 65 authorities have budgeted either at or below guideline and that a number of other individual authorities are at a level only marginally above. But my hon. Friend will recall my comment earlier that four local authorities are responsible for 90 per cent. of the excess, and that is a matter for severe concern.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): What comfort will this give to Strathclyde regional council in its efforts to eliminate composite classes in primary schools, when one in three primary schools have composite classes? In addition, what comfort will it give to Motherwell district council, bearing in mind the terrible unemployment there? Do not mention the food park, because that is not labour-intensive.

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman has discussions with either Strathclyde region or Motherwell district, he will find that it will tell him, privately if not publicly, that this provision is substantially greater than it had anticipated.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that this welcome statement, which gives encouragement to Scottish ratepayers to expect a similar or lower rate bill in the coming year, owes much to the Government's success in persuading more Socialist authorities to budget at or near guidelines? Will he make further efforts to see that the track record of prudent local government management will be rewarded in rate support grant settlements?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. It is worth pointing out that local authorities are spending in volume terms for all practical purposes the same as in 1979. It has taken a number of years to reach that position, and it is good that they have now done so.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): The impression is being created that this is a less worse settlement for ratepayers in the coming year. Is this the first sign of the advice that the Government have given to the inquiry committee on teachers' pay and of the settlement that he expects, or can local authorities expect a supplement to the rate support grant if the teachers' settlement is higher?

Mr. Rifkind: The Government's evidence to the Main inquiry has been published and is available for the hon. Gentleman to study if he so wishes. We have not yet even received the recommendations of the Main report and obviously I cannot comment at this stage on what our response will be to recommendations of which neither we, the unions nor the local authorities are aware.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): The Minister stated that he is looking for more cuts from authorities such as Strathclyde and Glasgow district. The Minister must know that, in communities such as my own, youth unemployment is very high and that the only people who seem to be trying to tackle that serious problem are the local authorities. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Hon. members say no, but I know of no private employer who is trying to get the young people off the street in the way that Glasgow district council is by attempting to get apprenticeships and by taking the Manpower Services Commission——

Mr. Rifkind: That is Government money.

Mr. Martin: It is not the Government's money. It is the taxpayers' money. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

The Minister asked local authorities to participate in the MSC schemes. He knows that Strathclyde region and Glasgow district have not only participated but have tried to make permanent work for the young people in those schemes. The Minister knows that he is endangering the prospects of young people in our communities.

The Minister may know that a deputation was received from the people in the Barrmulloch area because the local authority intended to close down the community centres at the weekend. What chance is there of cutting down vandalism if the community centres are not open?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should appreciate that it is not just Glasgow district and Strathclyde region that are participating in the youth training scheme and using, as he correctly says, taxpayers' money to help employment in their locality. Virtually all 65 authorities are participating in the scheme. If 40 out of those 65 can participate in the youth training scheme and still have budgets at or below guideline, there is no particular reason why Glasgow district and Strathclyde region cannot do so as well.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, within the additional resources that he has made available to local authorities in Scotland, there is ample scope for them to use their powers to give discretionary rate reductions to amateur sports clubs in Scotland? What was the result of discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on that issue? Can we now expect local authorities which said that if they had these resources they would act to do so?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. Already, a number of Scottish local authorities are giving discretionary rate relief to sports clubs. A number are not, and have sought to suggest that Government restrictions prevented them from being more generous. As my announcement today represents an increase in aggregate Exchequer grant of 7·5 per cent., or £152 million, my hon. Friend is correct to say that, if that is all that was stopping them using their discretion, as the 100 per cent. rates relief for sports clubs has been estimated to be about £3 million or £4 million, and as no one expects or would wish to see such a high level of rate relief, there can be no excuse now for any authority that wants to use its discretion not feeling free to do so.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State concede that we are all rather bemused by his and the Secretary of State for the Environment's exercise in raiding the contingency fund just prior to an anticipated general election in a year or so? Why is local government expenditure profligate when the Exchequer has to support it to the tune of 60 per cent. or over, while it is an exercise in probity when the Exchequer has to support it at 56·5 per cent., as is the case today? When has a regional council such as Fife embarked on excessive expenditure? Can he identify any expenditure in Fife that commands the penalties that he seeks to impose? Where, against the background of increasing unemployment and the increasing devastation of our industrial base, is any wasteful expenditure to be found?

Mr. Rifkind: As I understand it, Fife regional council was able, during last year, to reduce its expenditure by

some £7 million, which suggests that the original budget was not the bare minimum that it could afford. The hon. Gentleman should ask himself why so many Scottish local authorities have been able to spend either at or below guideline—[AN HON. MEMBER: "They have not enjoyed it."] It is not a question of whether they have enjoyed doing so. There is no evidence that, in the two thirds of local authorities that are spending within guideline, services to the community are significantly different from those in areas that are overspending. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman should inquire about the reasons for that.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): There is nothing cheerful about the figures for Kilmarnock and Loudoun for they have been mallied. Kilmarnock and Loudoun is kind but not extravagant. Its only crime was to protect jobs and services. The authority must knock approximately £500,000 off the intended expenditure. That means several hundred jobs lost in an area which already has almost 20 per cent. unemployment. Would the Secretary of State care to tell me, so that I can tell the lads in Kilmarnock, how the authority can cut that expenditure without job losses?

Mr. Rifkind: Ayrshire Labour Members appear to be deeply divided about their proper response to my announcement. One wants to cheer and the other is worried.

Mr. McKelvey: My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) said "jeering", not "cheering".

Mr. Rifkind: That is not what I heard.

When the hon. Gentleman discusses the announcement with his district council he will discover that it considers the provision generous and considerably higher than it expected. The provision will enable the council to plan expenditure for next year on a realistic basis.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the rate support grant which he has announced today shows clearly how far Britain has recovered from the day when the Labour Administration went to the International Monetary Fund? That followed many years when Britain had to be careful about taxpayers' money, borrowing and expenditure. Does he also agree that the best way to deal with the frivolous expenditure of local authorities, especially on such items as nuclear-free zones and conferences, is to ensure that others, such as those who run caravan sites which are an important part of the tourist industry, and who are concerned about the differences between their rates and the rates paid in England and Wales, are protected by continuing with the policy that we have been pursuing for years, which is to see that ratepayers get value for money?

Mr. Rifkind: It can only be in the interests of the local community if local authorities confine themselves to matters for which they clearly have responsibility.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I return to the answer given to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston)? The Secretary of State talked about concentrating educational provision and mentioned an 18 per cent. drop in the number of pupils. Is the entire package conditional upon the closure of schools? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] If it is not, the right hon. and learned Gentleman had better make the position clear. What did the answer given to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber mean if it was not the closure of schools?

Is not the real answer to do something about class sizes, not least in the light of last night's vote? We have an opportunity to achieve better and more favourable class ratios, which are much required in the light of last night's vote. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman address himself to the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin), which inadvertently he did not answer, as to whether it makes sense for community centres to have to close at weekends because of a shortage of money? Those places were built in the 1950s and 1960s at enormous expense, and socially it is highly desirable that they should remain open at the weekend.

Mr. Rifkind: That is a matter to be determined according to the priorities of the local authority. The hon. Gentleman will agree with me that Glasgow and Strathclyde region has sufficient resources to do what it thinks appropriate about community centres, given the overall resources available to it. But my announcement today is not conditional on anything. It represents a significant increase in resources for local authorities—an extra £152 million of cash through the rate support grant system. The hon. Gentleman should appreciate that that is a fair and realistic basis for local authority expenditure next year.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that most people in Scotland will greatly welcome the announcement of extra resources today, and that it will be welcomed especially by local authorities which have shown prudence in their spending? Does he accept that most ratepayers in Scotland will welcome his assurance that there need be no increase in rates next year as a result of today's announcement? Will he give an undertaking that, despite all the huffing and puffing that we have heard from local authorities, he will continue to impose penalties where there is evidence of overspending?

Mr. Rifkind: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. It is because the majority of Scottish local authorities are now budgeting responsibly and constructively that it is possible and desirable for the Government to respond in a similar fashion.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): When the Secretary of State met the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, did he explain how he had managed to obtain from his Cabinet colleagues a protected inflation rate of 1 per cent. less than Wales, despite Wales' dynamic Secretary of State? Did the right hon. and learned Gentleman give COSLA the reasons for that difference? Did COSLA endorse the Government's proposals?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not recall COSLA being terribly interested in Welsh rate support grant provision but perhaps that will change. The level of local government expenditure in Wales has been, up to this year, dramatically lower than in either England or Scotland. Welsh authorities have kept within guidelines to a much greater extent than authorities in Scotland or England. I am sure that those factors were taken into account by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales in determining what provision to make.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian) *rose*——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Foulkes.

Mr. Foulkes: I had expected to take on my hereditary position of sweeper, but I hand it over to my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson).

Two things are clear about the settlement from an initial consideration of the statistics. First, it is clearly political—*[Interruption.]*—party political—and there is an election approaching. For example, Argyll and Bute—one does not have to look far from the hon. Member who represents that area—gets an initial needs payment of £2·6 million, whereas East Kilbride and East Lothian receive about £900,000. Will the Secretary of State explain that?

Secondly, it is clear that the guidelines are completely arbitrary. Cumnock and Doon Valley is faced with a punitive penalty of 110 per cent. Can the Secretary of State explain to the local authority with the highest unemployment how it can cut its expenditure? It has the smallest administrative overheads. Should it close leisure facilities available to the unemployed? Should it stop advance factory building? Will the Secretary of State say exactly where the cuts can be made in an area such as Cumnock and Doon Valley?

Mr. Rifkind: First, my announcement today does not show the amounts going to any local authority. That is a matter which is determined by distribution principles, and nothing has been determined yet. Today I simply announced the global amounts. I hope that the hon. Gentleman appreciates that.

If Cumnock and Doon Valley wants to achieve economies, it might usefully take advice from the two thirds of Scottish local authorities which have found it possible to budget within guidelines.

Mr. Home Robertson: If I could sweep up the Secretary of State, I would be a happy man. He has been emphasising some rather contrived good news, but will he say something more about the bad news which he has tried to conceal? What about the £25·34 million which he proposes to impose by way of penalty on his constituents and mine, in Lothian region? What scope is there for cutting the services available to the people of Edinburgh, Pentlands or of East Lothian under Brian Meeks' Tory budget? Will the Minister tell us more about that? Will he also pay tribute to the fine tuning of East Lothian district council? Will its penalty of £1,762 cover the administrative costs of this absurd system of penalties and guidelines?

Mr. Rifkind: I have no doubt that, if the penalty is so small, East Lothian district council can ensure that there is no penalty at all. Even the hon. Gentleman will agree that that should not be beyond its wit and imagination. Lothian regional council is, indeed, one of the high overspending authorities and it is right and proper that we should have a system that imposes penalties only on those that are responsible for the excess. That is much fairer than the old system, when penalties were imposed on local authorities as a whole. That took no account of whether they had overspent. That was the system which the Labour Government seemed to prefer.

South Africa (Council of Ministers)

4.49 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I seek your guidance and, I hope, your support? On Monday 21 and Tuesday 22 July, the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Community met in Brussels under the Presidency for the first time of a British Foreign Secretary. A very serious report was given to it on the subject of South Africa by the Foreign Secretary, who is now perambulating his way around South Africa, being snubbed by all varieties of black opinion. He reported to Foreign Ministers of the European Community on his visit to the United States of America and on his conversations with Secretary Shultz and President Reagan, and informed them of his itinerary for this week.

But this afternoon there has been no report to the British House of Commons about that council meeting. We are left with a written answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) if we are to work out precisely what the Foreign Secretary intends to say to the South African Government and to those elements who may choose to meet him. Surely it is intolerable for the Foreign Office and the Foreign Secretary to treat the House like that, and not to pay us the elementary courtesy of reporting back from that Foreign Affairs Council. It leaves us asking what on earth the Foreign Office has to hide if it has to take such an unprecedented step following the first meeting held during our Presidency. It has simply hidden behind a slim written answer given this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, whether the Government make a statement is not a matter for the Chair. I have no control over that.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask you a factual question? Is there any precedent for such behaviour? In my 24 years of involvement, I cannot recall a time when there has not been a statement on such an occasion. If senior Ministers have been ill, their place has been taken by junior Ministers. Is there any precedent for a report being given in the form of a written answer instead of a statement? The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office is certainly in the building.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): It may help the House if I say at once that it is by no means unprecedented for the proceedings of the Foreign Affairs Council to be reported to the House by means of a written answer. A case in point is the written reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on 12 March 1986.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In normal circumstances, we would no doubt accept what the Leader of the House has said, but there are only two days to go before the recess, and it will be October before the Foreign Secretary or one of the Foreign Office Ministers will be standing at that Dispatch Box again. It is imperative that we should have a statement before the recess. I hope that the Leader of the House will ensure that there is a statement tomorrow afternoon or, if necessary, on Friday morning.

Mr. Biffen: This afternoon the House has a pretty full bill of fare, and I appreciate that the right hon. Gentleman has tried to be helpful. Of course, we could look at this

issue through the usual channels to see whether something could be done on Friday morning. But it should be placed on the record that last week we had a very authoritative debate on foreign affairs and on the South African issue. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary then gave the House the most authoritative report on the Government's position. He certainly would not have gone beyond that in Brussels.

Mr. Williams: This issue is important. I understand that the meeting with the American President took place after the debate last week in the House, so it is even more important to have a statement this week.

Mr. Biffen: As I have said, we can discuss the matter through the usual channels. However, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary would not take new policy initiatives with the American President. What he said to the House last week was a clear and definitive statement of the British position.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I declare an interest? The Leader of the House has just slipped in the suggestion that, if there is to be a statement, it could be on Friday morning. But on Friday morning I have an Adjournment debate on the Westland affair. Is the idea that my debate should be truncated in any way? After all, there is a great deal to be said about the Defence Committee——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that I can help the hon. Gentleman. I recall that his debate on the Westland affair will be held before 11 am. If by chance there is a statement, it will come after his debate.

Later—

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps inadvertently, your response to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on Friday's Adjournment debates gave me the impression that, if a statement were made on the Foreign Affairs Council, you would protect Adjournment debates prior to the statement. I and others have Adjournment debates that will take place after a possible statement and I trust that you will keep these in mind as well.

Mr. Speaker: Generally, I deprecate statements being made on a Friday because they intrude into Back Benchers' time; if they take place I normally adjust the timings of debates after 11 o'clock but not before. That is because statements on a Friday take place at 11 o'clock.

Members' Dining Facilities

4.56 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that an arrangement has been come to whereby the Members' Dining Room will be turned into the Strangers' Dining Room on an experimental basis at lunch time when the House returns from the summer recess, and that the existing Strangers' Dining Room will become the Members' Dining Room. I also understand that, if the experiment is considered to be successful, it will be extended, and the Members' Dining Room will be turned into the Strangers' Dining Room for dinner.

It is now becoming almost impossible for Members of Parliament to obtain tables in any of the facilities that should be available to them. What is happening to those facilities is nothing short of downright scandal. Hardly a day goes by without finding that it is impossible to have a buffet lunch in the Terrace Pavilion because the tables are almost entirely booked by those who are not Members of the House. The facilities that should be available to hon. Members are being increasingly encroached upon. In your capacity as Speaker, will you put that matter to the House for discussion and decision as a matter of urgency, and will you ensure that the experiment in the Members' Dining Room does not take place until the House has had a chance to discuss and decide on it?

Mr. Speaker: I understand that it was the unanimous recommendation of the Services Committee that the experiment should take place between October and Christmas, but if the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members are unhappy about it their most appropriate course might be to make their strong feelings known to members of that Committee.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that this matter comes before you as a recommendation and that it is for you to decide whether it is important enough to warrant putting it to the House. Would you consider putting it before the House, because——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has not got this matter quite right. It is perfectly true that the unanimous recommendation was brought to me. As it was unanimous, I inclined to agree to the experiment. If it does not work out, it will come to an end.

Mr. Willie W. Hamiliton (Fife, Central): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. From what you have said, do I take it that the Services Committee and you have executive authority to take such action without there being any prior debate in the House? If that is so, the House seems to have no control whatever. A cabal of Members called the Services Committee, in conjunction with you, have taken it upon themselves to take a decision that adversely affects the interests of the House as a whole. That seems manifestly wrong and I hope that this course is not pursued.

Mr. Speaker: The House sets up the Services Committee and charges it with making recommendations on the operation of the services of the House in the interests of the House. I do not think that the House would want every one of its decisions debated, but if the hon.

[Mr. Speaker]

Gentleman feels strongly about the issue—I sense that hon. Members do feel strongly — he should make representations to members of the Services Committee.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not wish to delay the House, but this is an important matter for all hon. Members, especially those who use the Dining Room regularly. You have said, Mr. Speaker, that it would be for us to find a way of raising the matter. The Leader of the House is present. Perhaps he will be able to tell us from the Dispatch Box whether time can be made available to enable us to discuss the matter. It seems that we have no control over events. I must tell the Leader of the House that Members are already talking of taking their places in the Dining Room irrespective of whether the change takes place. That would embarrass members of the public and the House authorities.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Silly.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman may think that that is silly, but some of us wish to defend the rights of Back-Bench Members. The way that the hon. Gentleman is going, he will probably spend the whole of his parliamentary life on the Back Benches. Perhaps the Leader of the House will make a statement.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I have noted the hon. Gentleman's remarks and the intensity of feeling that lies behind them. I suggest that it is an appropriate matter to put to me in my role as Leader of the House when I next announce the business.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps it will help if I draw these exchanges to the attention of the Chairman of the Catering Committee.

BILL PRESENTED

Osteopaths

Mr. Roy Galley, supported by Sir Gerard Vaughan, Dame Jill Knight, Mr. Michael Brown, Mr. Nicholas Winterton, Mr. David Evennett, Mr. Christopher Murphy, Mr. Lewis Stevens and Mr. Kenneth Hind, presented a Bill to establish the existing general council and register of osteopaths as the statutory registering and governing body to unite and regulate the practice of osteopathy and certain other practitioners of manipulative therapy; to restrict the practice thereof by unqualified persons other than registered medical practitioners and State-registered physiotherapists and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 24 October and to be printed. [Bill 218.]

Companies (Disabled Employees Quota)

5.3 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for effective penalties to be applied to registered companies which fail to employ a specified quota of disabled persons.

During periods of severe economic depression, disabled persons are much more severely affected than others when it comes to getting a job. The latest data available shows that unemployment among disabled persons is double that of non-disabled persons. It is not necessary for that to be so, because there is legislation on the statute book to protect the interests of disabled people who wish to work. The Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 did three important things. It defined the term "disabled persons", it established the voluntary register of disabled persons, and it outlined the form of an employment quota scheme.

The quota scheme provides that all employers with 20 or more employees have a statutory duty to employ a quota of registered disabled persons, but the Act did not fix the level of the quota. However, in 1946 it was agreed that it should be 3 per cent. of the payroll. Although the 1944 Act was not binding on the Crown, Government Departments and the National Health Service nevertheless agreed to accept the same responsibilities as other employers. I shall demonstrate that, regrettably, Government Departments are among the worst offenders against the 1944 Act.

One of the problems with the present system is that it is not an offence for an employer to be below the quota, but it is an offence for an employer to engage someone other than a registered disabled person when the employer is below quota. There is a means of opting out for employers, and that is by applying to the Manpower Services Commission for a permit. Permits are issued by the MSC when it is satisfied that no suitable registered disabled person or persons are available. Regrettably, the MSC appears to issue permits, nearly always in bulk, with the same flippancy as a guest showers confetti at a wedding. This hypocrisy must stop. The system is a shambles.

Fines can be imposed on employers. If a company is obliged to employ a quota of disabled persons, it must keep a record, and failure to do so results in a fine not exceeding £20. I am sure that a fine of that size does not worry an employer for a second.

A few examples will illustate the problem. The Banking, Insurance and Finance Union carried out a survey among 31 companies in the finance industry. Between them the 31 companies employ more than 250,000, and the survey showed that only 2,000 are disabled. That is not 3 per cent. but less than 1 per cent. That is a disgrace and an outrage. In reply to a question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) a Minister from the Department of Employment informed him that of the 35,481 firms subject to the provisions of the quota scheme, only 28 per cent. employed the full quota. A further 52·7 per cent. were below quota but had been issued with permits, and just about all of them were bulk permits.

That is unsatisfactory, and a number of questions must be asked. How many of the companies were checked? With what certainty can the MSC state that the companies were

operating within the spirit of the law? How many of the 17,000 or 18,000 companies issued with bulk permits have abused them? Did the MSC do any follow-up checking? What about Government Departments? They might reasonably be expected to set a good example but, regrettably, the situation is hopeless.

At the latest date on which information is available, only one of 27 Government Departments is at quota level, and that is the National Savings Department. Of the rest, only five Departments have reached 2 per cent. or more, and four are employing less than 1 per cent. The Home Office has reached a miserly 0·5 per cent. and the Department of Health and Social Security has reached 1·4 per cent., which is less than half the quota level. It is shameful that the great Departments of State set such a bad example. Ministers should hang their heads in shame.

What happens to companies which break the law? The answer is nothing. Since 1944, only 10 companies have been to court on this issue and three of them escaped a fine. Those which were fined faced exceptionally small penalties. To counter this situation, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), who is now Minister for Trade, argued on 14 May 1985 at a meeting with the all-party disablement group that there were not enough registered disabled persons to allow employers to achieve the 3 per cent. quota, because not all disabled people choose to register.

When the 3 per cent. quota was determined in 1946, consideration was taken of the probability that not all disabled persons would register. Some disabled persons do not register because of the lack of incentive to do so, and for others registration is counter-productive. Such is the discrimination against those who have suffered certain illnesses — for example, against those who have experienced a period of mental illness or sufferers from epilepsy—that many people choose to keep quiet about their problems.

Since the 1950s, however, the number of disabled persons registering with local authorities has increased from less than 200,000 in 1956 to over 1 million. Over the same period there has been a decline in the number registering for employment purposes from over 1 million to 400,000. The decline is due to the lack of specific and real benefits as a result of registration. For those registering with local authorities there was immediate and tangible benefit, including car parking badges and bus tokens.

What should be done? Employers should be made to enforce the quota system. If disabled persons saw that efforts were being made to reach the 3 per cent. quota by private and public companies and Government Departments, there would be a greater incentive to register. Simultaneously, it would be easier for the MSC to take action against those employers not reaching the quota. The House should realise that 96 per cent. of all permits issued are bulk permits. There is an urgent need to stop the issue of these permits, as the present situation is no longer acceptable on either economic or moral grounds. There is a need for more inspectors to discover the companies which are infringing the present arrangements. There is a need for more prosecutions to be taken against companies flouting the law.

My Bill is aimed at giving disabled persons more opportunity to obtain work. It is also aimed at giving notice to employers subject to quota that, if there is no improvement, effective action will have to be taken against them, and that will be by the introduction of penalties that are large enough to make it extremely costly for an employer to ignore the quota. If doing so helps unemployed disabled persons to get jobs, it will be worthwhile.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Roland Boyes, Mr. Jack Ashley, Mr. Alfred Morris, Dr. David Clark, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. Mark Fisher, Mr. Peter Pike, Mr. Tony Banks, Dr. Norman A. Godman, Mr. Jeff Rooker, Mr. David Clelland and Mr. Richard Caborn.

Companies (Disabled Employees Quota)

Mr. Roland Boyes accordingly presented a Bill to provide for effective penalties to be applied to registered companies which fail to employ a specified quota of disabled persons. And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 24 October and to be printed. [Bill 219.]

Social Security Bill (Allocation of Time)

5.12 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): I beg to move,

That the Order of the House [15th April] be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1. — (1) The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting.

(2) The order in which the proceedings are taken shall be—

(a) the following Lords Amendments—
(i) 1 to 34;
(ii) 94 to 109;
(iii) 135 to 139;

(b) the following Lords Amendments—
(i) 35;
(ii) 42 to 44;
(iii) 36 to 39, 41, 45, 67, 119;

(c) the following Lords Amendments—
(i) 40;
(ii) 46 to 51 (including 48A);
(iii) 84 to 86;

(d) Lords Amendments 52 to 66, 68 to 83, 87 to 93, 110 to 118, 120 to 134 (including 121A), 140 to 184,

and, subject to the provisions of the Order [15th April], each part of those proceedings shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion not later than the end of such period beginning with the commencement of the proceedings on the Motion for this Order as is of the length specified in the second column of the Table set out below.

TABLE

Lords Amendments	*Length of period from commencement of proceedings on Motion*
Amendments up to the end of those listed in sub-paragraph (2)*(a)* above.	1 hour 15 mins
Amendments up to the end of those listed in sub-paragraph (2)*(b)* above.	2 hours
Amendments up to the end of those listed in sub-paragraph (2)*(c)* above.	3 hours
Amendments up to the end of those listed in sub-paragraph (2)*(d)* above.	4 hours

2.—(1) For the purposes of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment to the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—
(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment or, as the case may be, in their Amendment, as amended;
(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;
(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and
(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill shall be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of the proceedings.

4. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—
(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;
(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and
(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplement

5. — (1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and on the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any such Message or for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(3) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

(4) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(5) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a Member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(6) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

We have already spent a great deal of time debating the Bill. Up to now, a total of 224 hours have been spent in both Houses on the legislation. The Committee stage in this House alone took over 162 hours. If I may put the figure into context, the 224 hours spent on the Bill are already not far short of the 234 hours spent on four separate pieces of legislation between 1946 and 1948, which followed the Beveridge report. Therefore, more time has been spent on this social security legislation than on any other such legislation since the war.

I believe that the Bill has had a thorough examination, which has come on top of a period of consultation which began in November 1983. A total of 4,500 organisations

and members of the public gave evidence in that period. Ministers held 19 public sessions to take formal evidence. In June last year we published a Green Paper, "Reform of Social Security" and in December a White Paper followed. Never before have a Government carried out such an extensive consultation exercise prior to introducing legislation.

Many of the amendments that are before the House are technical changes, which I do not think should delay us. I recognise, however, that a number of the amendments made in the other place raise important questions. The motion has been drafted in such a way as to enable debate on those issues.

In those circumstances, I hope that the House will agree that the terms of the motion are adequate for our consideration of the Lords amendments and that we can proceed to the final stages of this important Bill.

5.14 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): There is something rather distasteful about putting a four-hour limit on debates on dozens of amendments received from another place, especially when three of them are extremely contentious. There is something infinitely more distasteful about forcing the measure through when the nation is distracted by the festivities of the royal wedding. But what is perhaps most distasteful of all is that the Government's business managers have deliberately orchestrated this dirty business in order to combine on this day, which might be expected to reflect a spirit of magnanimity and national unity, the imposition of extra rates payments of £300 million for the poorest people on supplementary benefit and cuts in single payments so necessary to their livelihood of some £150 million to £200 million—a total of nearly £500 million of cuts for some of the poorest people in our society.

I believe that any reasonably objective person would acknowledge that four hours in which to debate the amendments is absurdly inadequate. Indeed, it is not even four hours when one excludes the time spent protesting at the guillotine, which protest we are keeping short, but which is certainly necessary. When one excludes the time for votes, debating time is probably down to only two and a half hours. This is a charade when one bears it in mind that these are not some peripheral changes. Major modifications were made to the Bill in another place which have altered its structure and left it fundamentally flawed.

There has been forced retreat from the 2 per cent. personal pensions bribe; forced retreat on the payment of family credit to the father; forced retreat on the state-earnings related pension scheme; inclusion of community care additions for the disabled that the Government never intended; forced retreat on benefits for child minders; retreat on fares for the unemployed who do voluntary work; reversal of the Government's plans to force people, after emergencies or disasters, to apply to a discretionary social fund; defeat over the right to independent appeal from refusals of help under the social fund; and, of course, defeat over the imposition of the iniquitous 20 per cent. rates payment. After all that, the original structure and logic of the Bill are altered beyond recognition, and to allow a mere two and a half hours to debate what is now a largely rehashed Bill is, frankly, a travesty of parliamentary procedure.

That is the main ground on which we protest at the timetabling limit, but there are some others. Amendments from the other place made to other Bills are not being guillotined. Why should this Bill be singled out for such a restriction on debate? Indeed, if there is such a limit on time, how is it that three other major items of business are being taken afterwards? The fact is that the Government are gratuitously signalling their contempt for Parliament by putting a four-hour time limit on extremely contentious social security business, then putting on social security regulations that are also contentious, and following that with amendments from another place to three further Bills.

Another reason why we object to the guillotine is that the only relatively free—I say that as a term of art—and open voting on the Bill, free of the Whipping juggernaut in this House, has been in another place. After that led to such major structural changes in the Bill, it seems particularly offensive to use a 140 Whipped majority in this House to steamroller out all those changes within a debating period of two and a half hours, which is nothing more than an insult to the democratic process.

More specifically, we object because in all three of the main issues being debated today it is not simply a straightforward amendment in another place that is being reversed. In every case the thrust of the amendment made in another place is to be reversed, but in a manner which is not straightforward and which introduces several fresh complications.

On the 20 per cent. rates payment, the Government argue that the amendment from the other place is technically defective, but their own proposal goes far beyond reversing any technical defect and introduces several new questions which need adequate debating time. On the community care additions, the Government have, under the guise of tidying up a loosely drawn amendment, severely restricted the range of the proposal made in another place and have left open major new questions about who should or should not be covered. An entirely new concept is being introduced in the Bill, which it is ludicrous to restrict to a debate lasting three quarters of an hour to an hour.

On the question of independent appeals from social fund decisions, I should like to draw to the attention of the House the fact that since the issue was last debated in the House the European Court has ruled in two cases—one from Holland and one from Germany — that social security can be regarded as a civil right, and that under the European Convention on Human Rights there has to be an independent judicial element in social security disputes. That is very relevant. To restrict debate on this important matter to less than one hour in the light of the latest development from the European Court is, I repeat, a travesty of parliamentary procedure.

It is obvious that the Government have an obsessive determination to push through the reversal of these amendments with what I can only describe as indecent haste. The Government were even prepared in the early hours of this morning to sacrifice the Education Bill and to lose that important measure until October or November in order to get this Bill through at any cost in the next few days. I can explain why the Government are doing this. They are doing it because the Bill imposes cuts of £1,000 million on some of the most vulnerable people in society.

For those reasons, the Opposition strongly reject this unnecessary and offensive timetable motion. However, we do not propose to vote against it, not because of a lack of feeling on our part, but because of the way in which the Government have rigged the four hours of debate. It

[Mr. Michael Meacher]

would take a further 15 minutes out of the debate if we were to divide and that would cut in on what is already less than minimal debating time. Our decision not to divide the House on the motion must not be seen as silent approval of the guillotine. Quite the reverse is true. We strongly condemn and castigate the motion as unnecessary and offensive.

5.22 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I do not wish to detain the House for any longer than the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) did. However, it is important to reinforce some of the points that he made.

The Secretary of State is pushing the position beyond the limits of reasonableness by presenting us with more than 100 amendments to consider this evening. I have tried to count the amendments, but the problem is that many of them are grouped on the selection list in the form, "Nos. 84 to 86". At first sight the position does not seem to be too bad, but if one adds them up one finds that there are dozens and dozens of amendments. I remind the House that the Report stage in the House of Lords finished only this week.

The Secretary of State guillotined the Committee proceedings in a way which inevitably meant that many of the issues were not properly discussed. That inevitably resulted in the Government having to amend the Bill in the House of Lords. I have studied the House of Lords Committee proceedings and the Report proceedings very carefully. It is clear, especially in the pensions provisions, that the Government's proposals were so ill-digested that it was inevitable—and the Secretary of State and his advisers must have realised—that the Lords would be required to insert many technical amendments and tidying up provisions of the Government's own making.

It is right for the House to protest in the strongest possible terms, if only in an attempt to influence Parliament in future and stop it from engaging in a legislative programme which inevitably puts the House in an impossible position when considering technical details, especially in relation to pension provisions.

I completely agree with the hon. Member for Oldham, West. The three other substantive debates this evening are of a political nature. The Government must have known that a great deal of time would be necessary to deal with these technical amendments, and I object more to the lack of time to deal with them than I do to the scant time that is provided for the political debates on these extremely important matters.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the arguments that have taken place over the past week about the funding of the various social security programmes of political parties. How much does the alliance intend to spend on its social security programme? Can he provide us with a figure? During the course of these debates the alliance will climb on to Labour's argument in the country about the nature of the Government's social security proposals——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I find it very difficult to relate this intervention to the allocation of time motion.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am grateful for your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will have to wait and see. If I followed him down that avenue, I would inevitably be out of order.

The Secretary of State must accept the point made by myself and others in Committee. We said that the Bill was a mistake. The right hon. Gentleman should have introduced two or three Bills. If he had done that, the parliamentary process in both Houses would have been more sensible and would have given hon. Members a better chance to scrutinise the measures properly.

5.25 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Listening to some Opposition Members one would imagine that a guillotine had never been imposed before at any time at any stage on any Bill. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) repeated himself about six times. Although I was not a member of the Committee, there were more than 160 hours of debate——

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): The hon. Lady was not there.

Dame Jill Knight: I was not on the Committee of this Bill.

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Lady was not here either.

Dame Jill Knight: If the hon. Lady wants to make a speech later, she will no doubt be able to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, she must learn not to shout from a sedentary position when other hon. Members are trying to make their points.

Every hon. Member with any experience of these matters knows perfectly well that, unless a guillotine is imposed, the Bill will never get through the House. We all know of the ability of Members to make very long speeches to block the passage of Government business. In this instance the guillotine is perfectly reasonable and sensible. I strongly support it.

5.27 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): I find it especially offensive on this day of all days for Her Majesty's Government to come to the House an hour or two after witnessing the vulgar rich outside engaging in a spree which will cost the taxpayer we do not know what, and state that there will be two hours to debate the clobbering of the poor, as my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said, to the extent of at least £300 million.

Today's copy of *The Guardian* contains an article about the Child Poverty Action Group. The CPAG plans to run a campaign about what the Government have been up to since 1979. The article states:

> "The top 2 per cent. of taxpayers (earning £30,000-plus a year) are £2 billion better off this year as a result of tax cuts since 1979."

The article goes on to state that the poor are worse off by precisely the same amount. The Bill is part of that exercise.

However the Government wrap this up, they are suppressing debate on a matter about which the Opposition feel very strongly. They are trying to compress debate into one or two hours, because they think that events outside will take precedence in the press over their dirty work today. That is the purpose of today's exercise

and that has been the purpose of the exercise since 1979. If the Government were in the dock, by God the whole lot of them would be in Brixton prison tomorrow.

5.29 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): As one who was not privileged to participate in the Committee stage, I am astounded at the synthetic anger of the Opposition. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, there has been more debate on this Bill than on any other measure since the war. My right hon. Friend has explained how the Government's commitment to a thoroughgoing and overdue reform of the social security system has been dealt with in the greatest possible detail both in the Chamber and in Committee.

I am sure that all my hon. Friends are astounded that the Opposition wish so slavishly to adhere to amendments made in another place that they do not want them dealt with as proposed in the timetable motion. I am equally astounded that the Opposition are spending so much time on nonsensical argument about the timetable motion that there will be even less time to debate the substantive issues. I wonder how they will square that with their constituents, having given up the time that we wished to devote to debating the substance of the Bill and wasted it on all this nonsense about the timetable.

For all those reasons, I hope that we can now get on and approve the motion.

5.30 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I think that I am the first Back-Bench spokesman who was a member of the Committee, which is a reflection in itself. The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) said that we had plenty of time in Committee. In fact, after the guillotine was introduced, the Government put down about 50 amendments, taking up a great deal of the remaining time.

The reason for the Government's timing is obvious. It is because the eyes of people in this country and the world, for reasons best known to themselves, are marvelling at the event which has taken place today. Whether that is good or bad is a matter of opinion. What is appalling is that the Government should use this day to rob deprived people who have to pay their rents and bills and will be going to the social security offices tomorrow.

The Government have brought in a guillotine because the Bill cannot stand the light of examination, morally or otherwise. There is no justification whatever for this measure. It takes away the rights of the poor in relation to community care, the 20 per cent. rate contribution and the right of appeal.

Many years ago I read a book by a Christian priest entitled "The Confessions of an Ecclesiastical Coward", or something to that effect. He talked about rich and poor and the obscenity of the ring on the bishop's finger when people were dying of starvation. The Bill before us is an obscenity and should be thrown out immediately.

5.32 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Yesterday, the Tory Benches were packed, mainly by those who wished to retain corporal punishment. They are showing much less concern today. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where are all the Labour Members?"] We did not introduce the Bill.

If the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) does not understand why we are protesting, I will explain. The Bill is a further onslaught on the poorest members of the community. We believe that it is wrong that those whom we seek to protect should be subject to this kind of action from the Government and that we shall not have enough time to make our arguments.

The Report stage was also guillotined, and many issues that should have been debated were not discussed at all while other important issues received insufficient debate.

Any Conservative Member who thinks that our concern is not genuine should appreciate that when we talk about the poorest members of the community we refer not to a generalised problem but to many of our own constituents. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), answered a parliamentary question from me about the percentage increase in the number of people of working age — I stress that aspect — receiving supplementary benefit in the west midlands, the black country and my own borough, Walsall, since May 1979. The number in Walsall in 1979 was 6,381. The latest figure, given in the Minister's reply to me, is 20,743. In the black country, the figure has risen from 26,500 in May 1979 to 94,000 today.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): I do not wish to detract at all from the seriousness of that situation, save to make one point that the hon. Gentleman would no doubt wish to have on record. The increase in the value of supplementary benefit automatically increases the figures. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear that in mind before drawing too many conclusions from those figures.

Mr. Winnick: I have never heard such a threadbare argument, even from a Tory Minister. The figures show that many more of our constituents are now living in poverty as a result of Government policy. The increase in my borough in seven years of Conservative government has been 225 per cent. In the black country which takes in my borough, Dudley, Sandwell and Wolverhampton, the increase has been more than 255 per cent. Those daunting figures illustrate the poverty and devastation caused by the Government. That is why we want sufficient time to debate amendments and clauses of crucial importance to our constituents.

If the Lords amendments are rejected, the lives of the people whom I have described will be made even more difficult as a result of Government policy. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) is absolutely right to protest extremely strongly about the further guillotine proposal before us today.

5.37 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I shall not detain the House long as we want to get on with the substantive debates. Nevertheless, it should be on record for the benefit of members of the other place that we have not had time to consider their proposed changes in detail.

It is ridiculous for the Government to talk about the hours of debate in Committee when we have before us 184 amendments from another place which this House has not yet had the opportunity to address at all as well as amendments tabled by the Government yesterday, which have appeared on the Amendment Paper today, dealing with matters of great importance, yet the Opposition have had no opportunity to put down amendments to those proposals.

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

We have four hours to deal with 30 pages of minute detail, which gives us an average of one minute per amendment. Is that how the Government intend to pass social security legislation? If the Bill goes back to the other place tomorrow after the rejection of the Lords' proposals, they should know that we have not had time to divide the House on all the issues that we wished. I hope that the Lords will insist on their amendments, because we shall not have had time to do justice to their arguments or to the people affected by the proposals.

5.39 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I emphasise the points made by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and make one further point in opposing the guillotine.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) said that we had had a record amount of time to consider the Bill. Technically, she is right to refer to it as one Bill but a moment's consideration shows that it is really not one but five major Bills. We have had great difficulty securing sufficient time to debate all the issues involved, either in the Chamber or in Committee.

Like many other hon. Members, the hon. Member for Edgbaston knows that some of the proposals in what is being presented as a single Bill are contentious, to put it mildly. We are aware that the Government got many of them through by using the Whips. When they were taken to another place, however, the Government found it much more difficult to win the argument. As the hon. Member for Caernarfon said, we are supposed to examine the amendments at a rate of one a minute. The Government, far from giving us a free debate, will enforce their will by pushing through the guillotine motion.

As we debate the amendments, one crucial fact will form the backcloth. Many parts of the Bill will disadvantage many of our constituents. We must also remember that, since 1979, the richest 90,000 taxpayers have picked up an average of £12,750 in tax cuts whereas the poorest, who earn less than £5,000 a year, have gained an average of £55. Those are the Government's priorities, and it is those priorities, as they appear in the Bill, which we wish to oppose.

5.41 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I do not wish to detain the House, but I have a special reason for not wanting there to be a guillotine.

It is about time that we were given an opportunity to press the alliance for more information. I do not know whether hon. Members are aware of it, but the alliance is telling people that it intends to raise the level of benefits while, in Conservative-held constituencies which it is setting out to win at the next general election, it is not admitting that it intends to raise taxes. There is a dubious tone to the campaign that it is running. It is important that the alliance is pressed on these matters so that people who intend to vote for it are aware of the implications of their decision.

When people vote Labour, they know that we intend to raise taxes. We have been open and clear about that. It is part of the just arrangements which we say should prevail. The same cannot be said of the alliance. We should be able to press spokesmen for the alliance on every amendment to establish their real policy. It is unreasonable for a political party to talk of increasing provision but to refuse to acknowledge where it will raise the money required.

Some months ago, during Prime Minister's Question Time, I put it to the Prime Minister, from a sedentary position, that she did not care. I never believed that that intervention would catch as much as it did among Conservative Back Benchers. It caught because they knew that it was true. They know what their supporters in the country are saying.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The Queen does not like it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend is right. The editor of *The Sunday Times* advises us that his sources are impeccable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must stick to the allocation of time motion.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I was speaking absolutely to order because I believe that there are hundreds of Conservative Back Benchers who are desperate to speak up on these matters, and there will not be time. They know that they have a duty to the House and their constituents to bring to the House's attention the anxieties that are being expressed by their constituents. The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) shakes his head. Is he saying that there are not Conservatives, and thousands of them, in Mid-Worcestershire — I hope that I am reported on his local radio station — who are saying, when they gather socially and at political meetings——

Mr. Forth: They never mention it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: —that the Government are being insensitive to the needs of the unemployed?

Mr. Forth: They do not say that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is he saying that his local Conservatives are turning their backs on people in need?

Mr. Forth: No.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is he saying that they are not saying that the Government are turning their back on people in need and are refusing to accept that they should make greater provision? The hon. Gentleman does not care because he does not understand what local Conservatives are saying. He does not understand their worries. Every right hon. and hon. Member is being subjected to the same pressures. Conservative Members know that that is true, because they tell my hon. Friends so privately.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport) *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We do not have to catch them in the net in the House — we have millions in the country. They all know the truth, and they should go to Ministers privately and tell them what they are being told. What Conservative Back Benchers are doing is immoral. There is no justification for it. There are many people who believe in one-nation Conservatism and who object to what is going on and say, "Stop it." Why does the Secretary of State not stop it?

5.46 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is right to spend a few minutes debating the timetable motion

because it goes to the heart of everything that the Government are trying to do with the Bill. The Bill affects more people than any other legislation that has been passed during the past seven years—it affects the old, the young, the sick, the poor, the out-of-work and people in work. It even affects schoolchildren who will today lose their right to a free school meal because of the votes of Conservative Members.

Consideration of the Bill is to be timetabled because the Government do not want public debate of the matter. It is being timetabled today because they hope that people will be befuddled by the royal wedding and not learn in the newspapers what the Bill really means.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am getting a little worried by some of my hon. Friends' references to events that have taken place outwith this place today. Is my hon. Friend aware that, in the Department of Health and Social Security parlance, a certain young naval officer will, from today, receive an additional requirement—not a single payment—of some £30,000 a year?

Mr. Corbyn: I hope that he does not——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does he need it?

Mr. Corbyn: —ever have to claim social security, because he would have difficulty living on it. His £30,000 is more than many families get over several years. The money that he is getting would keep an awful lot of people for a long time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that the hon. Gentleman was tempted, but he must speak to the motion.

Mr. Corbyn: The motion is perfectly simple. The House is being gagged by a Tory majority because they do not want public debate on the most vicious piece of social legislation to be introduced by any Tory Government since the days of Neville Chamberlain. We shall oppose it. We will probably be defeated by the willing herd of sycophants behind the Minister, but we shall defeat them in a general election and change the legislation.

5.48 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): The sooner that this courageous Bill to simplify and modernise the social security system reaches the statute book, the better. No Bill has been better debated inside the House and outside it since I was elected. Every beneficiary group is represented professionally. We have been inundated with correspondence and information. We know very well what the Bill is about and the sooner it reaches the statute book the better.

As for the charge that the Conservative party does not care for the unemployed, I find that the major complaint in my surgeries from the unemployed is that it is not worth while going out to work. That is one thing which the Bill tries to remedy, and the sooner it is done, the better.

5.49 pm

Dr. Norman Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I wish to voice my dismay and concern at the guillotine on this Bill.

Poverty is not distributed evenly throughout Great Britain. Strathclyde region in Scotland is acknowledged by the European Commission as one of the most deprived regions in the European Community. In my constituency, more than 40 per cent. of those whom I represent, about 33,000 people, live on or below supplementary benefit level. I protest most strongly on their behalf at the way in which the Government have treated the Bill and deliberations on it by introducing this guillotine motion.

Tory Members claim that the Government are a caring, compassionate Administration. If that is so, why is a large part of the electorate outside the deep south so hostile to the Tory party? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can we be assured that *Hansard* has recorded the remarks of the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer)?

5.50 pm

Mr. Fowler: I shall respond briefly to the debate. I heard with mounting disbelief what the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and many of his hon. Friends were saying. It is almost exactly 10 years since the day, in July 1976, when the Labour Government imposed, not one guillotine, but five guillotines in one day. This is the 10th anniversary of that action by the Labour Government. The Health Service Bill was guillotined that day and it had started its Committee stage only four weeks previously. The Minister in charge of the Education Bill was none other than the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett).

Mrs. Beckett: Will the Secretary of State tell us in how many of those cases the content of the Bill was debated within the same timetable motion?

Mr. F[illegible]: My point is that there was no precedent for the five guillotine motions imposed that day, and the hon. Lady knows that that is the case.

The Government are simply not prepared to take lectures on imposing guillotines from the Labour party. When the hon. Member for Oldham, West poses as a defender of the House of Lords, this debate has reached an extraordinary stage. We have taken 224 hours to debate this social security legislation. We have taken 163 hours in Committee. That is longer than on any other social security legislation since the war, and it is certainly much longer than on any other social security legislation which was introduced by the Labour Government.

I must say to the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) that many of the amendments are, as they well know, technical changes which should not delay the House greatly. I recognise that some amendments made in the other place raise important questions, and the motion before the House has been drafted in such a way as to enable debate on those issues to take place. I suggest that that debate now takes place.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Order of the House [15th April] be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting.

(2) The order in which the proceedings are taken shall be—

(a) the following Lords Amendments—

(i) 1 to 34;

(ii) 94 to 109;

(iii) 135 to 139;

(b) the following Lords Amendments—

(i) 35;

(ii) 42 to 44;

[Mr. Fowler]

(iii) 36 to 39, 41, 45, 67, 119;

(c) the following Lords Amendments—

(i) 40;

(ii) 46 to 51 (including 48A);

(iii) 84 to 86;

(d) Lords Amendments 52 to 66, 68 to 83, 87 to 93, 110 to 118, 120 to 134 (including 121A), 140 to 184,

and, subject to the provisions of the Order [15th April], each part of those proceedings shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion not later than the end of such period beginning with the commencement of the proceedings on the Motion for this Order as is of the length specified in the second column of the Table set out below.

TABLE

Lords Amendments	*Length of period from commencement of proceedings on Motion*
Amendments up to the end of those listed in sub-paragraph (2)*(a)* above.	1 hour 15 mins
Amendments up to the end of those listed in sub-paragraph (2)*(b)* above.	2 hours
Amendments up to the end of those listed in sub-paragraph (2)*(c)* above.	3 hours
Amendments up to the end of those listed in sub-paragraph (2)*(d)* above.	4 hours

2.—(1) For the purposes of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment to the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment or, as the case may be, in their Amendment, as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill shall be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of the proceedings.

4. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplement

5. — (1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and on the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any such Message or for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(3) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

(4) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(5) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a Member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(6) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

Orders of the Day

Social Security Bill

Lords amendments considered

Clause 1

MINIMUM CONTRIBUTIONS TO PERSONAL PENSION SCHEMES.

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 8, at beginning insert

"Subject to subsection (3A) below,".

5.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments:

No. 2, in page 2, line 10, at end insert—

"(3A) In such circumstances as may be prescribed the Secretary of State shall pay minimum contributions to a prescribed person."

No. 4, in clause 3, page 4, line 13, at beginning insert

"Subject to subsection (1A) below,".

No. 5, page 4, line 27, at end insert—

"(1A) In relation to earnings paid with respect to any such employment as may be prescribed, subsection (1) above shall have effect as if the words 'the aggregate of' and paragraph *(b)* and the word 'and' immediately preceding it were omitted."

No. 6, in clause 4, page 5, line 20, after "earner" insert "sections 16(2B), 28(7A) and 59(1A) of the Social Security Act 1975 and".

No. 7, in clause 5, page 6, line 22, at end insert—

"section 52C of or paragraph 16 of".

No. 8, page 6, line 41, after "29" insert "(2) and".

No. 9, page 6, line 43, leave out from beginning to "were" at page 7, line 7, and insert—

"to that person and a widow or widower of that person as if any guaranteed minimum pension to which that person or any such widow or widower is treated as entitled under those provisions, and which derives from the minimum contributions, minimum payments (within the meaning of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975) or transfer payment or payments from which those rights derive".

No. 10, page 7, line 26, leave out from "pension" to end of line 27 and insert—

"such as is mentioned in subsection (9) above."

No. 94, in schedule 1, page 88, line 15, leave out "or" and insert—

"pension scheme or protected rights (within the meaning of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975) under an".

No. 95, page 88, line 20, at beginning insert "The value of".

No. 96, page 88, line 23, after "which" insert "the value of".

No. 97, page 89, line 15, leave out sub-paragraph (3) and insert—

"(3) Effect may be given to protected rights by the provision of a lump sum if—

(a) the lump sum is payable on a date which is either the date on which the member attains pensionable age or such later date as has been agreed by him; and

(b) the annual rate of a pension under sub-paragraph (1) above or an annuity under sub-paragraph (2) above giving effect to the protected rights and commencing on the date on which the lump sum is payable would not exceed the prescribed amount; and

(c) the circumstances are such as may be prescribed; and

(d) the amount of the lump sum is calculated in a manner satisfactory to the Occupational Pensions Board by reference to the amount of the pension or annuity."

No. 98, page 89, line 46, after "amount" insert—

"and the circumstances are such as may be prescribed,"

No. 99, page 90, line 17, leave out from "with" to end of line 46 and insert—

"any such requirements as may be prescribed for meeting the whole or a prescribed part of any liability in respect of protected rights under the scheme which the scheme is unable to meet from its own resources—

(a) by reason of the commission by any person of a criminal offence;

(b) in such other circumstances as may be prescribed."

I inform the House that Lords amendments Nos. 1 and 2 involve privilege.

Mr. Major: Many of these amendments are drafting or technical changes to ensure that the Bill works as intended. *[Interruption.]* However, a small number of amendments deserve particular, but brief, mention, even at the risk of having to speak over the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

Amendments Nos. 4 and 5 enable regulations to be made excluding some people from entitlement to the 2 per cent. incentive addition to the payment which DHSS Newcastle will make to their personal pensions. That is for a five-year period until April 1993, and it is in addition to the normal contracted-out rebate.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State undertook to do when the Bill was last considered by the House, we have listened carefully to representations about this incentive payment, particularly to the proposition that it should not go to people who have been in contracted-out occupational schemes. While we remain unpersuaded by the predictions of dire consequences for occupational schemes if this modest inducement were to remain available, we certainly do not doubt or question the sincerity of those who find this an issue of principle. After careful consideration, not forced retreat, as the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) claimed earlier, we have decided to make these amendments. The principle we are accepting is that the 2 per cent. incentive will not be available to people who have belonged to a contracted-out occupational scheme for a reasonable period and who then leave it voluntarily.

What is a reasonable period? No decision has yet been taken about that, primarily because we wish to listen carefully to the views put to us. The proposals for the regulations will be subject to full public consultation later this year, and I hope that the House will welcome that.

Of less importance, but worth mentioning, are amendments Nos. 1 and 2 which give power to allow outstanding payments from DHSS Newcastle to be made to a scheme or insurer to which a person's pension savings have been transferred. Without these amendments we would occasionally have faced the absurd situation of those payments having effectively no proper home to go to because the person had taken his or her accumulated pension rights elsewhere. The provision commits the contracted-out rebate effectively to follow the pension savings.

[Mr. Major]

Finally, amendment No. 99 replaces paragraph 10 of schedule 1 with a specifically worded power. On reflection, and in the light of advice from some pensions experts, paragraph 10 did not do what we intended it to do. The amendment ensures that there is power to make regulations about the arrangements that a personal pension scheme must make to compensate members if it cannot meet its liabilities because of fraud, theft or negligence. My right hon. Friend invited the Occupational Pensions Board earlier this year to advise on compensation arrangements for personal pensions. We have just received its advice and will consider it carefully, with the other Departments concerned, before publishing consultative proposals later this year. That is in line with our intentions originally set out in the social security White Paper. I commend the amendments to the House.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): One of the reasons why we have argued that the time for debate on the Bill has been inadequate has just been made plain by the Minister. It is more than ever apparent that in this House, in the other place and again in this House the Government are making up the Bill as they go along. Every time the Government announce some fresh changes, there is buried within them the words that the Government have yet to make up their mind or that they do not know exactly what the change means but sooner or later, in the fullness of time, all will be revealed. Tonight we are being asked to put on the statute book a Bill, many of the details of which remain unclear and will be settled in future.

Despite the changes that the Government have made on the 2 per cent. bribe, we remain of the view that personal pensions are likely to leave many people with wholly inadequate pension provision for their retirement which will inevitably mean that in future many more pensioners will be dependent on the equivalent of supplementary benefit. We remain even more strongly of the view that to offer people a 2 per cent. bribe to encourage them to run the risk of poverty in old age is morally indefensible, and, despite the Minister's concessions, may damage good occupational pension schemes. We shall terminate this bribe at the earliest possible moment after the general election. I do not intend to detain the House further on these amendments.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Amendment Nos. 4 and 5 attempt to limit the substantial move towards personal pensions that is generally expected when the regulations are published and come into effect. As a proponent of personal pensions for some time, I must admit that I welcome the amendment through slightly gritted teeth. That is not to say that the occupational pensions industry, which pushed hard for the amendment, has anything to be ashamed of. I pay tribute to the work that the industry has done over many years in building up occupational pensions to the extent that the freedom of personal pensions can take off from the ground work that it has laid. It has little to fear, in the growth of occupational pensions, from the fact that personal pensions will grow also. Nevertheless, personal pensions will grow slightly less slowly if the amendment is passed.

The amendment leaves the Secretary of State with the duty, ultimately, of regulating the time within which a member of an occupational scheme must decide whether or not to leave that scheme and to take out his own scheme. I press my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), to allow a considerable time to pass before he closes the door. Until the advent of the Bill, many occupational pension schemes were compulsory. Therefore, many people in occupational pension schemes will want to consider whether to opt out of those schemes and take out a personal pension.

That consideration will not be taken lightly or quickly. Very few people in occupational pension schemes have studied their schemes to the extent that they can say, off the top of their heads, whether the life cover in the scheme is adequate or whether it is below what is available on the market. Very few people can say whether the accrual rate on investments in the fund compares adequately with alternative accrual rates available elsewhere, or whether —this will be regulated by the Financial Services Bill— the charges levied by the managers of the schemes, especially in the early years, are comparable with those available in other schemes.

As a result of the publicity that will be generated by the passage of the legislation, many people will consider whether to move out of occupational schemes. I believe that in the majority of cases they will decide to stay in their present schemes. It will take a long time to get all the information together and to obtain adequate comparisons.

My comments are even more true of someone joining an occupational scheme after the legislation is effected, when the incentive is available. He will need a considerable amount of time to decide on the financial options. Once that decision has been made, further time will be necessary, in many cases, for the individual pension contributor to negotiate with his employer as to whether the employer will be prepared to make a corporate contribution to his individual pension scheme. All that will take time. Mechanisms must be developed, within the period in which the 2 per cent. incentive is available, to enable that to take place.

When my hon. Friend considers, as a result of consultation, what length of time to allow a pensioner, who may be a compulsory member of a pension scheme — he never had a choice in the matter because he wanted to keep his job — to decide whether or not to take the freedom offered, for the first time, as a result of the Bill, I hope that he will err on the side of generosity. I should have thought that a period of five years was by no means unreasonable.

My hon. Friend is to consult all relevant interests to decide on the time limit. He should not limit his consultations to representatives of existing pension schemes and existing pension scheme providers. As was noted in Standing Committee in a brief debate, to which both the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and I contributed, there is in existence a sort of pensions ombudsman. Although limited in scope, that office is doing useful work. I share the hope of the hon. Lady that the work of that or a similar office will be extended in the future.

That office has considerable experience of what one might call the unsatisfactory occupational pension schemes, about which a contributor who might consider leaving his existing scheme could require advice. I hope that in consulting on such schemes my hon. Friend will consider the experience of people who have complained to that ombudsman and ensure that he allows an adequate time limit.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I had some difficulty in trying to disentangle the import of amendments Nos. 4 and 5. I was assisted to some extent by the debate that took place in the other place. I welcome the amendment so far as it goes. It would be churlish of me to do otherwise. I raised the point in Committee and it was raised by Lord Banks in the other place.

It is important to recognise that the Government are assuming a wide power. I ask whether the wide powers that will be assumed by the Government will be used to exclude the 2 per cent. incentive for anyone who, after a "reasonable" period as a member of a contracted-out occupational scheme, decides of his own volition to leave it in favour of an "appropriate" personal pension. If that is the clear intention of the amendment, I support it and endorse what the Government are doing.

The definition of the word "reasonable" in that context should be relatively short. I draw the Government's attention to a possible comparison in length with the cooling off period required under the Financial Services Bill. As the Minister is probably aware, that is intended to cover those who join a contracted-out scheme but regret the decision and change their minds. That is the reasonable period that we would have in mind as a sensible way to proceed. If the word "reasonable" is interpreted in the regulations as longer than that, my enthusiasm for the change would quickly wane.

Because of the wide-ranging nature of the power, I seek an assurance from the Minister that there will be the fullest possible consultation with the industry and other interested parties before introducing the regulations, which will be extremely important to the way that the schemes work. That is a minimum requirement for my continued support of the amendment.

The hon. Member for Derby, South maintains the use of the pejorative word "bribe" in relation to the 2 per cent., but I am prepared to start considering it more in terms of an incentive than a bribe.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I wish to speak only briefly because the House knows that I have serious reservations about the principle and many of the details of the Bill. As the Bill stands, it contains provisions that will have serious disadvantages for a large number of my constituents in Kensington where many poor families have to pay exceptionally high rents and rates. They, in particular, stand to suffer from the Bill if it is passed in the form that seems likely.

I pay tribute to Ministers who have listened to our debates and made many important improvements in Standing Committee and in another place. I thank especially my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), in respect of the 2 per cent. "inducement", or whatever word one might wish to use, which was originally intended to lure pension scheme members away from occupational pension schemes to private provisions.

I listened carefully to the comments of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and am glad that he has taken on board the criticisms made in Parliament and outside on this subject. No final decisions have yet been taken on the 2 per cent. inducement. I hope that, in the further discussions on this point, the Government will take account of the fact that contributions to the private sector schemes are not enough, even for the long stayers, and need to be very much increased, but not by a little manoeuvre of this kind.

Early leavers and personal pension scheme members get a still worse deal than those who belong to group schemes as long stayers. This 2 per cent. subsidy from the taxpayer to encourage members to leave collective schemes is an ungainly and unwarranted intervention in the working of the capital market which will persist until April 1993. It would be better to withdraw the proposal altogether. I hope that that will be the Government's conclusion by the end of their deliberations.

It would be far better to induce the Treasury to regard the employer's entire national insurance contributions as the employee's deferred pay. That would significantly help to lift private sector pensioners from dependence on supplementary benefit. At the moment, the money flowing into occupational schemes in the private sector is not enough to do that. The problems of the millions of people on supplementary benefit in retirement is, I am afraid, likely to remain with us as the Bill stands. The Bill's object should be to reduce dramatically the number of people dependent on means-tested benefit through case work. I am afraid that, as the Bill stands, it will only add to their number.

Mr. Major: With the leave of the House, I shall reply briefly to some of the points that have been raised.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) and to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) for their welcome of amendments Nos. 4 and 5. I note the cautionary words implicit in the remarks of those hon. Members about the definition of the word "reasonable" and the conclusion of the consultation period. I assure the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire and my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) that we shall consult widely before laying the regulations on the 2 per cent. incentive. We plan to publish a consultation document later this year and to consider representations before publishing the regulations. I shall take careful note of the other important points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West.

The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) rather uncharitably accused us of making up the Bill as we went along. I simply remind her that we are at present responding to representations made, not least by the Opposition, and I had hoped that the hon. Lady would welcome that. I remind the hon. Lady, who is clearly concerned about the number of regulations that spin off from this legislation, that it is in the nature of pensions legislation—both this and prior legislation—that many matters are best left to regulations. There is nothing novel in that concept.

The hon. Member for Derby, South said that she and her hon. Friends, if given the opportunity — which I think is unlikely — would remove the 2 per cent. incentive as soon as possible. She did not define what was meant by "as soon as possible". She did not on this or on previous occasions answer the question whether the Labour party would take similar action with the remainder of the contracted-out rebate. I hope that at some stage Labour Members will make clear their position. I hope that the amendments will be approved.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment agreed to. [Special Entry.]

[Mr. Major]

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Clause 2

APPROPRIATE SCHEMES

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 4, line 12, at end insert—

"under section 41 of the Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980"

6.15 pm

Mr. Major: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 32, in clause 16, page 20, line 30, at end insert—

"*(aa)* the Sheriffs' Pensions (Scotland) Act 1961;"

Mr. Major: I am assured by my colleagues in the Scottish Office that these two technical amendments are necessary so that the provisions of the Social Security Bill sit happily with existing regulations. I am happy to take their advice, and I trust that the House will do so also.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 7

SCHEMES BECOMING CONTRACTED-OUT BETWEEN 1986 AND 1993

Lords amendment: No. 11, in page 8, line 24, leave out "to the trustees or managers of the scheme".

Mr. Major: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 12, in page 8, line 34, at end insert—

"(1A) The Secretary of State shall make a payment under this section to the trustees or managers of the scheme except that in such circumstances as may be prescribed he shall make such a payment to a prescribed person."

No. 13, in clause 8, page 10, line 10, at end insert—

"and except to that extent shall be treated for the purposes of section 50 of that Act (requirement of consent of Occupational Pensions Board to alterations of rules of schemes) as if it had never existed".

No. 14, in clause 9, page 12, line 10, at end insert "*(h)* section 52D,"

No. 15, in page 12, line 15, after "earner" insert—

"in any case where he is entitled to a widower's invalidity pension, but that reference shall be so constructed where he is entitled to any other benefit"

No. 16, in page 13, leave out lines 36 to 40 and insert—

"(8) Except as permitted by subsection (13), (14) or (14A) below, the trustees or managers of a scheme may not make an increase in a person's pension which is required by virtue of this section out of money which would otherwise fall to be used for the payment of benefits under the scheme to or in respect of that person unless—

(a) the payment is to an earner in respect of the tax year in which he attains pensionable age and the increase is the one required to be made in the following year; or

(b) the payment is to a person as the widow or widower of an earner who died before attaining pensionable age in respect of the tax year in which the person became a widow or widower and the increase is the one required to be made in the next following tax year."

No. 17, in page 14, line 42, at end insert—

"(14A) Where in any tax year subsequent to 1989-90 the trustees or managers of a scheme make an increase which is partly made otherwise than in pursuance of this section, they may deduct the part of the increase made otherwise than in pursuance of this section from any increase which, but for this subsection, they would be required to make under this section in the next following year."

No. 18, in line 43, leave out "or (14)" and insert ",(14) or (14A)"

No. 19, in page 15, line 2, at end insert—

"(16) Where by virtue of any of those subsections guaranteed minimum pensions are required to be increased in pursuance of this section by an amount less than they otherwise would be, their amount shall be calculated for any purpose as if they had been increased by that full amount."."

No. 20, in line 5, leave out "or (14)" and insert", (14) or (14A)'

No. 21, after clause 10, insert the following new clause—

". The following shall be inserted after section 56N of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975—

"*Auditors*

Regulations as to auditors

56P. The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision as to—

(a) the appointment, resignation and removal of auditors of occupational pension schemes;

(b) the duty of employers and auditors of employers to disclose information to the trustees or managers of occupational pension schemes and the auditors of such schemes;

(c) the duty of trustees or managers of an occupational pension scheme to disclose information and to make available documents to the auditors of the scheme."

No. 100, in schedule, 2, page 91, line 18, after "section" insert—

"and sections 16(2B), 28(7A) and 59(1A) of the principal Act".

No.101, in page 93, line 35, leave out from "to" end of line 39 and insert—

"minimum contributions there shall be substituted references to minimum payments and any payments by the Secretary of State under section 7 of the Social Security Act 1986;"

No. 102, in line 49, leave out from "rights" to "pension" in page 94, line 1 and insert—

"(within the meaning of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975) under another occupational pension scheme or protected rights under a personal".

No. 103, in page 94, line 4, leave out

"for the reference in paragraph 9"

and insert

"in paragraph 9—

(i) for the reference to an occupational pension scheme there shall be substituted a reference to a personal pension scheme; and

(ii) for the reference"

No. 104, in line 13, leave out "trustees or managers" and insert "employers".

No. 105, in page 95, line leave out "improve" and insert "approve".

No. 106, in page 96, line 1, after "29" insert "(2)".

No. 107, in line 3, leave out from beginning to "were" in line 13 and insert.

"to that person and a widow or widower of that person as if any guaranteed minimum pension to which that person or any such widow or widower is treated as entitled under those provisions, and which derives from the minimum payments, minimum contributions (within the meaning of the Social Security Act 1986) or transfer payment or payments from which those rights derive"

No. 108, in page 96, line 37, leave out from "pension" to end of line 39 and insert—

"such as is mentioned in subsection (8) above."

No. 109, in page 98, line 11, leave out

"after the definition of 'accrued rights'"

and insert

"before the definition of 'guaranteed minimum pension'".

I inform the House that amendment No. 11 involves privilege.

Mr. Major: Many of these amendments make drafting or technical changes. One that perhaps deserves particular mention is amendment No. 16 to clause 9. Apart from making some minor drafting changes, this provides for an exception, but only in the first year following payment of a guaranteed minimum pension, to the general rule that an increase in that GMP may not be provided out of any other part of the person's benefits due under the scheme. This relaxation will effectively simplify the administration of schemes which increase pensions other than at the beginning of a tax year and will mean that they will not have to provide two separate pension increases in the first year.

Amendments Nos. 17 to 20 are technical amendments to protect pensioners. They ensure that, where an occupational pension scheme takes advantage of provisions which allow an increase in the occupational pension to count towards an increase in the GMP, the pensioner does not overall receive less than the required annual increase in the GMP.

Amendments Nos. 11 and 12 allow outstanding incentive payments to be made to the scheme or insurer to which the pension rights of the member concerned have been transferred. Amendment No. 13 relieves the Occupational Pensions Board of the duty to examine scheme rules relating to "requisite benefits" for periods before clause 8 is operative.

Amendment No. 21 introduces a new clause, after clause 10, which enables regulations to be made about the appointment, tenure and powers of auditors of occupational pension schemes in relation to their duties in connection with the disclosure requirements on schemes.

I commend the amendments to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, one with Special Entry.

Clause 11

CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCHEMES

Lords amendment: No. 22, in page 15, line 28, at end insert—

"( ) must not prohibit, or allow any person to prohibit, the payment by a member of voluntary contributions;"

Mr. Major: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 23, in page 15, line 30, leave out from "on" to end of line 33 and insert—

"the payment by a member of voluntary contributions".

No. 24, in line 34, leave out from "any" to "are" in line 36 and insert—

"voluntary contributions paid by a member".

No. 25, in line 38, leave out from "provide" to "and" in line 40 and insert—

"additional benefits for or in respect of him".

No. 26, in line 42, leave out from "regard" to end of line 43 and insert—

"(i) to the amount of the voluntary contributions; and

(ii) to the value of the other benefits under the scheme."

No. 27, in page 16, line 44, after "(4)" insert "or (6)".

No. 28, in page 17, line 24, after "(4)" insert "or (6)".

No. 29, in clause 14, page 18, line 25, leave out from "schemes" to "that" in line 26 and insert—

"shall be void; and

(b) any such term or rule to the effect".

No. 30, in line 28, leave out from "scheme" to end of line 30 and insert—

"of which the earner is not a member, or to one or other of a number of personal or occupational pension schemes of none of which he is a member, shall be unenforceable for so long as he is not a member of the scheme or any of the schemes."

No. 31, in clause 15, page 19, line 30, after "applies" insert—

"(including changes affecting adjustments under the regulations)".

Mr. Major: All these amendments are drafting amendments which involve no changes of substance to the Bill. I commend them to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 17

RETIREMENT PENSIONS

Lords amendment: No. 33, in page 22, line 4, after "contributions" insert "or earnings".

Mr. Major: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we will consider Lords amendment No. 34, in page 22, line 16, at end insert—

"(5) For the purpose of determining the additional pension falling to be calculated under section 6 of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 by virtue of section 7, 13 or 16(4) of that Act in a case where the deceased spouse died under pensionable age, the following definition shall be substituted for the definition of 'N' in section 6(2B)—

'N = the number of tax years which begin after 5th April 1978 and end before the date when entitlement to the additional pension commences, except that where—

(a) in a case in which the deceased spouse was a man, that number would be greater than 49; or

(b) in a case in which the deceased spouse was a woman, that number would be greater than 44,

N = 49 or 44, as the case may be;'.

(6) For the purpose of determining the additional pension falling to be calculated under section 6 of that Act by virtue of section 14 of that Act (invalidity pension for persons under pensionable age), the following definition shall be substituted for the definition of 'N' in section 6(2B)—

'N = the number of tax years which begin after 5th April 1978 and end before the first day of entitlement to the additional pension in the period of interruption of employment in which that day falls except that where—

(a) in a case in which the person entitled to the pension is a man, that number would be greater than 49; or

(b) in a case in which the person so entitled is a woman, that number would be greater than 44,

N = 49 or 44, as the case may be;'."

Mr. Major: The amendments to clause 17 are all of a technical or drafting nature.

Amendment No. 33 is consequential on the provisions in clause 72 and schedule 8, which relate to earnings factors.

Amendment No. 34 modifies the calculations for SERPS, additional pensions for widow's and invalidity pensions to ensure that they are made on the same basis as for a person reaching pensionable age in the same year.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Schedule 10

Minor and Consequential Amendments

Lords amendment: No. 135, in page 133, line 30, at end insert—

"2A. In section 64 (modification of occupational pension scheme by order of Occupational Pensions Board) the following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (1)—

"(1A) The Board shall also have power on such an application to make an order—

(a) authorising the modification of the scheme with a view to achieving any one or more of such other purposes as may be prescribed; or

(b) modifying the scheme with a view to achieving any one or more of those purposes"."

Mr. Major: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following Lords amendments:

No. 136, in page 135, line 30, leave out

"(1)*(a)* (contracted-out rates of benefit)"

and insert

"(contracted-out rates of benefit)—

(a) in subsection (1)*(a)*."

No. 137, in page 135, line 33, at end insert—

"*(b)* in subsection (2)—

(i) after the words "this section" there shall be inserted the words "and sections 16(2B), 28(7A) and 59(1A) of the principal Act"; and

(ii) at the end there shall be added the words "or if as a result of a transfer payment or transfer under regulations made by virtue of section 38 below he is no longer entitled to guaranteed minimum pensions under the scheme by which the transfer payment or transfer is made and has not as a result of the transfer payment or transfer becomes entitled to guaranteed minimum pensions under the scheme to which the transfer payment or transfer is made.""

No. 138, in page 136, line 11, leave out paragraph 17 and insert—

"17. The following subsection shall be substituted for section 38(1) (transfer of accrued rights)—

(1) Regulations may prescribe circumstances in which and conditions subject to which—

(a) there may be made by one occupational pension scheme to another or by an occupational pension scheme to a personal pension scheme a transfer of or a transfer payment in respect of—

(i) an earner's accrued rights to guaranteed minimum pensions under a contracted-out scheme;

(ii) an earner's accrued rights to pensions under an occupational pension scheme which is not contracted-out, to the extent that those rights derive from his accrued rights to guaranteed minimum pensions under a contracted-out scheme; or

(iii) the liability for the payment of guaranteed minimum pensions to or in respect of any person who has become entitled to them;

(b) there may be made to an occupational pension scheme or a personal pension scheme a transfer of or a transfer payment in respect of an earner's accrued rights to guaranteed minimum pensions which are appropriately secured for the purposes of section 52C below."

No. 139, in page 138, line 17, leave out paragraph 25 and insert—

"25.—(1) Section 52C (cases where scheme's liability is discharged) shall have effect and shall be deemed always to have had effect as if the following subsections were substituted for subsections (1) to (3)—

"(1) A transaction to which this section applies discharges the trustees or managers of an occupational pension scheme from their liability to provide for or in respect of any person either the requisite benefits or short service benefit or any alternative to short service benefit—

(a) if it is carried out not earlier than the time when that person's pensionable service terminates; and

(b) if and to the extent that it results in—

(i) the requisite benefits; or

(ii) short service benefit or an alternative to short service benefit, for or in respect of that person being appropriately secured; and

(c) in a case where the transaction takes place on or after 1st January 1986, if and to the extent that the requirements set out in anyone of paragraphs *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* of subsection (5) below are satisfied.

(2) This section applies to the following transactions—

(a) the taking out or the transfer of the benefit of a policy of insurance or a number of such policies;

(b) the entry into or the transfer of the benefit of an annuity contract or a number of such contracts.".

(2) Subsection (5) of that section shall have effect and shall be deemed always to have had effect as if "(1)" were substituted for "(2)*(b)*".

(3) In relation to transactions which take place after the commencement of section 8 above section 52C(1) of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 shall have effect with the substitution of the words "guaranteed minimum pensions" for the words "the requisite benefits", in both places where they occur.

25A.—(1) Subsection (1) of section 52D (supplementary provisions) shall have effect and shall be deemed always to have had effect—

(a) as if the following paragraph were substituted for paragraph *(b)*—

( ) "*(b)* either—

(i)) the transaction wholly or partly securing them was carried out before 1st January 1986 and discharged the trustees or managers of the scheme as mentioned in subsection (1) of that section; or

(ii) it is carried out on or after that date without any of the requirements specified in subsection (5)*(a)* to *(c)* of that section being satisfied in relation to it and the scheme has been wound up;"; and

(b) as if for the words from "entitled" to "which" there were substituted the words "only entitled to such part (if any) of his or her guaranteed minimum pension as".

(2) In that subsection after the words "purposes of" there shall be inserted the words "sections 16(2B), 28(7A) and 59(1A) of the principal Act and".

25B. The following definition shall be inserted after the definition of "occupational pension scheme" in section 66(1)—

""personal pension scheme" has the meaning assigned to it by section 80(1) of the Social Security Act 1986;"."

Mr. Major: Although these amendments are technical, they are important for the smooth operation of the legislation in practice.

Amendment No. 135 gives authority to extend the existing powers of the Occupational Pensions Board to modify the rules of an occupational pension scheme. That would be used where those rules would otherwise prevent the scheme from complying with a statutory requirement or exercising an option available under the law — for example, one of the permitted options for reducing surplus funds as proposed under the Finance Bill.

Amendments Nos. 136, 137 and 138 substitute a revised version of section 38(1) in the Social Security Pensions Act 1975. This provides for the regulations about transfers of guaranteed minimum pensions. A central feature of the new pension arrangements will be that contracted-out rights will be capable of maximum transferability, when an employee changes his job or alters his pension arrangements. We have made it clear that existing schemes will not be required to provide transfer values of rights built up before the new arrangements begin to people who opt out of the scheme while continuing in the job. But where the right to a transfer value is available, we do not want to put unnecessary restrictions on what can be done with any GMP element which it may include. Where the individual wants to — but not of course otherwise — it seems reasonable that he should be allowed to apply the value of the GMP to buying "protected rights" in a personal pension or money purchase contracted-out scheme. These amendments enable regulations to be made about that. The details will be included in the consultative proposals which we will be issuing later this year.

Amendment No. 139 has been made in response to requests from the pensions practitioners. It clarifies that section 52C of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 provides a discharge for scheme trustees even in cases where the benefits secured by an insurance policy or annuity contract are not identical to those which would have been provided by the scheme. The revised provision will have effect from the date that section 52C was operative — 1 January 1986 — so that pension schemes can have confidence in the legal soundness of their arrangements to date.

Mr. Kirkwood: I wish to speak briefly to amendment No. 139. If my understanding is wrong, perhaps the Minister will put me right this evening or perhaps, more appropriately, drop me a note about it.

As I understand the amendment, we have introduced into paragraph 26 of schedule 10 a retrospective amendment to section 52C of the Social Security Act 1985. That was one of several amendments in a package taken in another place. It included amendments to the regulations which are designed to remove the present difficulty for scheme trustees and insurance companies in implementing the buying-out requirements under the Act. I understand and appreciate that.

However, although the amendment is fully retrospective to 1 January 1986, the Department is not taking power to make retrospective the related amendments to the regulations. If that is true, and if my understanding is correct, the present impasse on buying-out will not be dealt with. It will continue until all the amendments are effective. I suggest that paragraph 26 of schedule 10 should be looked at again with a view to an extension to provide that regulations made within six months of the commencement date of this paragraph under the powers in section 52C or paragraphs 13 and 20 of schedule 1A to the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 should also be retrospective to 1 January 1986. That would enable buying-out to proceed without any further delay once the proposed content of the amending regulations is known.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting and intriguing point to which I am sure there is a satisfactory answer. I shall raise precisely that interesting and intriguing point over the next day or so and write to the hon. Gentleman with a definitive reply.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 19

INCOME RELATED BENEFITS

Lords amendment: No. 35, in page 24, line 8, at end insert—

"(1A) The scheme prescribed in subsection (1)*(a)* above shall provide for weekly payments of a community care addition to a chronically sick or disabled or elderly person, or in respect of a chronically sick or disabled child or other chronically sick or disabled elderly dependant.

(1B) Regulations shall provide that payments of community care addition made under subsection (1A) above shall be payable at a rate that shall be determined by reference to—

(a) the needs of the claimant or dependant in relation to his proper welfare and need for care and attention in a dwelling which he occupies or is to occupy as his home or in which he resides or is to reside as a member of a family, and

(b) the extent to which other benefits or payments that are payable under Part II of this Act fail to meet those needs.

(1C) Payments of community care addition under subsection (1A) above shall be payable in addition to any other income support payment, including any premium, and in addition to any attendance allowance or mobility allowance to which the claimant or dependant may be entitled."

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be appropriate to take the following Government amendment (a) in lieu of the Lords amendment, in page 27, line 37, at end insert—

'(2A) In relation to income support and housing benefit the applicable amount for a severely disabled person shall include an amount in respect of his being a severely disabled person.

(2B) Regulations may specify circumstances in which persons are to be treated as being or as not being severely disabled.'.

Amendment (i) to Government amendment (a), in line 4, at end insert—

'and that amount shall be determined in accordance with the severity of his disability.'.

Amendment (ii) to Government amendment (a), in line 6, at end add—

'and how the severity of the disability of such persons is to be assessed.'

Amendment (iii) to Government amendment (a), in line 6, at end add—

'(2C) The amount or amounts referred to in subsection (2A) above shall be calculated with regard to the cost incurred by severely disabled persons in living as householders or as members of a household and to the income support payments available to such persons in residential care homes.'.

Mr. Newton: I think that the House understands that the background to this important debate on the needs and interests of disabled people, especially severely disabled people, is one in which we have actively and consciously sought, through the new income support scheme and as shown by the illustrative figures we have published, to improve the support made available to less well off disabled people generally.

Under our proposals, we shall be paying the disability premium automatically, without a qualifying period, to people receiving one of the disability or continuing incapacity benefits. It will be paid without a time limit for blind claimants and claimants will qualify for the premium on grounds of incapacity for work after 28 weeks, compared with the present one-year qualifying rule for the long-term rate. The premium will be payable where either the claimant or a partner is receiving one of the qualifying benefits, unlike the position for the long-term rate, and our proposals on equal treatment should also make it easier for a disabled partner to qualify the whole family for extra help. There will also be considerable improvements in the amount of part-time earnings. Disabled claimants who are in a position to have some part-time earnings can retain them without it affecting their benefit to the extent that it would at present.

I sum up those points by saying that on the illustrative figures—they are avowedly illustrative—published in the technical annex, our proposals for disability premium would imply an increase of about £50 million a year for those in receipt of it, by comparison with the present system. That is something we will be proud of when we have had the opportunity to implement it. I think that the House will accept that it shows our good intentions in this area.

Alongside that, we have made it clear that there will be transitional protection arrangements, where they would be necessary, to ensure that income support payments will make up weekly cash income to at least the same level as supplementary benefit did before the change in the system.

Having made those points about general improvement in support for the less well off disabled people, which is reflected in the policies we have put forward in the Bill and the figures in the illustrative tables, I want to acknowledge that throughout discussions on the Bill there has been concern about the position of what is acknowledged to be a small group of very severely disabled people, especially those who are in receipt, under the present system, of very high weekly additional payments in respect of domestic assistance. The position that we adopted during some of the earlier discussions was that that was very much the kind of problem, relating as it did to the individual needs of a relatively small number of people, that we would expect to find an appropriate way of dealing with through the social fund.

However, it was clear from discussions in Committee and on Report and from quarters outside the House that the general statement of intent about our aim to find a new solution to the problem of those severely disabled people had fallen short of satisfying those who rightly and properly represent the interests of that group. Concern was expressed about both the possible change from regulated entitlement to the provisions represented by the social fund, and about the actual position, especially at the point of change and despite what had been said about transitional protection, of those who were receiving large amounts of weekly help with domestic assistance.

When the matter was debated in the other place, my noble Friend Baroness Trumpington gave two commitments on behalf of the Government. The first was to improve transitional protection for severely disabled people receiving extensive support by way of the domestic assistance provision addition. It was made clear that the amount would continue to be paid separately to, and on top of, any other transitional protection needed. It was further made clear that it would be increased at future upratings, if the need continued, to maintain its value. That goes well beyond the normal arrangements for transitional protection, but it was intended to offer assurance to those receiving these relatively high weekly payments.

6.30 pm

The second assurance given was that we would be seeking new arrangements to continue support for similar new cases after the changes in 1988, and that that would be the subject of consultation with interested groups.

Those undertakings were welcomed in the other place, as I am sure that they will be welcomed here, especially that about transitional protection in these cases, which I am happy to repeat tonight. Nevertheless, the other place felt that the Government had not gone far enough to overcome the anxieties that had been expressed. Clearly, it felt that there should continue to be some regulated entitlement, so it passed what is now Lords amendment No. 35.

The amendment that I am moving alongside the motion to disagree with Lords amendment No. 35 represents our clear acceptance of the basic proposition that there should continue to be a regulated system of weekly benefit directed to the kind of needs that have been the cause of concern. The fact that I am moving the motion makes it clear that we do not feel able to accept the Lords amendment in the terms in which it was passed. The amendment includes payments to groups such as the "chronically sick and disabled" and "elderly people", neither of which terms is further defined. I accept that it would be possible to find some way to define "chronically sick and disabled" people, but the fact that elderly people are included in such a way would inescapably mean that the provisions would cover up to 1·75 million supplementary pensioners. In other words, the amendment goes massively beyond any possible definition of the group that has given rise to the concern that has led to the amendment.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is the Minister prepared to say what the weekly payment will be? Will he estimate what will be the cost of the amendment?

Mr. Newton: I am and I will, but I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will allow me to make my speech in the order in which I wish to make it, which I hope is reasonably rational and logical.

The other principal point that I shall make, apart from what might be called technical nit-picking, is that the adjudication officer would be expected to deal with the payments by reference to a person's

"proper welfare and need for care and attention".

Those are wide and imprecise phrases, and the latter in particular raises questions of overlap with local authority service responsibilities, particularly those under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act to provide assistance in the home.

The enormous potential coverage of the amendment and the wider scope of the phrases that are used and would have to be assessed by social security adjudication officers means that, in the terms in which it has been passed, the amendment is simply unworkable with the current arrangements of the social security system. Potentially, it would involve us in taking over a wide part of the work of local authority social services departments in a way that the social security system is simply not qualified to carry out.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The Minister says that the amendment would be unworkable. If the Government amendment is accepted, will more or fewer people be eligible compared to what would be the position if the Lords amendment were passed?

Mr. Newton: I shall again come to that point. By definition, it is clear that since I have resisted the amendment partly on the ground that potentially it covers the entire supplementary pensioner population, I am unlikely to be moving a Government amendment that would run wider than that.

Mr. Field: That is a cut.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is now being merely mischievous. I shall come to that point.

We are seeking to accept the spirit of the way in which the amendment was spoken to and passed in the other place. We are seeking an additional disablement premium —one might call it a severe disablement premium. I am happy to see the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) in her place. That premium also has the advantage of responding to the recommendation of the Select Committee on Social Services, that we should consider the introduction of a two-tier disablement premium. That is what the Government's amendment is designed to bring about.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Government amendment (a) says:

"the applicable amount for a severely disabled person shall include an amount in respect of his being a severely disabled person."

Is that amount a variable sum or is it a fixed amount that will be appropriate to disabled people, however severe the disability? Is there scope in the way that this measure will be used to vary that in line with the degree of disability?

Mr. Newton: I am tempted to say that I will be grateful if the hon. Gentleman will allow me to set out my points in logical order. However, the direct answer is that the intention is that this shall be a fixed sum, a point to which I shall return.

As an additional sign of our good intentions, I point out that there is no need to amend the Bill to provide for a severe disablement premium. There are ample powers within the Bill as it stands for us to have as many premiums as we wish. We have thought it right to make clear our intentions and to respond to the feelings both in this place and the other place. Nevertheless, we wished to table an amendment that specifically provides for a severe disablement premium.

We are proposing a higher and additional premium for a particular group of disabled people. It will be paid on top of the other structural improvements for disabled people in the Bill, and in particular the disablement premium. As I have said, in effect it provides the two-tier disablement premium that many commentators, including the Select Committee, have urged upon us. It will be paid as an extra amount to severely disabled people who are living on their own, and who are most likely to need extra support and care. It will be paid to them direct and as of right within the income support scheme. It will also form part of the assessment of need in the housing benefit rules.

In considering the issue, we have sought criteria that are consistent with other social security arrangements. Our intention is that receipt of the higher rate of attendance allowance should be the first qualifying condition. The present domestic assistance addition already has a condition that there must be no one in the household capable of carrying out normal domestic duties. The purpose behind that rule, on the need for extra support to maintain independence that cannot otherwise be provided, is a sensible one.

We have recently announced a major extension of the invalid care allowance as the benefit that is paid to those caring for disabled people. Consistent with that, we intend that the extra disablement premium will be paid direct to a severely disabled person where there is no one receiving or eligible for the invalid care allowance in respect of that person's care needs. We envisage setting the rate at the same level as for invalid care allowance, currently, although shortly to rise, £23 a week. This will be paid on top of the disablement premium in relevant cases. It is nearly double the rate of the basic disablement premium for a single person that is illustrated in the technical annex.

Our estimate is that up to 10,000 severely disabled people could qualify for this additional premium, at a cost of up to £12 million. It will go to a far wider range of people than those who currently receive the domestic assistance addition. Our latest information, for December 1984, shows that only 3,150 people then received the domestic assistance addition, of whom 3,000 received £10 or less, compared with the figure of £23 that I have mentioned.

On the basis of those figures, total expenditure on the current domestic assistance addition was well below £1 million. We expect that this measure will lead to a twelvefold increase in expenditure on severely disabled people and to at least a trebling of the number of people who are helped by the current domestic assistance addition. It is a very substantial move towards meeting the points that were made in another place. No less important is the fact that it represents a substantial move towards——

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will allow me to finish this point.

It represents a very substantial move towards extending the help that is available. It will help a much larger number of severely disabled people than are helped by the existing arrangements. Thus, it will further the objectives that unite all right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Ashley: Does the Minister——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not sure whether the Minister is giving way.

Mr. Newton: I had finished, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am happy to allow the right hon. Gentleman to appear to intervene during my speech, if he so wishes.

Mr. Ashley: The Minister says that this is a substantial increase, but he also said that the amounts are to be fixed. How can fixed amounts provide for people with different disabilities who require separate amounts? Is the Minister able to give a categoric assurance that no fewer people will be living in the community and that these proposals will not force them to live in institutions?

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Gentleman will be very well aware that it would be very unwise of me to give a categorical assurance of the breadth that he seeks. It is clear, from the figures that I have just given, that substantially more severely disabled people who are living in the community will receive significant additional help, compared with what they receive under the present income support scheme. That must help to serve the objective that all of us have in mind of extending the effectiveness and the real meaning of care in the community.

Mr. Alfred Morris: It will excite no surprise in the House when I say that I very much agree with Lords amendment No. 35. The amendment is, of course, virtually identical to the one I moved at the Bill's Report stage in this House on 19 May. Except for the Minister, everyone who took part in the debate on my amendment, from both sides of the House, spoke in support of what I was proposing. Yet the Government defeated the amendment on a three-line Whip.

In another place, their Lordships were clearly much more impressed by the speeches in favour of my amendment than they were by the fiercely whipped vote by which it was defeated. Maurice Jackson, in *Therapy's* widely read parliamentary column, wrote after the Lords debate:

"What happens now? The Government, of course, with its big Commons majority, could try to reverse the Lords amendment when the Bill returns for final examination by MPs. My prediction is that they will do nothing of the sort, but retire from the field—battered and bloody and not a little bowed—yielding victory with as much grace as they can muster."

In fact, however, the Government are still opposing the amendment. Their own alternative amendment is grossly unsatisfactory and I hope very much that the Lords, when the Bill returns to them, will stand their ground and insist that the protection we are seeking for severely disabled people stays in the Bill. At the same time, I hope they will appreciate that the outrageously strict guillotine on the time available to us today makes it impossible for there to be more than one vote at the conclusion of this debate.

6.45 pm

This is a deeply important debate for severely disabled people. It is a debate not about compassion but about rights and, in particular, about the right of every disabled person to live, wherever that can be made possible, both independently and with dignity in his or her own home.

The outcome of the debate will quite literally, as Lord Henderson of Brompton said in another place, mean the difference between life at home and life in an institution for many of the most severely disabled people in this country. On 19 May and again in the Lords, numerous cases were quoted of the kind of people who will lose out. They were the cases of very severely disabled people who now live independently at home by virtue of the domestic care allowance which, if the Government have their way, will disappear.

Let me remind the Minister of just two cases that were drawn to my attention by the organisations of disabled people. One is that of a woman who is paralysed from the neck down after a road accident. She requires help with virtually all aspects of personal care and was looked after by an elderly mother until increasing frailty left her unable to cope. She then had to spend weekends in bed until she received the domestic care allowance. Until the Bill was amended in the Lords, a person like her would have lost much more than the Minister is now proposing in his amendment.

Mr. Frank Field: Has my right hon. Friend not reached a most important point? Although the Government, for once, have carefully costed this amendment, the one crucial piece of information that they have not given us is whether some disabled people, even if the amendment is passed, will still be worse off.

Mr. Morris: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is incontrovertibly the fact that some of the most severely disabled people will be very much worse off if the domestic care allowance disappears without an adequate replacement.

Another case drawn to my attention was that of a young man who recently graduated from university. He not only needs help with washing, dressing and using the toilet, but also has to be turned in bed frequently during the night. Before the Lords amendment, the loss in a case like his would have been £48·55 a week and there is no doubt whatever that admission to an institution would have resulted at a cost to the taxpayer of at least £180 a week.

Everyone who knows the facts sees that residential care would cost the taxpayer more than the benefits that the Government want to scrap. That is why the Spastics Society condemned the Government's attitude as "self-defeating" and why Eric Ward-Rowe, a war-blinded campaigner for the disabled and a life-long Conservative, described the Bill as a "wicked attack" on severely disabled people.

The Government's amendment has not removed the fear of their organisations that many severely disabled people will lose their independence and they are very angry about the Government's treatment of their representations. When the Bill went into Committee in this House, six organisations wrote to the Secretary of State and the Minister for the Disabled about their concern. They were the Disablement Income Group, the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People, Disability Alliance, the Spastics Society, the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation.

On 21 February, they requested a meeting with Ministers. The meeting took place on 17 March and the six organisations wrote again, on 20 March, for clarification of the Government's position. No reply was received. Then on 14 May—in advance of the Report stage in this House—the organisations wrote asking for some comment about the community care addition I was proposing. No reply was received. Yet again, on 9 July, they wrote to Ministers for their views about the provision of a community care addition. No reply has been received. As Peter Large of the Disablement Income Group has commented:

"The absence of any reply since the meeting of 17 March makes it difficult to be constructive. In my opinion, the absence of a reply to three letters from six reputable charities,

all of them expert in the field of disability, is a sign either of an arrogant disregard for the needs of disabled people or of inefficiency".

At this last hour of our proceedings on the Bill the Minister produces what he claims to be a solution. Even disregarding the spelling on yesterday's Order Paper, it looked more like a Back-Bench amendment on the back of an envelope than the fruit of two years' deliberations by a Department of State. All it does is to allow a higher rate of payment to severely disabled people, yet the Minister has known of the problem ever since he took the chair of the DHSS review of supplementary benefits over two years ago.

The House now needs cast-iron assurances that the Minister will pay extra amounts of the order of £50 to £60 a week—or perhaps even more—to people who require such sums to pay for the support that they need to live in the community. This is why right hon. and hon. Members have tabled amendments to the Government amendment.

The Opposition would prefer Lords amendment No. 35 to be retained because it would ensure that the precise needs of severely disabled people are met. However, it may be possible to describe in regulations the people about whom the House is so concerned in a way that they can be easily and accurately identified by adjudication officers and paid a fixed-rate benefit that is high enough to enable them to live or to continue to live in their own homes. The danger is that the defects of a basic disablement premium will simply be repeated in the proposed new premium.

If the Minister just thinks of a number and picks some convenient passport off the shelf, he will fail to meet the needs of some of the most disabled people. If he has in mind, as seems to be the case, something of the order of an extra £23 a week for people on income support who are in receipt of the higher rate of attendance allowance, then I must emphasise to him that he will be sentencing many disabled people to indefinite institutional care.

Ministers refused to speak to organisations of and for disabled people before tabling their amendments. In the next 48 hours a solution must be found that will satisfy their legitimate claims. The amendments tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and colleagues from the all-party disablement group would give the Minister discretion to pay more than one rate of the new premium. That would make it much easier for him to target resources on those identified as being in the greatest need. The amendments also relate the amounts to the costs incurred by severely disabled people on a general rather than on an individual basis and to the level of support available in residential care. In the tiny amount of time available, the all-party disablement group has been doing the Minister's work for him and has been bending over backwards to meet his administrative complaints about Lords amendment No. 35, which I am sure the membership of the all-party group still hope will be accepted by the House.

The House owes a great debt to the Select Committee on Social Services under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) for the way in which it has exposed in its recent report the illogicality of providing substantial sums to people in residential care and practically nothing to disabled people living in the community. The Opposition seek the introduction of non-means-tested payments to disabled people which would allow them to make their own choices. The whole structure of the Bill is inimical to the interests of disabled people and all the amendments we have tabled are exercises in damage limitation. Without Lords amendment No. 35 or an acceptable alternative, the damage to severely disabled people after April 1988 will be appalling.

As their former Minister, I know that disabled people crave nothing more than to live independently at home. The Government's stance on this issue is thus egregiously cruel. It makes total nonsense of the claim that their Bill helps those most in need. Since the Government were routed in the local government elections, we have heard much of their claim about a "caring" new image, but it is totally uncaring to drive into institutions disabled people who, with adequate help, could live at home.

One of the Bill's probable victims has summed it all up. She said: "If that's caring, the word has lost its meaning." I strongly urge all hon. Members in all parts of the House to respond to her anguish, in the way that she would wish, by supporting the Lords amendment.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): I cannot follow the line taken by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), because it was one of extreme criticism of the attempts by my hon. Friend the Minister to find a solution to what has proved to be a difficult problem. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the way in which he has kept in close contact with the all-party disablement group to try to find a solution to this problem, which is to find a satisfactory method of replacing the accumulation of additional allowances which the severely disabled are able to obtain under the present system. We need to find a replacement for that accumulation, and the amount will vary from one person to another but will be sufficient to allow disabled people to live in the community rather than in institutions.

Over the last two years my hon. Friend has assured us that he is aware of the need to secure for this small but important group of severely handicapped people a method by which they would not suffer as a result of the change over to income support. I welcome the fact that my hon. Friend has been able to find an additional disability premium which will allow those people nearly to reach that final objective, but I am worried that in a couple of years a new group of severely disabled, blind and handicapped people will be outside the continuity assurances that have been given to those who are presently severely disabled and who will continue to receive amounts equivalent to the present allowance.

In a couple of years, disabled people in the 16-plus group will miss out on the level of allowances. They will require just as much help as similarly disabled people who will continue to receive the full guaranteed benefits. They will require just as much help for special diets, heating, blindness allowance and domestic assistance and all the other benefits that build up and allow disabled people to live in the community rather than have to return to institutional or residential home care.

The Lords amendment is rather like the one tabled on Report by the all-party disablement group and like the amendments that we have tabled. The benefit of those amendments was that they provided flexibility and were attractive because of that. They took account of individual needs, because we all know that disability is unique to each person and that the financial needs vary from one person to another. The single objective is to give each disabled person the means to live in the community, and my worry

[Mr. John Hannam]

about the Government amendment is that it could mean everything or nothing. I was relieved to hear further details from my hon. Friend about the amounts that will be made available, because they come close to securing the final objective.

My hon. Friend talked about a second tier disability premium of some £23 on top of the £12 basic disability premium. That takes in many disabled people who might have found themselves with nothing but the basic disability premium. I appreciate the problem that has faced my hon. Friend in trying to find a system that would provide for a clearly defined flat rate addition. That is the nub of the problem that the Government face.

My hon. Friend's proposal will provide about 12 times as much financial help as the domestic assistance allowance that it replaces, and about three times as many disabled people will receive it. However, that does not address the main point that we have raised again and again about the small but vital group of severely disabled people. It is upon them that the full focus of attention will be directed. They could normally have expected to receive amounts in excess of the combined second tier and the basic disability premium.

Mr. Wigley: Will the hon. Gentleman address himself to the fact that the Spastics Society estimates that to keep a severely disabled person in institutional care costs between £230 and £280 a week, of which the DHSS may be paying £180?

7 pm

Mr. Hannam: The hon. Gentleman has just pre-empted exactly the point that I was about to make. To find the extra few pounds a week to ensure that disabled people remain in the community rather than being in institutional care would save hundreds of pounds of taxpayers' money and prevent the return of disabled people to a point from which we have tried to move away.

Therefore, I am not happy to accept the Government amendment and the Bill as it stands without a further assurance from my hon. Friend that he will find a way to meet the needs of the group of people about whom we are talking in the next few days with a more flexible use of the new system.

Will my hon. Friend consider a suggestion made to me by the manager of my local DHSS office, which happens to have the largest number of claimants in the country? I cannot praise the manager highly enough for the interest that she takes in the needs of her clients and the disabled in particular. She said that, looking at the proposed workings of the social fund, it would be eminently possible for her and her staff to enable the small group of severely disabled people in the community, about whom they all know, to have the necessary topping up amount on a weekly basis if necessary. If that flexibility were built into the system, she said that she and her staff would have no problem.

I hope that my hon. Friend will consider whether he can, through the regulations that he will be applying, look at that suggestion closely and introduce a method to ensure that this small but vital group of disabled people do not find themselves deprived of that essential £5, £10 or £15 a week that enables them to live in the community rather than having to return to institutional care.

Mr. Ashley: The hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) plays a prominent role in the all-party disablement group and I share many of his views. However, I do not think that the Minister was quite as magnanimous as the hon. Gentleman made out. This is obviously a party-political difference, despite the attempts that we make in the group to find some kind of consensus. The hon. Gentleman knows that the Minister is failing to meet the requirements of the other place. The Lords amendment made necessary provisions for severely disabled people, but the Minister has refused to accept it. He is offering us a substitute which he claims is just as good as the Lords amendment but, of course, it is not. It is inadequate and it fails on a number of counts to help severely disabled people in the way that the all-party disablement group would have wanted. However, I shall not press the hon. Member for Exeter on that point.

Will the Minister clarify one point that he made? He did not answer my question about different premiums to help different people with different disabilities, and I hope that he will be able to do so when he replies. The Minister said that the premium would be paid only to people living on their own and receiving the high rate of attendance allowance. That is an unusual provision. Many people need extra money for someone living with them. Some good friends of ours are severely disabled and help those of us who play a prominent role in helping those with disability. They must have people living with them. If such people were excluded, it would be a scandal. I hope that I have misunderstood the Minister, but if I have not, there will be hell to pay. Those people must not be deprived of the special premium that the Minister has promised.

The Opposition's amendment seeks to introduce different amounts for different people. That is the crux of the matter. A general allowance is of no use at all, because disabled people cannot simply be lumped together and given X amount of money. That cannot be done; it is most unrealistic. Our intention is to focus particular additional resources on those who specifically need them.

The basis point of the Opposition's amendment is to recognise the individuality of disability. We recognise that individual disabled people require individual payments for specific individual needs. Any alternative in the form of a general payment to all severely disabled people—I put this seriously to the Minister—is inadequate, demeaning and insulting. It is offensive to lump all disabled people together in one homogeneous group.

In all my years in the House I have never spoken of "the disabled". There is no such thing. Each disabled person has an individual problem. I know the Minister recognises that because he meets many disabled people. However, these provisions do not meet that fundamental point and the Minister should have a battle with his own Department, and the Secretary of State should take the point on board. Disabled people need individual payments. We do not want a lump sum for everyone. A few disabled people may receive a bit more than they need, but many will not.

What does it mean to disabled people not to get what they need? We are not speaking of a few people going without a few luxuries. If severely disabled people do not get what they need, they will not be able to get the basic resources and necessities of life. They cannot obtain the care that is vital to their wellbeing. They cannot go to the toilet, have a bath, use the telephone, feed, wash or dress

themselves without help. If they cannot use their legs and arms, they must be provided with adequate resources to enable them to cope.

I make no party-political point when I say that we all know that many local authorities simply do not provide the wherewithal for disabled people. There are some fine authorities, but there are some lousy ones. Some appalling authorities leave severely disabled people without basic necessities. We could say that that is not our business but local authority business—the Minister hinted at this in his speech—but we must find some means in this House of Commons of providing the essential specific disability payment for the individual. There is no alternative. That is the only answer, and I hope that the Minister will bear that in mind.

I have a lot more to say, but I shall not go on. I want to drive that point home to the Minister. If he takes that point on board, he will go much further towards helping severely disabled people than he could by any other single thing that he could do.

Mr. Newton: I want to make three points in reply. First, in the sense in which the word has been used, there are no victims of this proposal in view of the arrangements that we have made for transitional protection.

Secondly, I want to make it clear that, in contradiction to what has been suggested, the noble Lord Henderson who moved the amendment in the other place made it clear that he was aiming for an amendment which would be related to the needs of 2,000 or 3,000 people. There can be no doubt that the amendment goes much wider than that, but that was his explicit intention in moving the amendment.

The third point is that, of the 3,000 people at whom the Lords amendment was aimed, the vast majority receive far less than we propose to make available under the new premium. Only 50 persons receive more than £20 a week, according to the latest information available.

I take up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), that part of our purpose has always been to treat disabled people's needs individually and flexibly. Resistance to doing that through the social fund has led to the amendment. We have sought to respond to it, but we do not rule out the possibility of also meeting the special needs of disabled people through the social fund, which is one of the purposes for which it was designed and intended. We hope that the social fund will work closely with local authorities, because none of us would wish them to cease caring for disabled people. One of our objectives is to bring about a better working relationship between the Department, in its social security role and in its wider caring role, and local authorities in their responsibilities for sick and disabled people.

I hope that the House will recognise that a change from a benefit which costs £1 million and helps 3,000 people to a benefit that we expect to cost £12 million and to help 10,000 people represents a substantial, significant and important move.

Mr. Wigley: I hope that the House of Lords will realise when it considers the matter——

It being two hours after the commencement of the proceedings on the motion relating to the Social Security Bill (Allocation of Time), MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair,* That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 251, Noes 183.

Division No. 275] **[7.11 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*

Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Francis Maude and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carma'then)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Hamilton and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Government amendment in lieu of the Lords amendment agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, some with Special Entry.

Clause 20

AMOUNT ETC.

Lords amendment: No. 40, in page 27, line 20, at end insert—

"and shall include the whole of the amount which he is liable to pay by way of rates in respect of his home."

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The first point to make is that there is nothing in the Bill concerned with 20 per cent. contributions to rates. The Government have made it clear that they want to see greater accountability in local government and that they believe that it is a serious defect of present arrangements that many people have no financial interest in the current level of rates charged or in any proposed increase. We have made it clear that we will put proposals to Parliament to change that position, but this Bill is not the vehicle for that change.

The powers in the Bill go no further than the provisions in existing legislation. When the Government put forward their proposals on domestic rates as they now are, they will be in the form of regulations which will be debated by both Houses. But, of course, the Government are also consulting on the proposals for a new community charge. That consultation is not yet complete, but it is clear that any change there would require primary legislation.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I am sure that the Secretary of State will be perfectly frank with the House. I appreciate that a measure will be introduced in due course, but does he agree that the Government intend to introduce a measure whereby at least 20 per cent. will be paid by those on supplementary benefit?

Mr. Fowler: The point is that this Bill is not the vehicle for that change. I see that we are agreed upon that.

Basically, the amendment pre-empts that decision. Rather than waiting for the proposition to be put, the authors of the amendment have used the opportunity of this Bill to seek to prevent any action at all. Let us be clear that the effect of the amendment is not just to make impossible a 20 per cent. contribution to rates; it would make any contribution impossible. It would not be possible to have a 15 per cent. contribution, a 10 per cent. contribution, a 5 per cent. contribution, or a 1 per cent. contribution. I must say that I find that totally unacceptable. It is unacceptable for the reasons given in the other place by my noble Friend Lord Boyd-Carpenter. It is an attempt to pre-empt Government policy on the whole question of local government finance.

Even on its own terms the amendment is wrong on several important counts. It would diminish a major achievement in the Bill—fairer treatment between those in work and those not in work. It would further weaken the link between payment for and use of services provided by local authorities. There would be greater expenditure on a benefit which has increased dramatically in recent years.

The central aim of the reforms is to treat people at the same level of income in exactly the same way, whether they are in or out of work. Thus, one has the same maximum for both. The amendment would guarantee a 100 per cent. rebate of domestic rates for those with incomes at or below the income support level.

There is a technical flaw in this, as it would also prevent any deduction from housing benefit to take account of the contribution towards domestic rates expected from non-dependent members of the same household. Thus, even though the non-dependent is earning, say, £100 a week, no deduction could be made from housing benefit. It cannot be right that a head of household should receive 100 per cent. help from the taxpayer with domestic rates when other members of the household are in full-time work. The cost of that would be about £100 million. But under the present system, and under any changed system, the effect would be to create sharp reductions in benefit as income rises. That would create new unemployment and a poverty trap which the unified structure in the Bill is designed to avoid. It could lead also to the reintroduction of housing benefit supplement.

The only way to avoid the effect of the amendment would be to extend 100 per cent. help with rates to all those who qualify for benefit. That would have the effect of reducing, not increasing, accountability.

7.30 pm

Currently, a substantial minority of householders — about 3 million — are insulated entirely from rises in domestic rates. A scheme which started with 100 per cent. maximum assistance would insulate even greater numbers from the consequences of their local authorities' spending policies. I shall develop that. At present, for standard housing benefit cases, the starting point for calculating rate rebates is 60 per cent. of the claimant's rates. That means that if his rates increase by £1 a week his rebate automatically increases by 60p a week, unless his income or other circumstances change. It would be the same for everyone receiving a rebate, however large or small his rebate was initially. But under a scheme that is based on 100 per cent. of rates, a £1 increase in weekly rates would produce a £1 increase in benefit, again no matter how much rebate the individual was receiving initially. Even if he was entitled to a rebate of only a few pence a week, a £1 rise in rates would still lead to a £1 rise in his rebate if his circumstances remained the same.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): Will the Secretary of State explain why similar logic should not extend to rents?

Mr. Fowler: We are not making the same proposals for rents. We are seeking more accountability within the rating system between local authorities and those who elect local authorities. The hon. Gentleman knows that the Government have made that clear from the beginning.

In other words, every household receiving a rate rebate — about 5·5 million, on the basis of our illustrative figures—would no longer have any financial interest in the spending policies of its local authority. That would weaken and, in some authorities, threaten to destroy the link between those who vote for more services, those who use the services and those who pay for them. That would be bad for local accountability and for personal responsibility. Our initial proposal is that everyone should pay a contribution towards his domestic rates. This proposal will have to be developed in the light of the consultations and discussions on the proposals in the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government". In principle, however, our case is clear and remains firm. Local electors must be aware of the costs of the policies that they are invited to support.

Finally, we have been entirely open in our commitment to restrain the cost of housing benefit. Total expenditure

[Mr. Fowler]

on assistance with rent and rates has more than doubled over the past six years. Current expenditure is estimated to be about £4·5 billion. At the same time, the numbers have risen so that one in three households is receiving some assistance. Overall, our proposals seek to restrain future housing benefit expenditure, and the proposal that everyone should make a contribution towards his domestic rates is an important part of that saving. I do not believe that the Government can be pre-empted from making financially important proposals of this sort.

The Opposition have sought to alarm people and will no doubt seek to do so again. I understand that they will claim that this measure will have dire consequences for poor households. We should be clear that we are talking about benefit rates to be set at the uprating that is due to take place in the autumn of 1987, not at the next uprating. Even on the illustrative figures published with the White Paper, the majority of those on income support would not experience any reduction in disposable income overall.

In summary, the amendment would not increase accountability in local government. In fact, it would reduce it. It would not restrain future spending on housing benefit. Instead, it would multiply it. Above all, the amendment is out of time. It seeks to pre-empt the Government's right to make proposals to Parliament in a vital area of policy. That is a fundamental issue, and I ask the House for its support.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I remind the House that the amendment involves privilege.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Contrary to the clear decision and vote of a significant majority in another place, the Government are seeking to revert to their original intention to impose this iniquitous 20 per cent. rates payment on even the poorest in our society. This proposal has been rejected by the Government's housing review committee, which was set up in the course of the social security reviews. It has been rejected virtually unanimously by public opinion in the course of consultation. It has been rejected—this is the reason for the debate—by a decisive vote in another place. Lastly, it has been rejected by the Social Security Advisory Committee, the Government's own advisory body. There is no support anywhere for this measure except among the Institute of Directors and among those who, to their shame, submit to the Tory Whip in this place.

Contrary to the Secretary of State's complacency, the Government's proposal will mean that the poorest claimants, even those on supplementary benefit, will have to use money which is intended for food and clothing as well as fuel to pay part of their rates. The proposal has been opposed by a wide range of political opinion, as well as by local authorities and those concerned about the welfare of claimants. Contrary to the Secretary of State's statement, the amendment is not an attempt to pre-empt the Government's policy. The vote in another place was not an attempt to pre-empt Government policy on local finance.

The Government's action is a deliberate one to cut benefit by between £300 million and £400 million a year, and this will affect some of the poorest in our society. That and that alone is the reason why the Government's proposal has been brought back to the House.

The Opposition have two main complaints about the 20 per cent. proposal. We say that it will cause hardship and that administratively it will be highly inefficient. Supplementary benefit claimants — if the right hon. Gentleman has any doubt about this I suggest that he should have rather more experience of what it is like to live on supplementary benefit — already have a pretty hard time getting by. By any standard, their income is extremely low. Many have to forgo necessities or get into debt, or both.

I shall quote one example of the impact of the Government's proposal. Let us consider the position of a pensioner couple aged 72 and 74 years whose sole income consists of supplementary benefit of £64·90, including allowances for the wife, who is diabetic, and heating addition. That is their income, apart from rent and rate rebates. They receive a full rent rebate, plus a fuel rebate of £7·50 and an allowance for water rates of £1·50. That is the position of a fairly typical couple in retirement. Their income support would total £63·25, out of which they would have to pay water rates and 20 per cent. of their domestic rates. They would be worse off by £4·65 per week. The 20 per cent. rate rebate cut would be £1·50 of the loss. That is a substantial cut. I am amazed that anyone in the House believes that that is justified and can find it in himself to vote for it.

Mr. Winnick: As my hon. Friend says, is not the situation deplorable? Is it not the case that, whereas now those on supplementary benefit are entitled to some assistance during a harsh winter, however bureaucratic the regulations are, and however inadequate the sums are, under the new position, such sums will not be paid? Therefore, apart from all the other difficulties of paying 20 per cent. in rates, certainly during the winter months, the people concerned are likely to have less income than they have now.

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend is right. We are debating just one item from the Social Security Bill. There are several others and, unfortunately, some of them combine. Therefore, the overall loss of income in particular cases, which is what matters, is greater than that as a result of any single one of the cuts, such as the one that we are now debating.

The DHSS tax-benefit model, which is the best indicator of the effect of the proposal, suggests that the average loss to claimants from the measure will be about £1·25 a week. In certain places where there is a great deal of poverty, it will be considerably higher. In Camden, it will be more than £3 a week because the average rent level there is over £15. In Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Brent and Hounslow it will be over £2·50 a week, which is a considerable sum to people on low incomes. The loss may not seem a lot to many hon. Members, but it is sobering to reflect that it is almost a day's benefit, in supplementary and child benefit combined, for a 10-year-old. Claimants live in a hard world where those figures are a serious business. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) smiles. We know that she comes from a very rich and well-off family, with both her income and that of her husband. She would do well to listen carefully to the effects that the measure has on many people with very low incomes, something that she has never experienced in her life.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I shall not give way. If the hon. Lady is insulting enough—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] If the hon. Lady is insulting——

Mrs. Currie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I shall not give way.

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: If the hon. Lady is——

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: I shall not give way. If the hon. Lady insults those whom we are discussing tonight, she has no right to speak at this time. She can make her own speech in her own time.

Mrs. Currie: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As it appears to be in order for the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) to make such insulting remarks across the Chamber, is it not in order for him to give me a little time to reply?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I cannot compel an hon. Member to give way to someone who seeks to intervene.

Mr. Fowler: I simply want to say to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) that I gave way to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) a moment ago. Surely, having referred directly to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), he will at least have the courage to give way to her.

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend asked a proper and courteous question. I only wish that the Secretary of State were as defensive of the poor people as he is of some of his insulting hon. Friends.

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: The Social Security Advisory Committee had this to say:

"We are . . .seriously concerned"—

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand the hon. Lady's resentment, but she must not persist in seeking to intervene when the hon. Gentleman has made it clear that he will not give way.

Mr. Meacher: The Social Security Advisory Committee, which advises the Government, had this to say:

"We are . . .seriously concerned at the proposal to limit eligible rates to a level which is less than 100 per cent.—and possibly as low as 80 per cent. Our concern is twofold: First, and most important, we believe that the proposal could cause real hardship to many claimants, especially those on income support; and second, the proposal will cause local authorities extra administrative difficulties, and therefore higher administrative costs, at a time when the Government is committed to simplifying administration and controlling costs".

The SSAC is right on that score, too.

The amounts regained from claimants may cause hardship—I believe that they will but they are puny in administrative terms, and local authorities regard the costs of collecting them as a nonsense, out of all proportion to the amounts collected and directly contrary to considerations of efficiency in social security. That applies even more to the costs of pursuing arrears, leaving aside the effects on claimants of losing furniture to the bailiffs or appearing in court.

7.45 pm

A paper has been passed to me from the Department of the Environment, which is headed:

"The community charge: Enforcement of payment."

Although the paper is about collecting the community charge, it also applies to collecting arrears on the 20 per cent. rates payment. It talks of introducing "time to pay" orders and attachment of earnings to cover arrears, with direct payment arrangements by the DHSS where debtors are on benefit. That is particularly interesting. I quote from that paragraph:

"Attachment of earnings would not cover those on benefit who had fallen into arrears. One possibility in these cases might be for local authorities to seek to have amounts deducted from benefit and paid direct to the local authority to cover community charge payments and to pay off arrears."

That is an insight into the way in which the measure is likely to be administered between the two Departments.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Does he accept that, if I believed that tonight we were discussing the issue of pensioners on supplementary benefit and those on low incomes being charged 20 per cent. of their rates, I would not hesitate to vote against the Government? I would do so if that was the specific issue, but is it really the issue? Surely the issue is that that cannot be done under the Bill without further legislation. The amendment is pre-empting something that may never happen. Therefore, if at some future time legislation were brought before the House to charge supplementary pensioners and those on low incomes 20 per cent. of their rates without any compensating increase in their income, I would vote against that. But the hon. Gentleman has not made out the case for me to vote for the Lords amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should be brief.

Mr. Meacher: I can be brief, as I see that time is going on. The hon. Gentleman raises the point that I am just coming to. If he really believes that the measure is not about cutting into the budgets of pensioners on supplementary benefit, among others, in a significant way, he is more credulous and gullible than I believe he is. It will have exactly that effect.

I refer to the Government's arguments. The Secretary of State talked about accountability. The Government want the measure to affect voting intentions. The Widdicombe report found that rate rebate claimants did regard themselves as ratepayers. There is no need to punish them so that they can see themselves in that light. Moreover, the fact remains that claimants are innocent bystanders in the Government's dispute with local authorities over rate levels. Wherever one stands on the rates question, which goes broader than what we are discussing tonight, it cannot be right to deploy as a tactic the threat of hardship to claimants. They are simply being used as pawns or weapons in the Government's fight with local authorities. Surely that is wrong.

The amendment from the other place is said to be defective. I do not believe that it is deficient; it is technically sound. It has certain incidental consequences.

[Mr. Meacher]

While claimants at or below the income support level are protected, the Secretary of State could still, if he so wished, impose the reduction above that level, thereby introducing an anomaly into the scheme. But one presumes that such anomalies would not be knowingly included in regulations. Indeed, the Government spokesman in another place said that that could happen only if the Secretary of State so wished. So I do not regard that as a justification for altering the amendment.

The Secretary of State said that certain other deductions are prevented, notably the non-dependant deductions. I believe that they are of dubious relevance anyway, because they apply only to housing benefit and not to mortgage interest tax relief. They also tend to discourage efficient use of housing stock. The Government could restore these non-dependant deductions if they wished without overturning the wider protection. That is the real point.

If there are deficiencies in the way that the amendment is drawn as it was finally decided in another place, these deficiencies can be put right within the terms of reference of preserving 100 per cent. coverage of rates for those on supplementary benefit, including pensioners. That would be completely acceptable to the Opposition. However, it is not acceptable for the amendment to be altered in a way that ensures that the 20 per cent. shortfall will be reintroduced. That must harm pensioners and others on supplementary benefit.

On those grounds, I strongly invite the House to reject this attempt to overturn the decision made in another place and to protect some of the poorest in our society.

Mrs. Currie: I am very glad to have this opportunity to put one or two matters right. First, I would like to tell the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) that I believe that the personal circumstances of hon. Members are irrelevant. I consider his personal circumstances are irrelevant, even though he comes from a far wealthier background than I. I stress to the hon. Gentleman that I merely taught in a public school, whereas he went to one. If the hon. Gentleman's behaviour reflects the manners that he was taught in that public school, I wish that I had been there to teach him. He would not have come out of my classroom behaving and talking in the way he did.

Last week the Labour party very nearly lost an election on the issue of the personal circumstances of their candidate. If the Labour party wishes to indulge in such remarks against the Conservative party, Labour Members had better watch their own backs. They might find that the electorate begins to listen and calculates very carefully in regard to the people whom the Labour party puts up for election.

Mr. Stern: I congratulate my hon. Friend on her thoroughly well deserved comments against the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). Would my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Gentleman is smarting at the publicity in *Private Eye* today?

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) knows that, as soon as this debate has finished, I will go straight to the Library and find out what *Private Eye* says.

I deplore the implication that I am not capable of asking the hon. Member for Oldham, West a courteous question. The hon. Gentleman should know that I am never discourteous in the Chamber. Whatever I may do to the hon. Gentleman or to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) outside the House, I try to observe the rules in this House and he should do that as well. However, I do not indulge in synthetic indignation like the hon. Gentleman.

I would like to consider the amendment and the Government's view on this matter. The current system of local government finance is thoroughly unsatisfactory. There are wide differences in the rates that are charged and differences in the services available to people. There are also differences of geography and political philosophy. The position is simply not satisfactory.

I am not sure that any proposed change in the system would satisfy all the critics. Rates are a tax and there is no such thing as a fair tax. The only nice tax is a nil tax. However, if we had nil taxes we would not have the services that we need.

One of the methods to ensure that efficient services are provided is to use some form of pricing or charging system. In that context, the proposal that people should have to pay 20 per cent., or whatever figure is eventually written into the regulations, should be adopted.

I do not believe that services should be free. When I was responsible for community services in Birmingham as chairman of the social services committee, I insisted that we charged for basic services like home helps, meals on wheels, night watchers and day care for children. I thought that it was right and proper that we should charge for these services. We did not charge the full economic value, but we charged a figure that was related to that. If the economic costs rose, we considered increasing the cost and in many cases we did that.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): Can the hon. Lady tell us what happened if they could not pay? Did they receive no services?

Mrs. Currie: We found that in the case of certain services like the night watch, people were willing to pay. They were prepared to put money on one side to pay for that service. The result of this charging was extremely beneficial to the people concerned. We had some 20 per cent. of the budget available and as a result of the charges we brought in about £10 million on a budget of some £40 million, which we could then spend completely within our own control. The same principle applies to rates. These should also be seen as a charge for local services.

I have just ceased to be a councillor in Birmingham. The ward that I represented consisted of 55 per cent. council tenants and 45 per cent. other occupants.. Three quarters of the council tenants in the ward were on benefit of one kind or another. One does not need to be an arithmetical genius to work out that a significant minority of the people whom I represented were able substantially to ignore the rate proposed by the local authority. They did not need to pay attention to the results of their voting pattern. I am delighted to say that the people in my ward had incredible common sense. After I gave up my seat of 11 years, they elected another Tory. Indeed, they elected another woman, with a majority of 600. That was a bigger majority than I had 11 years ago on a bigger electorate and I believe that the ward is a darn sight more Tory now than it used to be.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West spoke about taking money from fuel bills to pay the rates. If that is the

case, I am surprised that the Labour party ever backed the miners' strike. If Mr. Scargill had won, the costs of electricity would have shot through the roof. Instead of a cut of 3·5 per cent., electricity charges would have rocketed.

I want to put a serious point to the hon. Member for Oldham, West which arises out of the point that he made about the week-by-week effect which these proposals would have on the finances of the people concerned. I served on the Select Committee on Social Services when the Committee expressed concern about the problems of collecting very small bills week by week. The hon. Gentleman said that the effect would be to create bills of the order of some £3 a week. That is not a tiny sum. Therefore, the problem of lots of little bills flying around would diminish.

At the moment, I am dealing with a case in my constituency of a widow who was moved into a new bungalow. The bungalow has just been rated and her rates are £25 a week. Under the proposals we would be able to help her to the tune of £20 a week and she would have to find £5. That procedure is administratively straightforward and would deal with the Select Committee's objection about bills of that order. We have also found that the payment of small amounts for water rates, which are often paid weekly through the use of payment books, has proved to be no problem. The money is collected and the procedure is straightforward.

For these reasons, I am glad to support the Government and I hope that we will see the changes introduced so that people will think about their rates when they go to the ballot box in future.

Mr. Kirkwood: I would like to contribute a few brief remarks to the debate. I accept that there are problems about accountability because some local authorities have been acting in a profligate way. However, to achieve accountability by this route is completely unjustified. I cannot begin to support the proposal, whether it is hypothetical, pre-emptive, or whatever. It is right that the House should take and express forcibly a view about the proposal.

If the Government are thinking about increasing and improving local accountability, there is clearly an alternative available. They can change the electoral system. If there were a system of multi-member constituencies with a single transferable vote, the local electorate would be given the power to choose——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that this has very much to do with Lords amendment No. 40.

Mr. Kirkwood: We are discussing local government accountability, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was arguing that there are ways of improving and increasing the level of accountability. That was the only point that I was trying to make. I will pass from it as there is not enough time to develop it further.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is a matter not of time but of order. The hon. Gentleman would be out of order if he sought to develop that point further. I hope that he will not do that.

Mr. Kirkwood: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

My other objection, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), relates to the important question of hardship. There is no way that the proposal could be introduced without producing an unacceptable degree of hardship. I hope that when the House of Lords considers our scant debate this evening, it will continue to be resolute in its opposition which it voiced recently on the matter.

I do not believe that this proposal will work in any shape or form. Interestingly, the Secretary of State said that consultations were not complete. Yet the Secretary of State for Scotland is working on a Bill to introduce these very proposals for Scotland next Session. I was interested in the comments of the hon. Member for Oldham, West on the enforcement provisions being considered by the Department of the Environment. I hope that the Secretary of State will bear in mind that the situation in Scotland is even more urgent.

8 pm

Given the way in which the Government introduced the proposal and the Lords' reaction to it, it is entirely right that the House should support the position taken by their Lordships, and I hope that they will continue to maintain that position when the Bill returns to the other House.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): It is an important democratic concept that there should be no taxation without representation. I believe that the converse is also true — that there should not be representation without taxation.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Property votes.

Dame Jill Knight: One might use the word "reception" rather than representation. It is extremely important that people should understand that there is no Father Christmas and no golden tree which drops benefits upon the fortunate without payment. Under the present system, votes have been bought. That is immoral. I wonder what the Opposition would say if we bought votes by dishing out largesse as they do.

Mr. Michie: You do it all the time.

Dame Jill Knight: That is not true.

Mr. Raynsford: What about mortgage tax relief?

Dame Jill Knight: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene, he is welcome to do so. I am not like the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher).

Mr. Raynsford: Would the hon. Lady deny the vote in parliamentary elections to people who do not pay tax because their incomes are too small?

Dame Jill Knight: I did not say that. The hon. Gentleman should listen more carefully. His suggestion is ridiculous. I am talking about rates.

Mr. Raynsford: The hon. Lady enunciated the principle that there should be no representation without taxation. I asked her to draw the analogy with elections to this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are dealing with the Social Security Bill. I hope that we can get back to it.

Dame Jill Knight: I will gladly follow your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When things are made available totally free there is no understanding of their value. There must be a relationship of experience between the cost of meeting need and the need to meet the costs. Labour authorities lash out on endless benefits to people who never pay a penny. A girl

[Dame Jill Knight]

being helped by Labour-controlled Islington council spent five months in 18 London hotels at a cost to the ratepayers of more than £4,000. She was not just placed in a bed-and-breakfast hotel — dear me, no! The social workers decided that she must be in a large, impersonal, good hotel, in which she was allowed unlimited use of the telephone and had £7 per day pocket money. That girl paid not a penny towards the cost of what she received. I am sorry, but I believe that that is wrong.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Member give way?

Dame Jill Knight: I will give way, but only briefly, as others wish to speak.

Mr. Corbyn: As the hon. Member has referred to my borough, she should allow me to comment. Islington borough council does not like putting people into bed-and-breakfast hotels. It chooses quality hotels where there is room for children to play and people can live decently. Islington and other authorities put people into bed-and-breakfast accommodation not because they wish to do so, but because of Government cuts in the housing programme and the Government's refusal to provide sufficient money to repair existing properties. None of that is the fault of the people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Dame Jill Knight: The hon. Gentleman does not listen. It was not bed-and-breakfast accommodation; it was expensive hotel accommodation.

Mr. Corbyn: In which they were given bed and breakfast.

Dame Jill Knight: No doubt that wounded the social workers all the way to the budget box because it was the ratepayers who had to pay for that largesse.

Mr. Corbyn: What largesse?

Dame Jill Knight: It was not bed-and-breakfast accommodation. A cost of £4,000 plus free phone calls and £7 per day pocket money is ridiculous. The hon. Gentleman should hang his head in shame at some of the things that Islington council has done. That girl was deliberately led to believe that money grew on trees. She did not have to pay and no one she knew had to pay. That is quite wrong.

Mr. Winnick: Is this an Adjournment debate on Islington?

Dame Jill Knight: There will be no understanding of the cost and no accountability unless the system is changed.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Member give way?

Dame Jill Knight: No. I have given way a great deal, and others wish to speak in the debate.

The more that local authorities spend on goodies, the more the lucky recipients will wish to keep the reckless spenders in office. That is wrong, too, because someone has to foot the bill, and the more the expenditure increases the greater the burden on the pockets of those who have to pay. Labour Members do not seem to realise that many people who pay rates are often much worse off than the people receiving all these benefits and there is great resentment among them when cases such as I have described are made public, because they have to foot the bill while the people who receive all the money pay nothing at all.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dame Jill Knight: I have given way twice and that is enough in a short speech.

The proposed cost for poorer households is very reasonable. We shall continue to pay 80 per cent. of the burden for those who find it hard to meet their rate bills. That is a very reasonable way to sort out the problem. Removing the assistance altogether would be another matter and I would vote against such a proposal, but we are talking about paying 80 per cent. out of the public purse. We are merely asking that people should understand that benefits cost money and that there is some relationship between what they receive and what they pay.

The Labour authorities are the big spenders.

Mr. Michie: They are the authorities that care.

Mr. Corbyn: And their rate support grant has been cut.

Dame Jill Knight: It is no use weeping crocodile tears. If Labour authorities were more careful in their spending, there would not be such hardship for ratepayers.

Mr. Corbyn: How much has Westminster city council spent on decorating the pavements?

Dame Jill Knight: The remedy lies in the authorities' own hands. For goodness sake, let us have some realism and understanding. I urge the House to support the amendment.

Mr. Raynsford From the comments of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), one would not suppose that we were discussing a proposal to cut benefit to 5 million or more households with a considerable saving for the Government. The proposal is about cuts, and the House of Lords has rightly rejected it on a number of grounds.

First, it is unfair because rate bills differ widely from one house and one area to another in a way that does not necessarily have anything to do with the political complexion of the local authority. Often it has more to do with the rateable value, when the property was last valued, the size of the property, and so on.

Dr. Godman: A 20 per cent. contribution to rates would fall especially hard on Scottish ratepayers because of the revaluation that the Government made in Scotland but dare not repeat south of the border, for obvious reasons.

Mr. Raynsford: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He highlights yet another of the variations in rate bills which mean that the impact of the Government's proposal would cause greater hardship to people who, for whatever reason, are paying a high proportion of their income in rates.

The proposal would be administratively inefficient. In many areas, it will cost local authorities more to collect the money than they will be able to bring in. I remember the Minister for Social Security arguing in the House a few weeks ago about the proposal to cut housing benefit for students and saying that one of the reasons for the cut was that the administrative cost of paying out the benefit was so high as to make it not worth while. The Government are here proposing a system that would incur quite unnecessary but considerable extra administrative costs.

The proposal will cause hardship and suffering and a mounting burden of debt among people who are already burdened with debt. The Minister's arguments are threadbare. If he claims that there is no proposal to take 20 per cent. of the rates, why did he and his colleagues talk about it incessantly during the consultation period?

It being two hours after the commencement of the proceedings on the Motion relating to the Social Security Bill (Allocation of Time), MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair,* That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 238, Noes 175.

Division No. 276] **[8.12 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin

Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. James Hamilton.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment accordingly disagreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, some with Special Entry.

Clause 32

THE SOCIAL FUND AND SOCIAL FUND OFFICERS

Lords amendment: No. 52, in page 41, line 23, leave out "directions given" and insert "regulations made".

Mr. Newton: I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 53, in clause 33, page 42, line 16, leave out " direct" and insert "determine".

No. 54, in page 42, line 18, leave out "direct" and insert "determine".

No. 55, in page 42, line 22, leave out "directs" and insert "determines".

No. 56, in page 42, line 34, leave out from "person" to end of line 36 and insert.

"who is liable to maintain the person by or on behalf of whom the application for the award was made or any person in relation to whose needs the award was made.

(8A) Subsections (3) to (6) of section 25 above have effect for the purposes of subsection (8)*(c)* above as they have effect for the purposes of sections 23 to 25 above."

No. 57, in page 43, line 9, leave out "general directions issued" and insert "regulations made".

No. 58, in page 43, line 13, at end insert—

"(11A) A person applying for a social fund payment may appeal to a social security appeal tribunal constituted in accordance with section 97(2) to (2E) of the Social Security Act 1975 against any determination of a social fund officer with respect to the application.

(11B) On an appeal under subsection (11A) above the appeal tribunal may—

(a) confirm the determination appealed against;

(b) substitute for that determination any other determination which a social fund officer could have made; or

(c) if the appeal is against a determination under subsection (3) or (4) above, set aside that determination."

Government motions to disagree with Lords amendments Nos. 57 and 58.

Government amendments in lieu of Lords amendment No. 58: (a), new clause—*The social fund Commissioner*—

'A.—(1) There shall be an officer to be known as the social fund Commissioner (in this section referred to as "the Commissioner.").

(2) The Commissioner shall be appointed by the Secretary of State.

(3) The Commissioner—

(a) shall appoint such social fund inspectors;

(b) may appoint such officers and staff for himself and for social fund inspectors,

as he thinks fit, but with the consent of the Secretary of State and the Treasury as to numbers.

(4) Appointments under subsection (3) above shall be made from persons made available to the Commissioner by the Secretary of State.

(5) It shall be the duty of the Commissioner—

(a) to monitor the quality of decisions of social fund inspectors and give them such advice and assistance as he thinks fit to improve the standard of their decisions;

(b) to arrange such training of social fund inspectors as he considers appropriate; and

(c) to carry out such other functions in connection with the work of social fund inspectors as the Secretary of State may direct.

(6) The Commissioner shall report annually in writing to the Secretary of State on the standards of reviews by social fund inspectors and the Secretary of State shall publish his report.'.

(b), in page 41, line 22, leave out from 'fund' to 'shall' in line 28 and insert—

'(1A) Payments may be made out of that fund, in accordance with this Part of this Act—

(a) to meet, in prescribed circumstances, maternity expenses and funeral expenses; and

(b) to meet other needs in accordance with directions given or guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

(1B) Payments under this section.'.

(c), in page 41, line 28, at end insert—

'(1C) Social fund payments to meet funeral expenses may in all cases be recovered, as if they were funeral expenses, out of the estate of the deceased, and (subject to section 51 below) by no other means.'.

(d), in page 41, line 35, leave out subsection (4).

(e), in page 42, line 6, at end insert

'such as are mentioned in subsection (1A)*(b)* above; and the Secretary of State may allocate an amount, or allocate different amounts for different purposes, for such payments by a particular social fund officer or group of officers in a financial year.'.

(f), in page 42, line 10, after 'payment', insert

', such as is mentioned in section 32(1A)*(b)* above'.

(g), in page 42, line 18, leave out

'under section 32(1)*(b)* or *(c)* above'.

(h), in page 42, line 22, leave out subsection (6).

(i), in page 42, line 26, leave out

'made under section 32(1)*(c)* above'.

(j), in page 42, line 28, leave out

'made under section 32(1)*(c)* above'.

(k), in page 43, line 7, leave out '(4)' and insert '(6)'.

(l), in page 43, line 36, leave out from 'inspector' to end of line 37 and insert

'appointed by the social fund Commissioner under section *[The social fund Commissioner]* below'.

(m), in page 44, line 2, at end insert—

'(4A) A social fund inspector may review a determination under subsection (3) above made by himself or some other social fund inspector.'.

(n), in page 55, line 8, at end insert

'and any social fund payments such as are mentioned in section 32(1A)*(a)* above'.

(o), in page 56, line 9, at end insert

'and any social fund payments such as are mentioned in section 32(1A)*(a)* above'.

(p), in page 59, line 16, at end insert

'and any social fund payments such as are mentioned in section 32(1A)*(a)* above'.

Mr. Newton: On Monday I set out in my statement to the House the view that had led to the social fund. Essentially, it is that the present single payment system is unsatisfactory and is becoming increasingly unworkable. That arises in part from a failure to distinguish sufficiently clearly between the two distinct roles of providing a basic weekly income and of meeting special emergency or one-off needs. The proposals in the Bill rest on that analysis, first, by creating a simpler, clearer structure for weekly income support and, secondly, by establishing a separate mechanism specifically designed to enable help with genuine, special, occasional needs to be given in a more practical, manageable, flexible way.

The first objective is unquestionably best met by precisely defined, closely regulated entitlement, with an appeal mechanism of the present type. That is a formal judicial structure which determines whether the law has been correctly applied in a particular case through adjudicating officers and appeal tribunals which we have improved and strengthened for that purpose.

The second objective is generally best met by a more discretionary approach operated on the basis of directions and guidelines rather than regulations so as to allow the application of a broader judgment to all the varied circumstances of individual cases. Just as we see this as a separate and distinct task, so we believe it requires its separate and distinct process of decision making through social fund officers and a different system of review.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): My hon. Friend will appreciate that for a system to appear to be fair there must be a degree of independence so that there is not automatically a bias towards either an applicant or the social fund. Justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done. Can he assure the House that an appellant can present his or her case at all levels on the procedure that he is proposing?

Mr. Newton: I shall come to the role that we see for the social fund commissioner, whom we have proposed in the amendment.

To ask the existing tribunals to perform this review role would be wrong from every point of view. If, in reviewing social fund decisions, they were to be subject to the directions and guidelines of the Secretary of State, the independence of their more clearly judicial role in applying regulations laid down by Parliament would be, and certainly could be, undermined. If they were not, they would in effect be acting as a second tier of discretionary decision making within no real framework. Either way, the inevitable tendency would be to build a body of case law which would risk recreating the very problems which have made the present system of regulated single payments so unsatisfactory.

As the House knows, our original proposals envisaged the first stage of review by the social fund officer, as indeed would be the case now with adjudicating officers. Beyond that we propose to review at a higher level within the normal management chain, with the applicant being given a further opportunity to put his case. In Committee we accepted that that alone might not be, and certainly might not be seen to be, sufficiently distanced from the original decision to be accepted as either fair or impartial.

Therefore, on Report we introduced proposals for a separate body of social fund inspectors, operating not only outside the local DHSS office, but outside and independent from the normal DHSS local office network and management. The inspector's role would be to establish whether the social fund officer had taken his decision properly — for example, whether it had been based on the proper evidence and in the light of all the facts. He would have power to confirm the determination made by a social fund officer, to make any determination which a social fund officer could have made—in other words, to substitute his determination—or to refer the matter back to the social fund officer for determination.

In debate in the other place and in the amendments that have come to this House as a result, the argument has been carried forward in two closely linked ways. First, directions, not guidelines, would be turned into regulations. Secondly, decisions, whether under the regulations as proposed or the guidelines, would be subject to appeal to the social security appeal tribunals.

For the reasons I have sought to give, we do not feel able to ask the House to accept the amendments. We wish to make a further clear and significant response to the concerns that underlie them. We seek to do that in three ways — partly through the amendments and partly through an earlier amendment.

[Mr. Newton]

The first is the community care amendment — the severe disablement premium — that we discussed earlier. As I said in that debate, we had intended that those needs should be met on a discretionary basis through the social fund. By creating the new severe disablement premium, which is decided on by adjudication officers and appeal tribunals in the normal way and is a part of the regulated entitlement of the income support scheme, we have responded to some of the concern expressed on that aspect of the social fund.

8.30 pm

Secondly, we have concluded that the proposed maternity and funeral payments should be put on a regulated basis and that decisions should be taken by normal adjudication officers, subject to the normal appeal machinery. In the case of community care reflected in the severe disablement premium and maternity and funeral payments, which are undoubtedly sensitive areas about which many hon. Members are concerned, we propose to put the entitlement into regulations. They will be decided by adjudication officers, and will be subject to the normal process of appeal.

Thirdly, for those decisions that would remain subject to the discretionary process on the basis of directions and guidelines, we propose an amendment to entrench the independence of the social fund inspectors in the role that they are assigned by the Bill.

Dr. Godman: Will the inspectorate have a career structure of its own? Will the inspectorate be independent of the general career structure of the Department? Will the inspectors be of a more senior rank than those whose decisions they may overturn?

Mr. Newton: As to those questions—particularly the last one—we should wish to discuss the matter with the social fund commissioner after his appointment. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to proceed.

We propose to establish the post of a social fund commissioner building on the well-established pattern—I think that it is widely accepted as valid—represented by the existing chief adjudication officer regarding the regulated part of the system.

The chief adjudication officer has his own specific position in the legislation and is statutorily independent of the Secretary of State. Our amendment proposes a social fund commissioner, similarly with his own position written into the legislation, and statutorily independent of the Secretary of State in his work—in this case, the work is to appoint the inspectors and their staff, to ensure that they are given appropriate training, and to monitor the quality of their decisions.

I shall make a further important point, because it completes, in some respects, the parallel with the chief adjudication officer. It will be within the memory of several hon. Members—certainly the hon. Members for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) — that we responded to argument on earlier legislation—I think that it was the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act; commonly called the 1983 HASSASSA Act — by requiring the chief adjudication officer to produce an annual report to the Secretary of State which the Secretary of State should have a duty to publish. We propose to match that requirement on the chief adjudication officer and the Secretary of State with a parallel requirement regarding the proposed social fund commissioner.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: My hon. Friend has talked about the duties of the commissioner for monitoring the quality of decisions. Will the commissioner, if he thinks fit, be able to consider individual cases and make decisions?

Mr. Newton: The social fund commissioner should satisfy himself that the standards maintained by the inspectors are proper and fair, and that they operate in a reasonable manner. He will be concerned with the quality control of those working the system, and not with taking separate decisions himself.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Can the Minister say what the net costs of the appeal arrangements are expected to be? Will new staff be appointed, or will the appointments be made from existing staff? Will the appeal arrangements be on a district or a regional basis?

Mr. Newton: The latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question would need further discussion with the commissioner and further development as we work out the proposals. We have brought forward proposals in response to quite legitimate expressions of opinion by Members of both Houses of Parliament. It is clear, from the amendment, that the social fund inspectors should be appointed from staff made available by the Secretary of State. Their responsibility as social fund inspectors would be to the social fund commissioner, in the same way as is familiar in the adjudicated side of the system.

The social fund is not simply an attempt to return single payments to discretionary form. Hon. Members opposite have found that difficult to accept. It is designed as, and we hope it will be, a new approach to what has been a difficult and intractable problem under successive Governments, and one more appropriate than that which we have at present to the meeting of genuine special needs. It requires a system of review, specifically related to the new approach. In those areas that lend themselves to regulated entitlement, such as maternity and funeral payments, as well as community care, we have met the needs of the other place and the consequent case for the normal system of adjudication and appeal.

In those areas where discretion remains, and where we believe that it must remain if we are to have the flexibility to look at individual special circumstances as they should be considered, we have responded by establishing a clear new safeguard for the independence and integrity of the appropriate process of review. Taken together, I believe that those steps constitute, as with the earlier amendment on community care, a real and significant move to meet the wishes that were expressed in another place.

Mrs. Beckett: The Secretary of State said that we had enjoyed listening to the discussions on the Bill for about 200 hours. It seems to me that during most of that time we have listened to Government Ministers saying, "We are thinking about that, we are considering that, we are discussing that with people, and we have not made up our minds."

In many ways, the speech by the Minister for Social Security was quite remarkable. Two thirds of the way through he said that it was not acceptable to the Government to include in the Bill the amendments passed

in another place because it would be wrong for appeals to go to tribunals and for them to be decided as a result of directions by the Secretary of State. He said that it would make the system unworkable if tribunals acted on directions rather than on regulations. Later, he said that the amendments proposed that the tribunals should act on regulations and not on directions. He then applied the argument for the first case to the second, to which it is clearly not applicable.

There is nothing wrong with the amendments; it is just that the Government do not like them. It is clear that the Government's alternative proposals are not exactly stringent in their application. I was fascinated when, in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), the Minister could not tell us not only whether there would be a separate career structure for the inspectors, but whether they would be of senior rank to those whose decisions they were reviewing, which may cast some light on the authority that he expects them to exercise.

There are problems with some of the Government's amendments, especially amendment (c), which goes further than the original Bill and which we find unacceptable. It is right for me to deal with the principal problem to which the amendments are directed — the Government's proposals to withdraw, through the Bill, rights of independent appeal that have existed for 50 years. The Government's reason for doing so is contemptible. They realise only too well that if applications are to be made for items that cannot be paid for out of weekly benefit, and those applications are to be judged on their merit, as they must be in an independent appeal, the cash limits which the Government ultimately intend to introduce will not hold. I say that with confidence, because we shall later discuss the paving proposals for the social fund by which the Government are clearly halving the already inadequate assistance now given. The scheme cannot be so severely restricted if need is to be properly weighed.

For the Government to dismiss cursorily a half-century-long civil right in their search for economy is widely considered to be a constitutional outrage. That view was clearly held by those in another place—many of them with a wealth of experience in these matters—and obviously led to the amendments that we are debating. That was also the strongly held view of the Council on Tribunals, a body which, so far as I am aware, has never before ventured into the area of political controversy, but which was so horrified by the Government's proposals that it denounced them in uncompromising terms and expressed its "grave concern" in a special report addressed to this subject alone.

It is widely accepted that the quality of decision-making is affected by the existence of an independent system of appeal. No one believes that it is an accident that, in so many cases in which an appeal is sought, and the case papers are therefore re-examined, decisions are overturned on review alone, without the full process of appeal. That happened in about 19,000 cases in 1984. An additional 8,000 decisions in that year where review had confirmed the original decision were overturned on appeal. That means that at least 8,000, and possibly up to 27,000, people received payments to which they were entitled in law, but which they received only because of the existence of an independent appeal system.

The first annual report of the Chief Adjudication Officer, as the head of the service in which these decisions are made, stated that DHSS officers make decisions

"on scanty evidence on the assumption that claimants will complain or appeal"

and that

"the standard of adjudication cannot objectively be regarded as satisfactory".

The Council on Tribunals points out:

"such a high proportion of incorrect decisions is most unlikely to be improved, even using specially trained officers to the extent where the need for independent tribunals became questionable".

The Government suggest that they have made concessions, but that is less than accurate. They have not made concessions in the case for independent appeal, except in respect of maternity and funeral payments. The Government have tried to find cosmetic cover to make an internal system of appeal sound independent. They refer to inspectors and to a commissioner, but a brief glance at Government amendment (a) blows the gaff and certainly calls into question the Minister's remarks.

The Minister referred to the commissioner as "statutorily independent", but proposed subsection (4) in Government amendment (a) states:

"appointments under subsection (3) above shall be made from persons made available to the Commissioner by the Secretary of State."

Some independence!

The Minister suggested that the commissioner would be concerned only with "quality control" of the system. I have no idea what he meant by that, and I doubt that he has. The inspectors and the commissioner are all to be responsible to, and in practice chosen by, the Secretary of State. They will not be, and will be seen not to be, independent. There will rightly be no confidence that each case will be judged on its merits, because cases will not be considered solely on their merits. The Government's amendments continue to fail the common test of justice. This injustice will be inflicted on those described by the Government's own Social Security Advisory Committee as "the most vulnerable" people in our society.

The Opposition are, of course, glad that the maternity and funeral payments will be judged in an independent procedure, but this highlights the truth of our argument. The Government have always stated that these payments would not be subject to cash limits and so, on these measures, fair dealing could be allowed.

There is nothing defective about the amendments. They seek merely to remedy an injustice which the Government seek to impose. The Opposition agree wholeheartedly with the Lords amendments. We hope that the other place will stand by its guns and see through the device of the Government's amendments as clearly as will the unfortunate claimants who otherwise will be subjected to these procedures.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: I shall detain the House only briefly to make a few comments on the proposed new clause. I am deeply disappointed with it. Unfortunately, the grand title of "social fund Commissioner" is far too grand for what the commissioner has to do and for his powers. I shall consider the proposed new clause subsection by subsection.

It is, of course, reasonable that the commissioner

"shall be appointed by the Secretary of State",

[Mr. Andrew Bowden]

but after that, in his activities, responsibilities and powers, he is bound hand and foot by the Secretary of State. Subsection (3) states that the commissioner

"(a) shall appoint such social fund inspectors;
(b) may appoint such officers and staff for himself and for social fund inspectors, as he thinks fit, but with the consent of the Secretary of State and the Treasury".

We might just as well say that the commissioner can appoint anyone he likes, so long as that person is on the list supplied by the Secretary of State.

8.45 pm

What are the commissioner's duties? The great disappointment is that the commissioner, so far as I understand from the reply by my hon. Friend, will not have the power to look at individual cases. He will

"monitor the quality of decisions".

I do not understand what that means. Will the commissioner look collectively at all the decisions made in a particular matter by the social fund inspectors and say that they were all wrong, or all right, or that some were right and some were wrong? This is a cosmetic exercise.

Subsection (6) states that the commissioner

"shall report annually in writing to the Secretary of State"

—

that is good—

"and the Secretary of State shall publish his report."

I am deeply disappointed that the commissioner has no real powers, that he is not an ombudsman and that there is no independent tribunal. In the context of the way in which our social security system has worked for a long time, it is sad that a degree of independence has been removed.

Mr. Kirkwood: I strongly subscribe to the arguments of the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden). The scheme has been ill-thought-out and will eventually be shown to be so. The proposals as they stand show no real element of independence. The Minister for Social Security knows that he is in difficulty with the other place. This is an attempt to get him off the hook. I hope that, even if this measure is passed with the use of the Whips here, the other place will not accept it.

The proposed new clause refers to a "social fund Commissioner". That is an especially cruel use of the word "commissioner". The proposal tries to invest this new official creature with the considerable authority and independence of the commissioners in the existing independent appeal system. That amounts to political sleight of hand. The two are in no way analogous.

The real independence of the proposed new commissioner is highly questionable. I do not believe that they will really have the power to overturn decisions taken by inspectors. At the end of the day, someone has to take the decision. There is a power to review. The commissioner may say that he wants to change a decision. The social fund inspector may say, "That is all very well, but I think that my decision is right." What will then happen? Obviously, there is no change in the application of the guidelines, which means, indirectly, no change in the cash limits faced by the social fund inspectors and the social fund commissioner. That is not acceptable.

The fact that the review will be taken in-house means that the social fund inspectors will have less stringent and effective powers of oversight. The present panoply of genuinely independent appeals will be missing in the future. Do claimants have a right of audience before the social fund inspector? If not, the whole system is vitiated. That aspect must be considered.

As I understand it, the social fund inspector will be based at a regional office. My regional office is 55 miles away from the local office. If people are to be sent traipsing from Galashiels to Edinburgh for a right of appeal, that will be an entirely regressive and detrimental move.

The Government's amendment talks about publishing a report. I welcome that as far as it goes. Of course, those reports will not be debatable in Parliament. They will be published and go into the ether. It may make interesting reading to see how the reports are handled, but they will not be debated in the House. We should look at that aspect carefully.

This whole matter should be taken essentially on the basis of a question of justice. The Council on Tribunals was right. Although there are some welcome improvements, which the Minister explained, they do not go far enough for me to recommend my right hon. and hon. Friends to support this amendment.

One of the great strengths of the appeal system as we now know it is that decisions are published and people can understand what is going on during the review that takes place under the normal process. Will claimants be given a clear explanation as to how their case was dealt with under the proposed system? Will the key decisions in the reviews be made available more publicly and generally by the Department? It is important for us to be able to measure exactly how the system will work.

These proposals do not go nearly far enough. This is nothing like the independent system that we would support. I recommend my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against the Government's proposals.

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): One can well understand and fully support the Government's determination not to introduce the full panoply of a quasi judicial appeal procedure such as we have at present. To deal with thousands and thousands of possible claims about small items will require a procedure which is cumbersome, long-winded, expensive, absurd at the margins and cannot be entirely fair and just to those who seek to appeal against decisions. I say that it is absurd at the margins because much time, effort, money and bureaucracy can often be involved in whether somebody should have a hot water bottle, a saucepan, or whatever. Therefore, one can fully understand that one does not wish to have——

Mrs. Beckett: I am listening with interest to the hon. Gentleman's remarks. Does my memory fail me or was it the hon. Gentleman who served on a Committee last year when his hon. Friend the Minister instituted this very judicial system? The hon. Gentleman enthusiastically welcomed it and his hon. Friend the Minister took credit for the Government making the system more judicial at the time.

Mr. Galley: That is not the case. That is not what happened last year. If that point is in any way valid, the hon. Lady should have made it long ago because this is a debate that we have had in Committee over a long period. Let me come to what I sought to persuade the Government to do.

One can fully understand that this long-winded procedure, which is not necessarily going to produce good decisions, should not be implemented. Nevertheless, concern has been expressed by many hon. Members on both sides of the House about the need for some form of appeal mechanism. The system, as initially proposed, meant that particular individuals had enormous power and responsibility. Therefore, it was crucial that there was some movement towards an appeal procedure. It should not be the case that one person made the decision and that was the end of the matter.

Therefore, after much debate in Committee and on Report, it was accepted, before the measure went to another place, that there should be an internal review procedure. That meant the possibility of social fund officers reviewing their own decisions, passing those decisions on to other social fund officers and having an inspectorate to monitor the decisions and to which people could appeal. That allayed some of the fears. It meant that there was a second opinion. That was an important concession.

When one looked at the new—*[Interruption.]* If hon. Gentlemen want to make comments, would they not make them from a sedentary position?

Mr. Frank Field: The hon. Gentleman may not be able to recall last year. However, does he recall the Committee on this Bill in which he was in the vanguard for reforms which would strengthen the appeal system?

Mr. Galley: Yes, indeed. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the Committee proceedings he will see that the remarks I have made this evening are precisely in tune with what I said during those debates. I said that there had to be a review procedure, and we got a concession towards an internal management review system. The hon. Gentleman should wait until I come to my further point.

With the Government's proposal, we now have the idea of a social fund commissioner. One looks at that and thinks, "Good, we are getting a little further. We will have a social fund ombudsman." That was my first thought. That would have been a good idea. It is important that there should be consistency in decisions in different parts of the country and that the quality of those decisions should be the same in varying circumstances. We should have a quality control mechanism through the social fund commissioner.

However, this is a lost opportunity in not extending the function of the social fund commissioner to an appeal of last resort. It may be that one would need to institute some control upon the range of such appeals, but it would give a further element of independence.

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I had the pleasure of serving on the Committee with my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley). I was under the impression that my hon. Friend was advocating that there should be monitoring of the performance of the inspectorate, and that is what we have now.

Mr. Galley: My hon. Friend is right. We have agreed on an internal review procedure which is a plus point, and we how have a monitoring of consistency, which is another plus point. All I am suggesting is that we must resist the Lords amendment. I fully support my hon. Friend the Minister in that. However, he may have missed an opportunity to have an appeal of last resort in a social fund commissioner. He could have gone just one step further.

Mr. Winnick: I am pleased that the other place recognised the importance of continuing an appeals system, which has operated in social security matters for over 50 years. It is interesting to note that the figures show that, between 1981 and 1984, over 25,000 decisions about single payments were challenged by tribunals on appeal. I hope that the Minister will take this on board.

It is important to bear in mind that not only does the system allow an appeal to be made, and many are successful, but decisions are affected by an appeals system. Once a decision has been made and a claimant is dissatisfied and intends to lodge an appeal, the matter is reviewed before the appeal. That is bound to have an effect. It is not likely to continue under the proposed system set out in the Government's new clause.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) mentioned the Council on Tribunals but, because of time, did not quote from what it said. However, I shall do so, because what it said is of the utmost importance. The Council on Tribunals is rarely mentioned in connection with these issues. It said:

> "Very good reasons are needed before the abolition of the right to an independent appeal in such circumstances, an appeal which has existed for over 50 years. It would probably be the most substantial abolition of a right of appeal to an independent tribunal since the Council on Tribunals was set up by Parliament in 1958 following the Franks report. It is for these reasons that we are so critical of the proposal. In our last Annual Report we described it as highly retrograde".

That view comes not just from the Opposition but from the Council on Tribunals.

9 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): The Council on Tribunals has an axe to grind. Has it not been made clear that the resources in the social fund are finite? Is it not better for the social fund to be directed towards those in real need rather than lining the pockets of those who sit on appeal tribunals, the secretariat and Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all?

Mr. Winnick: To a large extent, the hon. Gentleman has given away the reason why there will be no appeal system. He has said frankly what the Minister was reluctant to say. It will be a highly cash limited social fund, the purpose of which is to limit and reduce the amount of money being given — hence no appeals system. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman because his intervention was useful.

What is contained in the new clause is no satisfactory alternative to an independent appeals system. The social fund officer will be based in the local office, so he will be in the very office where the decision was first taken against which an appeal is being made. Although the social fund inspector will not be based in the local office, he will be based in the regional office and will be perceived, inevitably, as part of the internal DHSS procedure.

As the new clause says, in the main — perhaps without exception—such inspectors will come from the existing DHSS staff. Does anyone believe, or could they come to accept, that this will be an independent review that will be a satisfactory alternative to the existing system of independent appeal?

I ask questions that I have asked before. Will claimants be seen in the first place by a social fund officer?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman made a curious remark about the fact that the social fund inspectors may come from within the DHSS staff. Is he saying that the adjudication officers, who do the same, do not accurately and properly carry out their functions, because that is the logical conclusion of his remarks?

Mr. Winnick: To some extent, my analogy is with the system of appeals in immigration, with which I am familiar. Although the adjudicators are appointed by the Home Office, it is recognised that they are independent, and that is an important difference. It is important that there should be an understanding, a recognition and an acceptance that the people concerned are independent. I do not believe for one moment that the social fund inspectors will be seen in that light.

Will people who say that they are dissatisfied with a decision see the social fund inspector in person? Many of the people with whom we are dealing may not feel adequately able to present their cases. Will they be in a position to go and see the social fund officer, or will such matters be dealt with through paperwork? We must not forget that, under the existing appeals system, people can be represented.

Mr. Corbyn: Does my hon. Friend accept that, as the terms of reference for the social fund commissioners are so vague, the only thing that can logically happen is that, as the many discrepancies on decisions of social fund officers arise, cases will end up in the court as a matter of natural justice?

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend is right.

It is understandable that, with the tainted record of Ministers trying to lessen the amount of money given to the poorest in our community, who desperately need the payments for which they can apply, there is so much suspicion of what is being done. That is why we are justified, like the other place, in voting against the Government's proposal and in believing that the appeal system should continue.

This is a further onslaught on the poor—on those who desperately need the items for which they have applied. The speeches by Conservative Members in previous debates and also in this debate demonstrate what was said a few moments ago: that they believe that the assistance that is being given should be reduced and that the poorest should be further discriminated against and penalised. The policy of this Tory Government is to give to the rich and to take away from those who are most in need.

Mr. Evennett: The social fund came in for a great deal of scrutiny in Standing Committee. Two matters caused concern to hon. Members. Certain hon. Members were in favour of a full appeals procedure, with all the bureaucracy that that entails. Other hon. Members felt that there should be a monitoring system to ensure that inspectors are doing their job correctly. That concern in Committee has been removed to a large degree by the new clause.

Conservative Members welcome the creation of a commissioner who will be responsible for ensuring that inspectors perform their job well. Conservative Members welcome most of all the fact that his report will be published, for it will then be possible to monitor his comments on the system. We do not want a return to the kind of bureaucracy which would result in appeals over minor matters being dealt with at great length. That does not help claimants, or administrators or taxpayers, who have to foot the bill.

I welcome the movement that the Government have made since the Committee stage. Also, I welcome the fact that they have taken on board the concern of some hon. Members about the monitoring of the social fund. The new clause is a vast improvement and it should be supported. We look forward to this radical Bill, which is long overdue, being placed on the statute book.

Mr. Frank Field: I should like to make four points in one minute. My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said that tonight the Government have made the crucial point that they are willing to concede independent appeals only to those parts of the scheme that are not cash limited.

Secondly, the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) made, as so often happens in these debates, a most pertinent contribution. He said that the use of the word "commissioner" in this context is a sham and that it will be seen to be a sham.

Thirdly, the hon. Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) said that such items as saucepans, clothing and bedding are small items and are of little importance. They may be of little importance to hon. Members, but to all too many of our constituents they are crucial ingredients for a decent standard of living.

Fourthly, even though, with his usual ability, the Minister used his silver tongue to move the amendment, he convinced us all that, if we were asked to write a minute on the working of the new system, if we were honest, we could not do it.

Dr. Godman: The concept of a commissioner is somewhat ambiguous, despite the welcome that has been given to it by the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett). It is an unknown quantity. Is the commissioner to become a social welfare ombudsman, or is he or she to be simply a chief inspector, or Government inspector? In some ways, the role is analogous to the lay observer in the Scottish legal system. Will he or she be a career civil servant, or will he or she be a member of the Department itself and hence part of the Department's career structure? Is it likely that the successful applicant will be recruited from outwith the Department? Will the commissioner have legal training? Is it likely that he or she will be a Queen's counsel? To my mind, none of those matters is at all clear from what the Minister said when introducing the concept of a commissioner.

The Minister knows the importance of single payments in Scotland vis-a-vis the rest of Great Britain. It is essential for us to have an independent appeals system and this shadowy vague animal, this commissioner, whoever he or she may be, will simply not be good enough for the people I represent. Despite the inefficiencies and the deficiencies of the single payment system, at the moment those people, at least at the back of their minds, trust an independent appeals system. This shadowy commissioner will not be able to earn the trust of people who depend on social welfare incomes in Scotland and in the rest of Great Britain.

Mr. Newton: The missing ingredient in the debate is the failure to acknowledge that the system we have is simply not working. In part, that is because of the nature of the system.

It being four hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion relating to the Social Security Bill (Allocation of Time), MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to Order this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—*

Question agreed to.

Lords amendment accordingly disagreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that hour.*

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, some with Special Entry.

Lords amendment: No. 58, in page 43, line 13, at end insert—

"(11A) A person applying for a social fund payment may appeal to a social security appeal tribunal constituted in accordance with section 97(2) to (2E) of the Social Security Act 1975 against any determination of a social fund officer with respect to the application.

(11B) On an appeal under subsection (11A) above the appeal tribunal may—

(*a*) confirm the determination appealed against;

(*b*) substitute for that determination any other determination which a social fund officer could have made; or

(*c*) if the appeal is against a determination under subsection (3) or (4) above, set aside that determination."—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment—*[Mr. Fowler.]*

The House divided: Ayes 237, Noes 184.

Division No. 277] **[9.12 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*

Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Francis Maude.

NOES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Cleiland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sedgemore, Brian
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Hamilton and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment accordingly disagreed to.

Government amendments (a) to (p) in lieu of Lords amendment No. 58 agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 57 disagreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, some with Special Entry.

Ordered,

That a Committee be appointed to draw up Reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to certain of their amendments.—*[Mr. Fowler.]*

Ordered,

That Mrs. Margaret Beckett, Mr. Secretary Fowler, Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd, Mr. John Major and Mr. Michael Meacher, be Members of the Committee.—*[Mr. Fowler.]*

Ordered,

That three be the Quorum of the Committee.—*[Mr. Fowler.]*

Ordered,

That the Committee do withdraw immediately.—*[Mr. Fowler.]*

Reasons for disagreeing to certain of the Lords amendments reported, and agreed to; to be communicated to the Lords.

Supplementary Benefit

9.26 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Supplementary Benefit (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1259), dated 18th July 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 21st July, be annulled.

We have tabled this prayer for three reasons. First, the proposals involve a cut in single payments of between £150 million and £200 million. I have based that on the figure that the Minister gave in his statement two days ago, when he referred to a current rate of £400 million. There is, therefore, a cut of something over 45 per cent. in expenditure on single payments, regardless of need, despite the increased number of those dependent on supplementary benefit. We believe that that must cause intense and widespread hardship.

Until now, it has always been accepted that the supplementary benefit scale rates are fixed at so low a level on the assumption that expenditure on major household items must be met separately. Indeed, many believe that the cut in expenditure is an attempt to accustom claimants and others to the limits under a future social fund. We believe that these regulations give us an insight into the sort of conditions that will exist under the social fund when the Bill is enacted.

Secondly, we object to the regulations because the new rules are extremly complex. Any hon. Member who reads the draft regulations will see what I mean. Moreover, they are contrary to the Government's stated aim on social security policy, which is to simplify administration. As a result, there is likely to be confusion, hardship and a low take-up, even among those who are entitled to benefit.

Thirdly, we object to the regulations on the ground of procedure. We are extremely disturbed about the manner in which the regulations have been tabled, with little or no time for hon. Members and outside organisations to consult on the response made by the Social Security Advisory Committee to the Government's proposals before today's debate and implementation on 11 August. Indeed, implementation is less than three weeks' time. Thus, we have yet another example of the Government's precipitate and indecent haste to put these measures into operation.

The Government sat on the highly critical report of the SSAC on these proposals for two months. The committee's report is dated 22 May. Yet only three weeks have been allowed for claimants and staff to find out about these complex changes. In the middle of the holiday period, it is totally unreasonable for DHSS staff to be expected to master these new complex rules in time to apply them by 11 August. The staff are already struggling to cope with what the Secretary of State referred to recently as the major operational burdens that the present scheme places upon them. Claimants are even less likely now to find out about the changes before the axe falls on 11 August. The Opposition believe—I say this advisedly — that this is a deliberate ploy to prevent people claiming their entitlement while they still can.

The problem, as the Government see it, is one of rising costs. The Minister shakes his head, but he will be able to speak in due course, and no doubt shortly. That was very much in evidence in what he said two days ago, when he spoke a great deal about exploitation and abuse. There is evidence, however, of a bottomless pit of need which is fed by rising unemployment, the growing number of claimants who have been unemployed for two or three years, the gradual erosion of other resources, such as savings, and the inadequate levels of weekly benefit payments.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): On Monday, my hon. Friend the Minister talked about leaflets circulating throughout the country containing tick lists under the slogan "closing down sales". He said that during the four weeks to 3 June there had been claims amounting to an annual rate of 5·5 million payments involving at least £400 million. It is no coincidence that these leaflets appeared throughout the country. Who was behind that smash-and-grab raid? Was it the Labour party? Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House here and now?

Mr. Meacher: I am sure that the House will be interested to know who is behind the smash-and-grab raid of tax cuts for some of the highest-paid people in the country.

Mr. Favell: Answer my question. Who is behind it?

Mr. Meacher: If individual Tories pay accountants to ensure that they receive all the reliefs to which they are entitled, why should not welfare rights officers, on behalf of poor people, obtain benefits for their clients to which they are entitled? These are benefits to which they have a right under legislation. The Government pretend at least that they wish there to be a high take-up rate and that benefits should be paid to those who are entitled to receive them.

Grants for exceptional needs are precisely that. Proving need is a basic condition before claims can be made and they are not paid without proof of need. That is set out in the regulations. The Minister has spoken of grants running at £400 million annually and the Government have said that they will return to the 1984 level, which will be entirely arbitrary now that we are in 1986. The effect of that move will be a reduction from £400 million to £216 million. That is a cut of about £190 million, not the £100 million that the Minister talked about originally.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): The figures that I used on Monday were based on one month's figures, which were the four weeks to 3 June. They reflect in part the astonishing activities that are taking place throughout the country, some of which I referred to on Monday and to which I shall refer again this evening. The plain and blunt fact is that currently it is difficult for us to know what the position is on single payments.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The Government are in charge.

Mr. Newton: We are in charge, and we believe that the present torrent of claims could cause the breakdown of the entire social security system. That is why we are taking action.

Mr. Meacher: The Minister's last remark, when he was under some pressure, is significant. He is saying that when people claim their rights, which they are entitled to do under legislation which applies to the social security system, the system is in danger of breaking down completely. It is an astonishing claim to make. The fact is that those welfare rights claims are purely to ensure that people get what the House has said they are entitled to claim. It is the Government who should be ensuring that

[Mr. Meacher]

they get that and we should not need to depend on welfare rights officers, financed by various voluntary organisations.

Mr. Frank Field: Did my hon. Friend notice the condemnation from Conservative Benches of voluntary organisations issuing leaflets with check lists of items to which people may be entitled? Will he remind Conservative Members who initiated that process? Is he not aware that earlier in this Parliament, with the cut in staff, the Government themselves started sending leaflets to old people, asking them to tick off items to which they may be entitled? Surely one is just learning from what the Government themselves have done.

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend makes an effective point. That is true. One section of the population that is in need, about which the Government are concerned, is the elderly —purely because of their numbers, one suspects. They have employed those methods to ensure that some elderly people get more benefit, but as soon as it is lone parents, the unemployed, or single unemployed persons claiming benefit, the Government strongly object. But they all have rights under the legislation. It is wrong to suggest that the social security system depends on a massive failure to take up benefits. That shows what a charade it is in the minds of some Conservative Members.

I wish to refer to the reasons advanced by the Government in a statement that they made two or three days ago to justify the measure. First, the Government see an inequity between those who are on supplementary benefit and those who are not. That is an odd argument because it was the Conservative Government in 1980, when the social security rules were changed, who removed entitlement to lump sum grants from those not on supplementary benefit and not in full-time work. They are now using that removal to withdraw the right to such grants from others. In other words, one chips away part of the edifice and, when one sees an inequity, one chips away at another part. If there is an inequity between the low paid and supplementary benefit claimants, surely the answer lies in improving the position of the low paid rather than further worsening that of supplementary benefit claimants.

The second argument used by the Government was the increased value of the scale rates since 1979, which they say reduce the need for single payments. However, the scale rate takes no account of the differential impact of price increases on the poor. I do not know whether the Government accept the low-paid price index, which was developed by the Low Pay Unit and the Civil and Public Services Association. Perhaps they do not. But it is a significant and carefully controlled independent effort to arrive at a fairer retail prices index for the low paid. On that basis, there has been not an increase in the rates, but a 1 per cent. cut in the value of the rates. However, another point is relevant. The Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations set out a claimant's weekly requirements to be covered in the scale rates. They do not include an amount towards major items of household equipment and furniture. That is what we are talking about.

The third argument concerns the increased number of single payments that have been made since 1981. I was surprised by the figures quoted by the Government until I looked into the matter more carefully. The fact is that 1981 is a deceptive base line for comparison because it was the first year of the new social security scheme in which single payments were set out in regulations. Neither the public nor many DHSS staff knew the rules. In that year, single payments as a proportion of the number of claimants were at their lowest level since 1971. For that reason, it is scarcely surprising that we saw the results that we did.

Two other arguments to which the Government and Conservative Members have referred tonight relate to the welfare rights take-up campaigns. It is extraordinary that Conservative Members should make so much of that. In effect, the Government have said that they introduced rights to single payments in 1980, but, now that people are exercising those rights, thanks to the efforts of local councils to improve take-up, those rights will be curtailed. A right is acceptable to Conservative Members as long as it is not taken up by too many people. The omens are ominous for future attempts to improve take-up of benefits. That raises serious questions about the Government's commitment to decent levels of benefit. It suggests that the Government support the means test because they know that there will be substantial underclaiming.

The implication is that people do not really need the single payments that they are claiming. A recent academic study into the matter was carried out by Berthoud and that study was much quoted in Committee. Berthoud states:

> "There has been a massive and continuing increase in the number of payments made especially for bedclothes, furniture and a range of household goods. This is not an artificial demand by claimants who have learned how to obtain extra money. The need for household items was there all the time and is only now beginning to be met."

I am sure that Berthoud is absolutely correct. All that local take-up campaigns have done is to attempt to make a reality of the right that claimants were promised in 1980. That is a job that the Government should undertake.

The examples that the Government have given of abuse involve ways in which claimants get round the regulations regarding entitlement to clothing grants. I would be the first to admit that there is some abuse in this system, as in any system involving money, whether it be tax, bus fares or whatever. The so-called abuse of clothing grant regulations is a reflection of the absurdly restrictive regulations. The Government have always refused to admit that the 1980 reforms involved a severe cut in clothing grants. The Minister looks doubtful, but I can tell him that between 1978 and 1981 the number of grants dropped from 137 per 1,000 claimants to 15 per 1,000 claimants. Such extraordinary attempts are made to get round the regulations because there is a great need for clothing and almost no help is now given.

Berthoud also states:

> "The evidence suggests strongly that claimants are not in a position to exploit the rules by making unmerited claims and it is clear that the needs being met by single payments are genuine."

None of the Government's arguments holds water. We are back to the simple, stark, crude but real aim behind the proposals, and that is to save another £150 million to £200 million at the expense of poor people, in addition to the £300 million which has already been lopped off by the vote taken a few hours ago.

The supplementary benefit scale rates have always been fixed at a level so low that they were never intended to pay

for major household items such as furniture, bedding, cookers and clothes. Yet that is what will now happen. The effect of the measure must be to force many poor families to go without these essential household items or to drive them deeper into poverty and debt. Either way, to do that, on this day of all days is especially offensive and we totally reject the regulations.

9.44 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I begin by reminding the House of the basic facts that I put to the House on Monday, without going back as far as the last Labour Government, who were also concerned about the growth in this area.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) clearly misunderstood. There was no reference whatever to 1981, so all his remarks about using a false base were entirely irrelevant. I said in my statement that, comparing 1979 with 1983, the number of payments virtually doubled to almost 2 million and that expenditure almost quadrupled to more than £140 million. By 1985, both figures had more than doubled again, to more than 4 million payments at a cost of more than £300 million, and the growth shows no sign of diminishing. Whatever else may be said about those figures, I did not use what I acknowledge would have been the low base year of 1981. Indeed, my previous sentence covered the 1981 position by saying that the measures that we took in 1980 appeared to have had some success.

I shall not repeat all that I said on Monday, but the points that I made then are in no way shaken by what the hon. Member for Oldham, West has said today. The trend cannot be explained merely by the increase in the number of claimants, because the rate of payment per claimant has itself doubled since 1979. I made it clear that, apart from the real increase in weekly benefit levels, there have been specific improvements — for example, in some of the scale rates for children, in the rate of additional heating payments, especially for pensioners, and in the rules governing the payment of benefit, especially at the long-term rate, for lone parents and for the sick and the disabled. That has also brought about a substantial improvement in the amount that people receive, especially at certain periods. We estimate very roughly that the total effect of the changes in benefit rates that we have made over the period is probably about £250 million in real terms for many of the people who the hon. Gentleman argues are affected by the proposals.

I note the hon. Gentleman's comments about entitlement and take-up. I made the point on Monday, and on several occasions since then, that I very much doubt whether any Government could live with a system of this kind growing at the rate of 1 million payments and £100 million per year. If, by some mischance, the hon. Member for Oldham, West had been the Minister responsible I am sure that he would have done something about it by now.

Mr. Meacher: Yes, we would have cut unemployment.

Mr. Newton: What has been revealed by what has happened? The serious point to which the House must direct its attention is whether the system is workable in the long run. As I have said twice this week, that is why we have brought forward proposals for a different system through the social fund in the Social Security Bill, but we have nearly two years to go before those proposals can be implemented and we face a dramatic problem affecting local officers now.

I was amazed when the hon. Member for Oldham, West implied that there would be much grumbling by staff at being asked to digest complex regulations at short notice. I have had quite a lot of contact with DHSS staff recently, and not just with people at headquarters who sometimes seem remote. If there is one thing that DHSS staff throughout the country want it is relief from the burden of single payments work which is making it almost impossible for them to do the rest of their work properly.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Disgraceful.

Mr. Newton: I have a letter from the hon. Gentleman complaining about the delays at his local DHSS office.

Mr. Clay: I have indeed written to the Minister and I spoke to staff at both my local DHSS offices last Friday. They want to get rid not of single payments but of the average eight-week backlog. People are waiting eight weeks for cookers and babywear. The DHSS offices want more staff and sufficient pay, even if it means working overtime to clear the backlog. They say that, if Ministers would pull their fingers out and do something, the backlog could be cleared in two weekends.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows that we are in the process of substantially increasing the number of staff in DHSS local offices because of a variety of problems. I suspect that almost anybody with a serious knowledge of the social security system accepts that nobody is likely to devise a means of coping sensibly, without some priority needs suffering, with the type of influx of claims that some local offices have experienced.

I mentioned on Monday a Sheffield office which received 4,000 claims for bedding over a relatively short period of time and 2,500 claims for furniture in four days. No serious administrative system can cope with that problem. I have here a schedule which I asked my officials to prepare. It lists the hon. Members who have asked about delay problems in their local offices during the past few weeks.I guess that at least half of them are sitting opposite me now.

Mr. Frank Field: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way, because I have most certainly asked about delays. I have also asked how many of the extra 5,000 staff will come to Birkenhead, and the reply has been nil. Is the Minister aware that, in view of the way in which he is developing his argument, we must ask him a fundamental question—for whom is the welfare state being run? The Minister's answer is, the officers in local offices. That is one consideration, but we are also anxious about claimants. Is he aware that many of them have needs which must be met through the system? How will he guarantee that that happens?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows that I have a lot of respect for him. I am sure that he will want to listen to me when I say that the people who are most at risk of suffering as a result of what has happened in regard to some of the single payments campaigns and claims are claimants with genuine needs. Their cases should be considered as a matter of priority, but they all too easily get buried at the bottom of some unmanageable heap. Other sufferers are people who want a speedy and proper resolution of their normal weekly claim to benefit.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Is the Minister aware — I am sure that he is — that DHSS staff said before there was any welfare rights campaign such as the Minister has referred to that they have for some considerable time been labouring under an increasingly intolerable work load, involving even routine business? It is disgraceful for the Minister to blame welfare rights campaigns for the problems in his Department. The staff have been telling him about them for years.

Mr. Newton: I am not trying to do what the hon. Lady suggests. Acting faithfully within the current and agreed complementing system, which is being reviewed, and the results of which review we shall consider when we have them, Ministers have been trying to ensure that DHSS offices are properly staffed to do their work. I do not believe that it is possible in any reasonable administrative system to cope with sudden torrents of work such as this, which are being experienced by some DHSS offices. The sufferers are not our staff, difficult though they may find it, but the claimants for whom we are unable to do the job that we would like to do and whose proper claims we cannot process as we would like.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I think that I am right in saying that about 800 of the 5,000 new jobs will come to Scotland. What is the likelihood of a similar number being created in the following year to deal with the delays?

Mr. Newton: I gather that the exact figure that the hon. Gentleman seeks is 869. Regarding any further developments, I have said that we are awaiting the results of the complementing review, and obviously, we will want to look carefully and faithfully at those results when we have them.

Rather to my sadness, the hon. Gentleman was not present in the House on Monday when I had hoped to use one of my most interesting examples of what has been going on, in view of his well-known dedication to Strathclyde social work department. If he has read my statement or talked to some of his hon. Friends, he will know that I am concerned about the tick list which was filled in by a claimant who had been visited by a Strathclyde social worker — *[Interruption.]* I can understand that Labour Members do not wish to listen. They do not like this, do they? This list—*[Interruption.]* I am grateful to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, because I know he takes a serious interest in the work of the Strathclyde social work department.

The social worker visited the claimant and filled in the tick list form, asking for four single beds and mattresses, bedding for the whole family, two wardrobes, a three-piece suite, a cooker and cooker guard, three fires and fire guards, four hot water bottles, curtains, rods and something I cannot read, floor covering, repair of the washing machine and vacuum cleaner, cleaning equipment, kitchen utensils, crockery and cutlery, a carpet sweeper——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I am not going to stop. The list, continues with bath, hand, and tea towels, light fittings, draught-proofing material, a hot water tank jacket, a pushchair, a high chair, a safety gate, clothes and shoes for the whole family, fuel costs and rent arrears.

Dr. Godman *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Only one hon. Member may be on his feet at a time, and at present it is the Minister.

Dr. Godman *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I shall not give way until I come to the end of my little story. Having ticked all those items, the social worker got the claimant to sign the form and then sent it to the local——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I have already heard this three times.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman may have heard it three times, but it is well worth hearing a fourth time.

Having sent the form to the local DHSS office, the social worker provided the claimant with a copy of it, at which point the claimant decided to write to the local DHSS office in these terms:

"I am Writing this letter As my social worker came to visit me and told me I could claim for different Items he said he would send it to yous. I signed it and he posted it I dident pay much attention at first the next day he Gave me a copy I realised Most of the things I dont need so I am writing to let yous know the Items I do need. and could yous Ignore the letters he has sent I want to apply for these items I have listed below."

If that is what social workers and other welfare rights workers are doing in Strathclyde, it is deplorable.

Dr. Godman: The Minister mentioned me by name. May I first point out that the campaign was undertaken with the full support of the 19 district councils in the region, including — that rare animal — the few Conservative councils? The Minister quoted extensively from a letter, but in fairness he should also have quoted from the letter that was circulated with the check list. The letter states:

"Dear Sir/Madam

We are writing to you to draw your attention to certain proposed changes in Social Security legislation which will affect the rules for receiving grants for essential needs for those in receipt of or entitled to Supplementary Benefit or Housing Benefit Supplement. These changes are being introduced prior to the major changes proposed in the Social Security Bill."

If I catch Mr. Speaker's eye, I shall be able to enlarge on the campaign. I remind the Minister that the Strathclyde council, with other Scottish regional and islands councils, carried out joint campaigns with the DHSS to help my constituents, and other Scots who are severely handicapped, to acquire what is theirs by right.

Mr. Newton: As a number of hon. Members wish to speak, perhaps my best observation is that my confidence in what has happened in Strathclyde is not enhanced by the knowledge that all 19 district councils have joined in.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, consideration of Lords Amendments to the Wages Bill, the Agriculture Bill and the Dockyard Services Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Supplementary Benefit

Question again proposed.

Mr. Newton: If that is a blatant example of some of the problems, let me give the House one or two other examples of what can happen.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): This is the Tories at their worst.

Mr. Newton: A lady who left her husband on Thursday night—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. However, I do not know how long it will last.

A woman left her husband on Thursday night. She took the children and moved to a women's hostel. On the following Tuesday, she returned to the marital home to resume a normal relationship, having received, in the meantime, over £300 supplementary benefit from another local office. On returning to her husband, only four days later, she requested a single payment for clothing for herself and the children, claiming that her husband gave it all away during her absence.

In another case, a claimant washed in excess of 60 items of clothing, bedding, towels, a dozen nappies, and other items, and put the wet washing into a bin bag to take it to the launderette. The bag vanished. The only explanation the claimant could give was that she had mistaken the bag for one of rubbish, had put the remnants of the family's tea in the bag and put it out for the dustman. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Campbell-Savours: This is not funny; it is tragic. The Government do not understand.

Mr. Newton: There is the case where items were stolen from outside a launderette. The items were on top of the claimant's push chair. The mind boggles — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. We cannot have these sedentary interventions.

Mr. Newton: The mind boggles at the push chair that could carry two sets of towels, two pairs of curtains, two double sheets, eight single sheets, four single blankets, two double blankets, two pillow cases, and a great raft of a family's clothing. It does not stand up. That is typical of many of the claims that we receive.

Mr. Frank Field: Why is the Minister citing such cases? Surely the current system deals with those claims. Most offices would not award claims for such lists. Claimants who dispute a decision can go to the appeal tribunals. Is the Minister saying that the appeal tribunals would allow such grants?

Mr. Newton: The system that gives rise to a large number of palpable and probable claims of that kind, in a volume which makes it increasingly difficult for DHSS staff to do a proper job of checking claims fairly, and paying claims promptly, is an inherently unsatisfactory system. We feel that it needs reining back and curbing in the way we have proposed.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding) *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis).

Sir Kenneth Lewis: I am sympathetic to what my hon. Friend is trying to do. I have no doubt that there is abuse in the system. Equally, I have no doubt that that is aided and abetted by the Labour party. How on earth can DHSS officers give out grants for what are obviously spurious claims and simply say that they do not have the time to check them? My hon. Friend's suggestion will not end that difficulty. It may lessen the amount being spent. If DHSS officers continue to give out grants, even at the lower rate, there will still be abuse of the system. How will my hon. Friend deal with that? We must do so.

Mr. Newton: I recognise my hon. Friend's point. It is important that we do our job in two respects—first, to ensure that we get benefit effectively and promptly to those who should have it and need it and, secondly, to prevent abuse. The same is true of weekly benefit. We must try to ensure as far as possible that we do not make payments to people who should not have them or who make bogus claims.

The core of a sizeable part of the problem is that a system that is used to generate claims on this basis makes it almost impossible for us to do the sorting out job needed, to prevent abuse and to ensure that we get benefit to those who need it.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Newton: Let me reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding.

The first requirement of a system which works as my hon. Friend and I want it to work is that it should be on a manageable scale and be confined to meeting the needs which we all agree must be met.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Newton: In a time-limited debate, it would be wrong for me to take up too much more of the time of the House.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I hope that the Minister goes to confession on Sunday.

Mr. Newton: On Monday, I outlined the general lines along which the regulations seek to change the position, concentrating on those we see as having priority needs, including pensioners, the disabled and those needing long-stay hospitals. I outlined the way in which we have responded to the Social Security Advisory Committee's specific recommendations, although I recognised that it did not endorse the proposals as a whole. I continue to believe that what we have put before the House and what is being prayed against tonight is a reasonable, balanced package to restore sensible working to this system and to enable us to achieve those objectives which have rightly been urged upon us.

10.7 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): To a certain extent, we should be grateful that we are having this debate at all. If my reading of the situation is correct, the Government were trying to slip off to summer beaches without having a debate. These regulations are subject to the negative procedure. There is no requirement for a debate to be held before they are implemented. I acknowledge the fact that we are having this debate, but I suspect that it is only because some of us agitated hard to get it.

This whole matter is based on establishing the existing levels need. The evidence of the increases in single

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

payments suggests that the Minister has seriously underestimated the level of need. He seeks to justify the increases in terms of abuse of the system. There may be abuse. If it exists, it should be eradicated. The point that comes across to me strongly from my constituency experience and elsewhere is that there has been a substantial increase in real need. But the Government are moving in exactly the wrong direction to deal with it. I put it squarely to the Minister that the ordinary and long-term rates that apply especially to unemployed people with families, are not high enough to enable people to replace major items, especially furniture. That is proven without any shadow of doubt. The Minister's case is based on the fact that the scale rates are adequate and that the families who receive the scale rates can survive without single payments unless there are exceptional circumstances. I deny that. The ordinary scale rates of £29·80 for a single person and £34·90 for a couple are patently not adequate to meet the replacement cost of major items that are currently provided by single payments. I understand what the Minister is saying, but the evidence that he is quoting suggests that his analysis is quite wrong and that he is moving in totally the wrong direction.

The question of check lists was openly recognised and endorsed by the Social Security Advisory Committee. It may be that the regulations are being abused. If the examples which were read out are true, the claims should not have been accepted. The adjudication officers can rule them out of court. That is the way to deal with that problem. The SSAC is not composed of wild and extreme leftist councillors or whatever. It accepts that, if used responsibly, check lists can assist claimants through these bewilderingly complex areas. *[Interruption.]* As the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) reminds me, the Government have, in the past, introduced check list forms of their own.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was right to pick up the point made by the Minister under pressure that the system, as presently constituted, depends on the massive failure to take up the benefits to which people are entitled. If that is the case, it is a dire state of affairs.

The changes made in relation to furniture grants will cause exceptional hardship. The changes that the Government are making in regulation 28 when Giro cheques are not paid are regressive and are to be regretted. In my experience, many claimants are not aware of their entitlements.

I am also worried about the changes to regulation 30 where we have the health and safety discretionary fallback. That is a mean and hard change to make. At the end of the day, the adjudication officers in my part of the country use that provision with great care and only in exceptional circumstances, which the regulation was designed to cover. The Government's proposal to change that regulation is deeply regretted.

The single payments regulations have differing rates of incidence in different regions of the country. We have had debates about that in Standing Committee. I am worried about the disproportionate effects that the changes will have on some of the regions that have traditionally relied on single payments, for whatever reason. Scotland, Northern Ireland and some other places which have a higher proportion of claims per 1,000 live claims involving single payments will be particularly hard hit. Not only that, but there will be localised effects. The whole economy of places such as Easterhouse, where I was born and brought up, in the constituency of Provan in the east end of Glasgow will have substantial sums of money withdrawn at a stroke by these regulations. That will have severe micro-economic local effects. The total number of claims paid in areas such as Scotland is traditionally higher and the regional effects will be varied and hard to bear.

I am left with the conclusion that this is a Treasury order being visited on the Minister. I do not believe that his heart is in these changes, however much he may go on about abuses. It is just taking money out of the social security system in advance of bringing in the Social Security Bill so that when the time comes he can say that it has not been as bad as some Opposition Members had expected. I certainly oppose these regulations.

Supplementary Benefit

10.14 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): When the welfare state system was introduced following Beveridge, it was considered to be a wonderful thing for the country and was the envy of the world. However, it has become a monster, because it has become universal and not selective, and it is not always targeted on the low-income families. The Conservative party wants the money to reach those who are in genuine need.

In one hand I hold a letter from the social services department at Sheffield, and in the other—I can see the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) flinching—I have a leaflet published by the social services department at Oldham, part of which I represent.

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order, when so many hon. Members have been sitting in the Chamber for hours waiting to participate in the debate, for the Government Front Bench, through Parliamentary Private Secretaries, to feed a Back Bencher with a brief when he has been here for only five minutes and others have waited for the past hour?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a matter for the Chair. Besides, the debate only started at 9.26 pm.

Mr. Dickens: How could it ever be alleged that I need feeding?

The leaflet from Oldham is paid for by ratepayers' money, to cream off taxpayers' money. If people are in need they should get help, but when they start to climb on to a gravy train, which uses a bottomless pit of money, there is no end to it. I shall explain the front cover of the leaflet. It says:

"Claim it while you can."

It is printed in three colours, and we all know from our election addresses what thousands of copies of three-colour runs on superior quality paper will have cost the ratepayers of Oldham.

The leaflet says:

"If you get: supplementary benefit, supplementary pensions, housing benefit,"—

do not leave it at that. Get the nose in the trough. It offers: "cash help with laundry and baths, cash help with special diets"—

I do not need those—

"cash help with clothing and shoes, cash help with baby things."

I shall not go through the list, because other hon. Members wish to speak and I am a fair man.

There is a claim form for dozens and dozens of items, listed on both sides, asking whether one needs this, that or the other. A woman can go into the DHSS and say, "Last night I lost all the clothing off my washing line except for one pair of knickers." The DHSS officer will say, "We cannot have this. We must replace all the other items of clothing. Let her have"—I cannot go through the list because I would be embarrassed, but the woman can get many items of clothing, and if she has a hole in her pullover, she can have a new one.

I may have made my point in a good-humoured way, but this is a serious problem. We are the custodians of taxpayers' money. We have to use it in a sensible way. We are not in business to feed Socialism. Let me explain what I mean by that. It is no coincidence that most of the Opposition Members who are in the Chamber have constituencies in inner city areas. Many of their constituents enjoy rent and rate rebates and are provided with free glasses, free prescriptions and all kinds of other free benefits. They do not mind if the Labour party inspires this kind of literature. Why do they not mind? They do not mind because it is free. If they feel that they can get something free from the Government and from the ratepayers, they will continue to vote for those people. That was the downfall of Liverpool.

The Labour party has cottoned on to the fact that the people who vote for them want more and more money for things that they do not need and to which in many cases they are not entitled. That is what the Socialist party is up to, and that shame has to be exposed. I shall tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why it has to be exposed. Industry, small shopkeepers and commerce pay the bulk of the rates and the bulk of the tax. Furthermore, the people who live in the outer suburbs, in constituencies such as mine, pay high taxes and high rates, and they see their hard-earned money being shovelled into a welfare state system that has become universal and not selective in helping those who are really in need.

Mr. Kirkwood: Is the hon. Gentleman able to say what proportion of the total social security budget constitutes single payments?

Mr. Dickens: It happens to be £400 million.

Does the House realise that what this Conservative Government are doing will not win local government elections or by-elections? However, they have had the guts to do something that is very much required in this country, because our welfare state system has run wild.

We want those who are really in need to be given help. That is why all our thinking is closely targeted on low-income families. We shall look after them. We are no longer prepared to tolerate a gravy train from which people demand things to which they are not entitled and which they do not even need. That is why we are taking these measures, and that has to be right. We must help those in need, but we must not be ripped off by those who do not need help.

10.23 pm

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Although we have heard such repulsive garbage from Conservative Members, we have not yet been given a single example of a claim that should not have been allowed. The Minister for Social Security had his colleagues rolling about in mirth when he referred to an individual who had lost a large amount of clothing. It was an interesting example for the Minister to quote. When the Foreign Secretary was Chancellor of the Exchequer he managed to lose a pair of trousers on a train, presumably when he was travelling first class. Therefore, it ill becomes Conservative Members to crack jokes about people losing clothes.

When the Minister referred to the Strathclyde check list, I thought that the most interesting and important part of that story was the letter that the claimant later wrote in which she said that she needed some of those items. Had the social worker not called, it is possible that those items

[Mr. Bob Clay]

which were needed and to which that person was entitled would not have been received. That is the most important moral to draw from that particular tale.

I should like to cite not the most overwhelming case for the need for single payments but an important and comprehensive one. If a family that has nothing and has been in some kind of residential social services home for a year or more — I have one such home in my constituency, in accommodation run partly by Dr. Barnardo's and partly by the social services—comes out of that accommodation with nothing, it no doubt horrifies Government Members to know that there is a general understanding with local DHSS offices that that family can get £800 by way of a single payment. Government Members will say that is shocking, but I should like one of them to explain how he would equip a house with furniture, carpets and curtains and with every other thing it needs for £800.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clay: No, I will not give way. We have heard quite enough garbage and filth from the Government side without the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) joining in as well.

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Mr. Clay: I am not giving way: the hon. Lady is wasting time.

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady can see that the hon. Gentleman is not giving way.

Mr. Clay: That is one serious example and the Government have perpetrated a deceit in this matter because we hear how much the figures have gone up. Those figures represent claims that are paid. We hear lots of jokes about claims that perhaps should not have been made and about little bits of, perhaps, fraud here and there. The money paid out in claims was needed. The Government have not explained why the amounts have increased. We have just had a lot of hysteria about fraud. The only explanation that we have heard is that people are getting things they do not need. There has not been a word about the fact that perhaps, if a claimant has been unemployed for two or three months, it is unlikely that such a person will need new clothes in that time and the number of people having babies in a two or three-month period of unemployment may be low, but when people have been unemployed for two or three years and when over 100,000 people have been unemployed for over five years and with the percentage of the long-term unemployed going up, that is bound to give rise to claims and explains the rise in the need for single payments.

I defend the advice and welfare rights centres that have been so much abused. My local DHSS staff tell me that they are a godsend even though they have a backlog. They say that those advice centres do a lot of the work that the DHSS should be doing. They are not encouraging people to make claims willy-nilly; they are explaining to people what they are and are not entitled to and how to claim and how much money they are likely to receive. If all the people who use those centres had to go to the DHSS for long interviews, there would be ever more pressure on a system that is nearly breaking down as it is. The DHSS should fund those advice centres for the good and effective work they are doing on behalf of the DHSS.

A matter that has not been mentioned sufficiently in the debates is the danger that exists following the withdrawal of many of these single payments. I shall give an example from the borough of Lewisham, where I stay when I am in London. In 1985, Lewisham council tested seven second-hand cookers on sale in its area through second-hand dealers. Every one of them failed the safety regulations and the condition of one was deadly. The local DHSS and the gas and electricity boards subsequently reached an agreement that, because there were obviously no safe second-hand cookers on the market, single payments would be made for new items at the cheapest available price, £225. I dare say that all Government Members always make sure when they buy a cooker that they buy a new one, but they expect claimants to get second-hand ones that blow up and kill them or burn them.

It is an interesting admission to hear Government Members say it is shocking that claimants should have new cookers rather than buy second-hand ones that are unsafe. The likelihood, not that claimants are being forced to buy second-hand cookers, is that traders will cash in and ask ludicrous prices for them. But that is all the DHSS will supply because it will not pay for new cookers and the dangers will increase. There are many other examples, quite apart from cookers. The restriction in single payments will cause not only further poverty and hunger and lead to people freezing because they cannot afford the clothes they need; it will also cause real physical danger. There will be more fires and explosions and more poisoned water. The Government should be ashamed of themselves, not only for what they are doing but for the despicable way in which Government Members have uttered filth and garbage from the sewers of the 19th century rather than make out any sort of case.

10.29 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): As I put it to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), it is clear that a campaign has been orchestrated by the Labour party to flood the single payment system. It is nonsense for the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) to suggest that the notices have just been sent to people who recently came out of homes. They have been sent to every pensioner and person in receipt of housing benefit throughout my borough of Stockport, without exception. Now that the Labour party has been exposed, it is embarrassed. The single payment system causes a great deal of annoyance to the low-paid hard-working people who pay taxes. It causes them enormous resentment, and rightly so.

I recently came across two families living in terraced houses subject to a compulsory purchase order. One was occupied by a widow with two young children who was working and got no supplementary benefit. She was obliged to move and buy a second-hand cooker and second-hand carpets and curtains for her new home.

Next door was a family of four, none of whom was working, was doing any training or was making any effort to get a job and, my goodness, did they scoop the pool? They got a brand-new home, while the widow who had scrimped and saved for years in the most extraordinarily

difficult circumstances had to go round the second-hand shops. She resented that, and there are many others in the same position.

Most people, when they need clothing, furniture, carpets or curtains, have to save. */Interruption./* Me too. The sooner the social fund comes in, the better. Then people who receive single payments will have loans and repay them. That is fair.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West, who has unfortunately left his seat, said that anyone who was unemployed could not afford to pay for something which at the moment is subject to a single payment. That is patent nonsense. Millions of people during the summer of this year saw people going to Mexico with, emblazoned across their chest, "We're here thanks to the DHSS". */Interruption./* They were bragging that they were there as a result of the welfare benefit system. */Interruption./* Good luck to them. If they can manage to save to go to the World Cup in Mexico, good luck to them. But if they can save to go to Mexico, they can save to buy a hot water bottle. The sooner the regulations are introduced the better.

10.32 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): We have before us tonight a Government who are presiding over record poverty. There are 7 million people in Britain living at or below the official poverty level. Earlier tonight the Government steam-rollered through the House a Bill which is designed to rob the poor of what little they have. These regulations are designed to take £100 million away from the poorest people in Britain and they are being steam-rollered through the House for the interim period between now and when the measures that we agreed earlier tonight come into effect.

As a result of the Social Security Bill, 19,000 households in my constituency will have their incomes cut. Of those, 2,700 households will have their incomes cut by more than £5 a week. The regulations will deprive already seriously disadvantaged and deprived people of essential help to enable them to survive. The Minister, who used to have a reputation as a liberal and a progressive, has treated us over so many months to a litany of measures designed to make the poor poorer and the rich richer that he lost his reputation long ago.

On the Jimmy Young programme this week, the Minister sought to justify these measures in very honeyed tones. We had the same story as he has given tonight about the check list. But he told his listeners that Members of Parliament were very lucky to have an opportunity to debate these regulations. He told them that there was no need to have a debate at all, because the new provisions would come into force on 11 August. He implied that it was only through his generosity that we would have an opportunity to debate the regulations—albeit for only an hour and a half.

This must be one of the most squalid, mean and nasty measures that this squalid, mean and nasty Government have taken since coming to office in 1979. The Minister gave the impression tonight that the regulations were being introduced because there had been an avalanche of single payments claims, and they were somehow preventing those in real need from receiving help. Listening to him, anyone would think that to obtain a single payment one had to be on supplementary benefit, and have less than £500 in the bank. We are dealing with people who have been unemployed for years in my constituency.

Things wear out and have to be replaced. Household items cost a lot of money. But the sort of household items that we are talking about do not cost as much as the items that Conservative Members consider to be essential. The hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) has many interests and incomes. Some Conservative Members have two or three jobs.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: He is a hypocrite.

Mr. Madden: The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) has a swimming pool. I am sure that she is not in any great need of a single payment.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) is a hypocrite.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) must contain himself.

Mr. Madden: The Minister used to have a reputation as a progressive, but he should be deeply ashamed of this measure and of the way in which he is exploiting those who wish to claim their rights. They are entitled to those things. He has chosen to put the blame on welfare rights advisers who merely help the poor to obtain what is theirs by right. He does not care about the tax advisers or tax avoidance schemes that exist to help very rich people to obtain even more money. They do not need or deserve it, yet it is supplied at the taxpayers' expense.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major) *rose*—

Mr. Madden: I shall not give way.

Mr. Major *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister knows that the hon. Gentleman is not giving way.

Mr. Madden: This disgraceful measure will rob the poor of help to which they legally have a right in order to obtain the things to which they are entitled. Those things make their meagre, mean lives a little better. We are dealing not with those who can stand on their own feet and look after themselves, but with those who need and deserve help. They need these things and are legally entitled to claim them.

We shall vote against the regulations. We shall be beaten, but the verdict on this Government will be given at the next general election. We will have the political commitment to ensure that the poor of this country are given the resources that they need to climb out of poverty. We will reduce poverty and reform the social security system. At present social security workers are deeply ashamed of the inadequate service that they can give to the poor of this country. We shall give those workers the resources and the political support and commitment to tackle the poverty that the Government have created, which will be made worse as a result of these regulations.

10.40 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I shall be brief, because I am conscious of the time. I shall try to deliver my speech at a slightly lower level of synthetic indignation than did my predecessor, the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden).

[Mr. Michael Stern]

It seems that two issues have not been emphasised adequately. The Opposition have rightly argued that there is a comparison — *[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) will shut up for a change. There is a comparison between tax reliefs, which are available, and payments under the regulations. The Opposition have made the comparison time and time again in many different ways. In both instances, payments are made as a matter of right. The Opposition have not said that where the right of tax relief has been abused or has become too expensive, no Government have ever refrained from stopping or limiting it. Why, therefore—

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stern: No, I shall not give way. I have only one minute in which to complete my remarks.

Why do the Opposition object when exactly the same position is taken on a system which is so clearly being abused to the extent that, in the words of the famous leaflet, it can be treated only as a closing down sale?

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockport, North): Prove the abuse.

Mr. Stern: The Opposition use their social and welfare rights arguments when talking about claimants. They do not talk to the people next door to the claimants who are extremely resentful that they are working for a living and living at a lower level than those who are living off the state. Until they understand that, they will never understand why a Conservative Government are governing the country.

10.42 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): This has been an extraordinary debate. The Minister has sought to argue that the regulations are necessary because the numbers and costs of the payments being made have increased so much. He implied this evening, as he did on Monday, that this is due almost entirely to fraud. In an effort to justify what is a contemptuous allegation, he endorsed the suggestion that payments should be made for unforeseen needs only. That has been the tenor of the remarks of Conservative Members. That is not the law, and it will not be the law even when the regulations are passed tonight.

The Minister justified his insinuations by saying that weekly benefit levels have risen under the Government and that need cannot, therefore, have increased. He must be aware, though I fear that many of his hon. Friends are not, that the long-term unemployed remain on the short-term rate of benefit until they are 60, drawing over £12 a week below the income that is considered adequate for any other group drawing benefit for longer than a year. How can the Minister say that in those circumstances need cannot have increased? We know that the number of long-term unemployed increases and the length of their unemployment increases with every year that the Government remain in office.

The smugness of the speeches of Conservative Members has been intolerable. The hon. Member for Stockport, North (Mr. Favell), who does not even have the courtesy to listen to the speeches of Opposition Members, suggested that claimants should save from their weekly benefit. Does he think that he could save to buy or to replace, in the terms of the regulations, carpets, tables, chairs and wardrobes from £29·80 a week, which is what a single person has to live on, apart from his housing cover? Could he raise the money if he were trying to keep himself and his wife on £48·40 which is what an unemployed couple receive? It is contemptible talk—

Mr. Favell: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Beckett: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. It is contemptible to talk about people saving from sums of the sort that I have mentioned. Even before the unemployed reach the stage of claiming supplementary benefit, the Government have removed the payment to which they used to be entitled. The abolition of the earnings-related supplement means that a single man is nearly £20 a week worse off than he was when the Government came to power. It is grossly misleading to imply, as the Minister did in his statement on Monday and in his speech this evening, that the unemployed are better off than they were.

It seems that the Government object strongly to take-up campaigns. On Monday the Minister took credit for the improved advice services that his Department is offering, but apparently an improved advice service is acceptable only as long as nobody takes the advice. He argued at length tonight about the intolerable burden that welfare rights campaigns have imposed on staff in the context of the regulations. Most of his hon. Friends seem to swallow that argument because they are too ill-informed to realise that the announcement that the Government proposed to reduce and remove the grants in the social fund and pave the way for that by the regulations created those campaigns. The regulations are not following the campaigns; they initiated them. They are the cause of the very thing about which the Minister has been complaining.

On Monday the Minister assured one of his hon. Friends, who was worried about insulation grants, that they will not be affected by the regulations that we are discussing tonight. That is good, and of course we are pleased about that, but what it means is that those who can get a grant at all will be able to have a well insulated room with a bed, a cooker and a heater, but no curtains, no carpet, no cupboards, no chairs, no tables, no cooking utensils, no plates, no towels, and so on — *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members do not even know what is in the regulations. Those people cannot have those things, except what they can buy from £75 for a single person, or the princely sum of £125 for a couple. Not long ago we all saw a little story in the paper about the Prime Minister taking a special outing to somewhere in Chelsea to buy lamps for her new home. I wonder how much change she got out of £75.

I am well aware that some Conservative Members will argue that £75 or even £125 is a great deal of money, but if they compare it with the Government's own list of published costings—not exactly generous in themselves —they will see that the Government expect one to be able to get a vacuum cleaner for about £35 or a washing machine for £100. If they compare that with the £75 or £125 for a couple, which is supposed to provide for all their other needs, they may begin to understand how inadequate the measures are.

This is a contemptible measure. Conservative Members have sought to justify it by a series of contemptible

speeches. They have reminded us vividly in the debate that the Conservative party stands for wealth, privilege and greed, and does not care who it stands on.

10.47 pm

Mr. Newton: Perhaps my role at this stage might sensibly be to cool down some of the things that have been said in the debate, which has led to a good deal of extraordinary language, including some of the things said by the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and others, from which it has to be understood that his conclusion is that to be liberal and progressive — to attach the adjectives that he attached to me in some former incarnation — one has to be willing to preside over a degree of manifest abuse of the social security system, which is militating against the interests not just of the taxpayer, but of serious, sensible claimants throughout the country. That is the point——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I shall tell the House frankly that I have never seen anything liberal or progressive, or indeed sensible or capable of any other reasonable label, about allowing abuse in a system — [HON. MEMBERS: "Prove it."] — that already does too little to ensure fairness between those who are on benefit and those who are in low-paid work but not on benefit.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) asked what we were doing about our worries about the unfairness of the present system towards some of the people who are not on benefit. He knows what we are doing. We propose to introduce a family credit which will double the amount going to such families, and that will significantly improve the position.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must address the House. He should not turn his back on the Chair.

Mr. Newton: I apologise, Mr. Speaker. I do not wish to turn my back on you. I wish to turn my face to the Opposition Front Bench and ask a question which the Opposition never answer. In all this rhetoric, are the Opposition saying that they will restore any reductions and restrictions in single payments? Will that produce another bill from the shadow Chancellor?

Mr. Meacher: I shall give the Minister an answer if he wants one. The causes of the huge rise in single payments are the continuing enormous rise in unemployment, the rapid growth in long-term claimants whose needs are greatest and the inadequate rate of weekly benefit. Our answer is not to tackle the symptoms but to tackle the cause by reducing unemployment by 1 million in two years. That is the real answer. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we are debating a prayer, and prayer time for me was always a quiet time.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member for Oldham, West has given his answer at considerable length and that answer was no. He is not going to restore the consequences of the restrictions that we are proposing. At the end of the day, the reason why the hon. Gentleman will not restore the cuts is that he knows that, if he were a Minister, he would have to act on these problems to protect the sensible working of the social security system.

Mrs. Beckett: I should like to remind the Minister that only a few days ago my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) reminded him that one of our three priorities is to give the unemployed the long-term rate of benefit. They would get an immediate increase of £12 a week from a Labour Government. Is the Minister going to match that?

Mr. Newton: That is very interesting. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] The last time I did to the hon. Member for Oldham, West what I have just done, was during the debate a week or so ago when the hon. Gentleman was banging on about the £3·6 billion that he was going to spend and I said that as far as I could see it would be £3·6 billion, instead of £5·6 billion, only if he took all the money back from those on supplementary benefit and housing benefit, leaving those people no better off than they were before. I did not get an answer to that point either. Perhaps we should have some answers from the Opposition, because we no longer know whether the Opposition will have £5 billion, £10 billion or £20 billion.

It is absolutely clear that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) does not have the foggiest notion what the figure is and he is frightened silly by the hon. Member for Oldham, West coming to the House night after night making further promises to spend money.

The non-answer from the hon. Member for Oldham, West tonight reveals clearly that the proposal is sensible, reasonable and necessary, and I rest my case.

Mr. Tony Banks: Although the Minister has given way, he has not at any time during the course of his various rants and rambles said whether there is firm evidence of abuse of single payments. He made many claims, but he did not say that there had been any abuse. I have sat through the debate and did not hear the Minister say that.

Many people have been forced into poverty by Government policies, and because they have turned up and claimed their rights and because so many people are now in poverty, the Government have said that they will change the system and take their rights away from them.

It is strange that the Minister, who has given the House a series of anecdotes, has never been able to show that there has been abuse. All that he has said is that there has been a great deal of pressure on the system. Of course there has; it has been brought about by the economic and social policies of this Government, who have created so much poverty——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): And the cuts in staff.

Mr. Banks: And the cuts in staff, as my hon. Friend says. So the Minister is changing——

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Mr. Banks: So the Minister is changing the system——

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady can see that the hon. Gentleman is not giving way.

Mr. Banks: It is obscene that here we have a bunch of well-fed, contented Tory Members, many of whom turned up late for this debate, screaming abuse at welfare rights organisations which have simply pointed out to individuals that to which they are entitled. We have heard no complaints about income tax payers claiming the rights that the Government extend to them. They can afford to

[Mr. Banks]

employ expensive tax accountants and lawyers to tell them what they can claim. I have not heard the Government say that, because people are claiming those tax benefits, they must be changed. I have not heard the Government say that, because so many people get mortgage interest relief, they will abolish it, too.

We are talking about people thrust into poverty by the Government's policies claiming what is theirs by right, and the Government——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to order [22 July].*

The House divided: Ayes 179, Noes 233.

Division No. 278] **[10.56 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Cleiland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip

Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

11.8 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I missed the last Division, which is why I am out of breath, and would like to ask your advice on how I should make representations regarding the procedure of the House. I made representations first to the Deputy Serjeant at Arms that a bus and about seven taxis were blocking the entrance to the House. He told me that today was wedding day and I got the impression that we took second place to those participating in it. We all support the wedding — *[Interruption.]* Some hon. Members may not support it. This is a charade. Tonight we have had a running Whip, some of us have been entertaining our wives and families — *[Interruption.]* I shall not tell you about the other little problem I had last week when I found —

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I am sorry he missed the Division. I remind him that the Serjeant at Arms said that there might be difficulties today and that hon. Members should be aware of that. I shall have the matter looked into.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems that the Sessional Orders have been moved and accepted by the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) has run into trouble. Therefore, the Sessional Orders have not been complied with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am aware of the Sessional Orders. I shall have the matter looked into to see why the hon. Member was not here.

Mr. Randall: Further to my original point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I recall that at the beginning of this Session, the House voted on a matter concerning the Metropolitan police. Perhaps I should quote the question that the House voted on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member need not refresh my memory. I am well aware of the matter. I am aware of what has happened tonight. I assure the hon. Member that I shall have the matter looked into. It has been an exceptional day. We should move on to the business of the House.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): On a different point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It appertains to the Wages Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall make an announcement about the Wages Bill which may deal with the point of order. If not, the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) can raise it when we consider the Bill.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall). Would it not be common courtesy to hon. Members if the entrance to the House and the yard around it were kept clear at times when it can be anticipated that there will be a vote? It does not seem unreasonable to anticipate votes. All hon. Members know the time of tonight's votes. Priority should be given to allowing hon. Members access to the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is no question about that. We are all aware of the Sessional Orders and the precedents. I shall have the reason why the hon. Member was delayed in getting to the House tonight looked into.

Mr. Bermingham: Is the Chair prepared to concede, bearing in mind the debate, that steps will be taken to ensure that it does not happen again and that the result of the inquiry will be reported to the House before the House rises?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair will take steps to see that the Sessional Orders are carried out.

Wages Bill

Lords amendments considered.

11.13 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): The House will wish to know that Mr. Speaker has selected two manuscript amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and other hon. Members. Copies are available in the House and from the Vote Office. The amendments will be discussed in the appropriate groups, which are those headed by the Lords amendments Nos. 3 and 34.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am pleased that Mr. Speaker has accepted two manuscript amendments. However, the Government have acted with unholy haste to try to get this shabby legislation on the statute book.

In Committee hon. Members did not have a copy of *Hansard*, because of the number of Bills going through the House. At that time, about 10 Bills were being considered by Standing Committees. Hon. Members were unable to avail themselves of the *Hansard* record of Committee sittings. The Government amended clause 26 concerning the redundancy payments scheme. Originally, the scheme was to be operative from 1 October. The Government decided that, by amending clause 26, they could save an extra £50 million. That proposal has caused complications in my constituency, where there have been massive redundancies in the shipbuilding industry. As a result of the date being brought forward, more shipyard workers were made redundant. The shipbuilding employers were not able to claim the 35 per cent. from the central fund. Therefore, more workers than necessary were made redundant to make up the shortfall.

I submit that there is no reason why the Bill should be discussed tonight. Hon. Members should have sufficient time to table amendments and consider those made by the other place. Wages councils are not discussing employees' claims pending the passage of this legislation and they hope that the Bill will be passed before the recess.

Clause 26 is sufficient reason for the House not to discuss the Bill. The redundancy payments scheme, to which employers and employees contribute, made a profit last year of £9 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is straying far from his point of order. He is arguing his case.

Mr. Dixon: I am explaining why I am raising the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I submit that the House should not proceed with the debate on the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The only consideration for me is the decision of the House. The House has already decided that the Bill will be considered. A motion to that effect has already been passed.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that the 10 o'clock business motion was carried without a Division. It stated that the Bill would be considered tonight until any hour. I cannot go against that decision.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am bound by the decision of the House.

Mr. McWilliam: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The business motion merely says that the Bill "may" be considered after 10 o'clock. It does not say that it "must" be considered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The arguments yesterday by the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) were made to Mr. Speaker by other hon. Members. That is why Mr. Speaker considered the manuscript amendments. The timing of the debate is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Nellist: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank you for your ruling on the two manuscript amendments, which we submitted this afternoon in the expectation of the debate being taken later this evening.

The point of order that I raised yesterday in the presence of Mr. Speaker was considered by him on the basis that the 1984-85 report of the Committee on Procedure clearly laid down standard guidelines as to how much time should pass between consideration of different stages of a Bill. The Leader of the House was present during that exchange. At my request, the right hon. Gentleman came to the Dispatch Box. He produced an example of the last time a Bill had left the other place and arrived in the Commons the following day. In 1977, almost 10 years ago, that not unprecedented but certainly unusual mechanism was used.

I do not want to develop the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), but I wish to request a further ruling. It is clear that the Bill is being rushed through because of the change of the date in part III, which was announced on virtually the last sitting of Standing Committee K. As far as I can discover from a brief reading of "Erskine May", we may consider on the same day or subsequent day to the Third Reading in the House of Lords the final stages of a Bill in this place if there is an "emergency". How is an "emergency" defined? Is it an "emergency" if the Government want to "save" an extra £50 million from the redundancy payments scheme? That is not their money. That is a scheme into which employers and employees have paid and from which they expect to gain money when faced with the problem of job losses.

I have raised this point of order now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because, when I raised it yesterday and Mr. Speaker kindly and carefully gave his ruling, neither he nor I was aware that at about 8 o'clock last night the Government would bring in a host of new amendments on Third Reading in the other place. Those amendments were not available to any hon. Member until later this morning. It took my hon. Friends and I some hours poring over last night's amendments——

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): The hon. Gentleman was moonlighting.

Mr. Nellist: If the hon. Gentleman wants to comment, he can do so under his own steam. He should give me a little quiet while I am finishing my comments.

We were not able to consider those amendments until this morning because they were not tabled by the Government until 8 o'clock yesterday—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) must contain himself.

Mr. Nellist: My legitimate point of order, not like the bogus heckling coming from the Tory Benches, is to ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how, in the light of the rules that govern the House, in "Erskine May" or wherever, the Chair defines an "emergency" when it allows the Government to bring a Bill from the House of Lords into the Commons within 24 hours. I can think of several occasions in the past three years, never mind the past 10, which marked a far greater crisis for the Government to get through than merely the saving of £50 million, by creative accountancy, which has been put into a redundancy insurance fund by workers and employers in this country. I ask you to rule on that. Is this a necessary emergency to enable them to get away with this tonight?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not the job of the Chair to give definitions about "Erskine May", I am glad to say. The Chair's job is to carry out the rules of the Houe and to proceed with what is in order. I understand that hon. Members may well criticise the timing and actions of the Government and so on. However, everything that is taking place is completely in order and it will be in order when we consider the Wages Bill.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. An important point has been raised by my hon. Friend the member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon). He said that Government Departments are already interpreting law which has not even been made yet because the Bill has not been approved by the House. If that is the case, it is a serious legal principle that should be clarified. If people are being denied their rights under the present legislation because this legislation has not been introduced, it is a serious matter that should be clarified by the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: My job is to decide whether it is proper and in order to discuss the Lords amendments to the Wages Bill tonight, and it is.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Popular): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You were good enough, in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), to say what you considered to be the duties of the Chair. With respect, I have always understood that one of the duties of the Chair is to protect the rights of private Members so that they can properly carry out their duties to the House and to their constituents. The procedure which is now being adopted does not provide facilities for hon. Members to carry out their duties properly.

We are dealing with a Bill of considerable complexity. It is a Bill which, as those who served on the Standing Committee will recall, involved a great deal of research to understand all its implications. It involved not only a great deal of research, but a great deal of consultation with interested parties, such as the Low Pay Unit and others. Since it is impossible for any such study of the complexity to be made and for any consultation with outside bodies to take place between 10.30 am and 11 pm on a single day, I submit that the procedure we are now having to undergo does not provide proper facilities for hon. Members to carry out their duties to the House and to their constituents. Therefore, I believe that it is right for my hon. Friends to seek your help, against the Government, to ensure that the job can be done properly and in

[Mr. Ian Mikardo]

accordance with the normal procedures of the House. That can be done only if the Minister will take the Bill away and bring it back at another time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has had great experience in the House. I have made arguments such as that myself, and it may be valid. However, my duty is to interpret the rights of Back Benchers in accordance with the rules and procedures of the House. All I can say is that, although we may think that the debate comes too soon after the Bill has left the other place, everything is in order. It is in order to proceed with the debate on the Lords amendments, and I am bound to allow the debate to take place.

Clause 1

GENERAL RESTRICTIONS ON DEDUCTIONS MADE, OR PAYMENTS RECEIVED, BY EMPLOYERS

Lords amendment: No. 1 in page 2, line 33, after first "of" insert—

"(i)"

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 2, in page 2, line 33, after "wages" insert

", or

(ii) any overpayment in respect of expenses incurred by the worker in carrying out his employment,"

Mr. Trippier: Clause 1(5)(3) contains a provision which excludes deductions made by employers to recover earlier overpayments of wages from the requirements of part I. It is common practice in many organisations to make small overpayments of wages or expenses, for administrative convenience, which are then recovered from a later payment of wages. An example would be where final figures on bonus due or expenses claims are not available in the pay office when the computer is run, so a standard sum is paid and the balance paid or recovered later. In the Government's view, deductions for such reasons should not be caught by the Bill. Otherwise provision to make such deductions would have to be made explicitly in the contract of employment, with the result that vast numbers of contracts would have to be rewritten. An employer would also have to ensure that all workers liable to suffer such deductions had been given, at some point in advance of the first such deduction being made, a copy or explanation of the term of the contract providing for the deduction. In short, if such deductions were covered, it would lead to the need for substantial changes in administrative and personnel practice in many companies. In our view, that should not be necessary.

The Lords amendments with which we are here concerned are intended to close a gap in clause 1(5)*(a)*. In some circumstances, employers will seek to recover an overpayment of expenses which has been made to a worker in the course of his employment. Because expenses are not included in the definition of wages for the purposes of the Bill, they are not caught by the existing wording of clause 1(5)*(a)*.

Let me emphasise, however, that these amendments will not affect the common law rights of workers where an employer recovers sums from wages on the ground that he had made an earlier overpayment of expenses and the worker thinks the recovery involves a breach of contract. The Bill will not prevent workers from continuing to take employers to the ordinary courts about alleged breaches of contract arising from the non-payment of expenses. Furthermore, there is no possibility that these amendments could give rise to injustice. If the worker believes the employer is deducting more than what was overpaid he can complain to a tribunal, which will determine the matter. If what is being deducted is no more than the earlier overpayment, the worker has not lost anything.

We believe that expenses should be treated in the same way as wages concerning deductions to recover earlier overpayments. I commend these amendments to the House.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): There is no need to spend long on these amendments. The Opposition accept that they should be made. However, given the nature of the Bill, its mean-mindedness, the way in which it will cut the wages of some of our poorest workers, and the unreasonableness with which the Government have brought the Bill to the House when the other place finished with it only yesterday, we are inclined to be bloody-minded and to oppose amendments such as these, so that employers would have to specify in contracts the right to take back over-payment of expenses. However, we have decided to proceed on the basis of common sense, and it is obviously the case that sometimes mistakes are made and workers are overpaid wages or expenses, and it is better that these things should be settled amicably. We are not opposed to the amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

Clause 2

DEDUCTIONS FROM WAGES OF WORKERS IN RETAIL EMPLOYMENT ON ACCOUNT OF CASH SHORTAGES ETC.

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 4, line 3, leave out "respect of" and insert "connection with"

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 4, in page 4, line 7, leave out from "involving" to "of" in line 8 and insert

"(whether on a regular basis or not)—

(a) the carrying out by the worker"

No. 5, in page 4, line 11, at end insert

", or

(b) the collection by the worker of amounts payable in connection with retail transactions carried out by other persons directly with members of the public or with fellow workers or other individuals in their personal capacities;"

A manuscript amendment to the proposed Lords amendment No. 5, at end add

"or

(c) the collection by the worker of amounts payable in connection with any aspect of the worker's employment."

No. 6, in page 4, line 34, after "is" insert "or may be"

11.30 pm

Mr. Trippier: The first three amendments were tabled to make it clear beyond doubt that a certain category of worker that I will describe is covered by the protection of clauses 2 and 3. They involve no change of policy. On further consideration of the provisions, we have come to the view that the definition of retail employment does not make it absolutely clear that workers involved in the collection or receipt of money in connection with retail transactions but not in the retail transaction itself—that is, they are not involved in the sale or supply of goods or the supply of services, although they collect money in respect of such transactions by other people—are covered by the provisions of clauses 2 and 3, if a cash shortage occurs. This category would include cashiers who simply collect money and take no part in any service or sales activity.

I am sure all hon. Members would agree that it is desirable that these workers should be protected by the provisions of clauses 2 and 3 if they face a deduction from wages or are asked to make payments on account of a shortage in the cash they have collected in connection with retail transactions conducted by other people. The amendments are designed to make certain that these workers are so protected and I ask the House to accept them.

Turning to the fourth amendment, subsections (4) and (5) of clause 2 dealt with the situation where all or a part of the wages of a worker depend on the absence or extent of any cash shortage or stock deficiency. The aim of the subsections is to ensure that, if an employer pays a bonus related to the absence or size of a cash shortage or stock deficiency, any failure to pay the bonus is to be treated as a deduction from wages related to cash shortages or stock deficiencies and is covered by the protection of clause 2. This in effect means that the unpaid bonus must not exceed 10 per cent. of gross wages—that is, basic wages plus bonus.

These provisions are designed to protect the worker in instances where employers might attempt to avoid the requirements of part I by the introduction of special bonus arrangements. However, after further consideration we believe that subsection (4)*(a)* as drafted might have left a small gap in the intended protection. It is the intention that the protection should cover agreements which provide for a bonus, conditional on the absence of a cash shortage or stock deficiency, where the amount of bonus is clearly spelt out according to an arithmetical formula — so much shortage, so much bonus forgone. But it is also intended to cover agreements where payment of a bonus is discretionary or conditional on a number of different factors, one of which is the absence of cash shortages or stock deficiencies. It is uncertain whether the original wording covers the second category of agreements. The amendment agreed in the Lords is designed to make the position absolutely clear and to ensure that the protection of clause 2 applies to both types of bonus agreement.

I know that hon. Members will agree that an amendment designed to ensure that the protections in the Bill cannot be avoided is to be welcomed, and I commend it to the House. All four of these amendments are designed to ensure that workers are properly protected by part I of the Bill, and I hope the House will accept them.

I must ask the House to resist the Opposition's manuscript amendment. Again I shall explain the objective of the special controls in clauses 2 and 3 of the Bill. The clauses establish controls over deductions or payments on account of cash shortages or stock deficiencies from the wages of workers in retail employment. These are limited to 10 per cent. of any payment of wages to ensure that such workers are not left with little wage, due to deductions to cover shortages in the till, or stock losses. Retail employment is defined as employment involving the carrying out of a retail transaction, which is defined in clause 2.

The amendment made in the Lords extends the definition of retail employment to include those collecting money in respect of retail transactions carried out by others. However, the Opposition amendment further extends the definition of retail employment to cover work involving the collection by the worker of amounts payable in connection with any aspect of his employment. This takes the definition of retail employment right outside the area of retailing as the ordinary man or woman understands it, to cover all activities involving the collection of money in the course of employment. Conceivably, even the collection of money for an office party would be defined as retail employment.

Ms. Clare Short: That is not part of the job.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) says it is not part of the job, but it is tied in with the employment of the people employed in the firm.

For that reason, the amendment runs against the basic principles of clauses 2 and 3 as argued throughout the passage of the Bill. Those principles are, first, that the 10 per cent. limit is a special protection to meet a particular need and is specific to those involved in the area of retail employment as that term is normally understood. Secondly, it is in the specific area of retail employment involving transactions with the public that there has been public concern about excessive deductions because of cash shortages or stock deficiencies. Thirdly, it has never been an objective of the Bill to limit contractual deductions from wages in respect of the disappearance of the employer's property or cash where the worker is not involved in retail transactions with the public or where he works in an industry that does not have such transactions. I ask the House to reject the amendment.

Mr. Mikardo: Throughout the proceedings in the Standing Committee, the Minister had great difficulty in finding illustrations of cases to support his arguments. When he did find examples, in nearly every case under pressure they proved false and he had to abandon them. He has given as an example that cash collected by somebody for an office party falls within the definition of the manuscript amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). *[Interruption.]* As she has just said in a barely audible aside, that is rubbish.

The Minister said that a collection for an office party was connected with the job, but I do not know, and I ask him whether he knows, of anybody with a contract of employment in which the job description specifies that it is a part of his job, if he is engaged in retailing or in any form of employment in which he handles his employer's cash, to collect cash for office parties. That is fantastic, imaginary, fairy-tale nonsense. If that is the only ground

[Mr. Mikardo]

the Minister can put forward—and it was the only one that he did put forward—for resisting this amendment, it is a pretty poor performance.

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): The performance of the Minister makes it clear that it is not only the Opposition parties who are suffering from the undue haste of the Government but also the Minister himself, because he has manifestly lacked time for preparation. He was wide of the mark when he said rather pompously that the manuscript amendment further extended the definition of retail employment quite outside retailing. That is not so, because the clause deals only with matters in connection with retail employment.

I support the manuscript amendment, although not with all the arguments on which I pride myself I might have thought up if the Government had given me time to prepare. This unseemly haste has crippled them as well as the Opposition parties. One of the worst features of part I of the Bill is that it sweeps away from those outside the narrow definition of retail employment the requirement of fairness and reasonableness that was in the Truck Acts.

In many ways the Government are going back 100 years—we all know that from their general economic policy—but it is going a bit too far to go back nearly a century by reversing what the old Truck Acts, God bless them in their antiquity, provided. Under the Truck Acts, a deduction from any worker's wages, whether he was in retail or not, had to be fair and reasonable. I need only direct hon. Members' attention to the magnificent speech of Lord Denning in another place on this matter to show how perverse the Government have been.

I agree that the manuscript amendment is not an ideal way of helping to remedy the defect—it is not—but the Government have left us no choice. In another place, and with no argument on their side, they rejected the idea of a non-statutory code of practice to be circulated to all employers. I thought that that was the very minimum that a civilised Government would allow. Yet, in spite of eloquent speeches in favour of a code of practice, they refused to have it.

Therefore, we are reduced to this second-best device in the manuscript amendment, which would have the valuable effect of extending to at any rate a few more workers protection against limitless arbitrary deductions. It would still leave a regrettably large number of workers subject to arbitrary deductions without even the basic requirement that they must be fair and reasonable. That is a bad position. It has been aggravated by the haste in which all this has been brought forward this evening, but it is better to support the amendment than to leave the matter to fester. I recommend my hon. Friends to do so.

Mr. Eastham: In Committee and again tonight the Minister appears to have been riddled with guilt. In his heart he recognises that this is a rotten Bill. He has trotted out again tonight, as he did on numerous occasions in Committee, statements about the right to go to tribunals. However, he will recall that when we challenged him on that point he said that he hoped that people would not go to tribunals too often because they might clog up the works. That was a confession that he really did not believe in using the tribunal procedure. But tonight he came to the Dispatch Box and said that there is nothing to prevent people from exercising their right to go to tribunals and he then trotted out the usual line that this measure is designed to protect the workers. He has said that several times.

The Bill is riddled with examples of workers' protections being taken away. If the Bill is enacted there will be no protection for anyone below the age of 21. Yet the Minister will try to make it sound good. It is mealy-mouthed to say that this measure is included to protect and improve the legislation. We know that the Bill is riddled with examples of where workers are not protected.

The Minister has been programmed, Civil servants present him with documents and he stands at the Dispatch Box and reads them out. I do not believe that he has any conviction about why he is requesting the House to approve the Bill.

Tonight the Minister gave us a classic example of that when he talked about office parties. Anybody would think that people in their places of work go to parties about 50 times a year. Usually, they are lucky to go to office parties once a year to celebrate Christmas. We are not talking about parties once a week, for 50 weeks every year. Yet that is the inept and weak argument that the Minister puts forward to justify his case. The manuscript amendment offers reasonable protection, and I hope that the House will support it.

11.45 pm

Ms. Clare Short: The purpose of the manuscript amendment is to extend the 10 per cent. protection. At present that protection is given by the Government only to those workers in the retail sector who suffer cash shortages or stock dificiencies. Only then is there a limit on the deductions that workers can be subjected to for disciplinary reasons. Like the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright), who spoke for the Liberal party, we believe that the provisions in this Bill and the sweeping away of the Truck Acts will lead to a massive increase in the use of deductions for disciplinary purposes. Workers can in future expect large sums to be taken out of their pay packets because their employers have decided that they have behaved improperly.

In Committee, the Minister gave examples of the sort of things that might lead employers to impose deductions. He spoke about lateness, absenteeism and perhaps a failure to comply with the health and safety regulations. Someone who had missed time at work through ill health might have money taken from his pay packet as well, because the employer might believe it to be absenteeism. The belief that failure to comply with health and safety regulations should lead to deductions is quite frightening, because we all know that good health and safety practices depend on a good spirit of co-operation and will not be helped by punitive sanctions.

We argued at length in Committee that the old provisions of the Truck Acts, which required that any deductions should be fair and reasonable, should be reinserted in the Bill. But that was rejected by the Government. We then argued that at the very least the 10 per cent. limitation should be applied to all workers in all circumstances — that it should not be possible for employers to deduct more than 10 per cent. from anyone's wages in any one week—but the Government rejected that, too.

Through the manuscript amendment, we seek to apply the 10 per cent. protection to all workers who are required to handle money as part of their job. What could be more

reasonable than that? The Minister is wrong to say that that would apply to collections for office parties. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) clearly stated, no one has a job description that includes the organisation of office parties. The manuscript amendment makes it clear that this protection would apply also to workers who were required to handle money in the course of their work.

Under the Bill, if workers are required to handle money, they may well be subjected to deductions. They should be protected by the 10 per cent. provision. If the Government had any grace, they would accept the amendment. But no, the Minister dismisses it without putting up any reasonable argument. We welcome amendments Nos. 3, 4 and 5. Throughout the passage of the Bill we have fought for, and won, marginal improvements in the protection of workers even though we reject the Bill and find it deeply offensive.

The other amendments slightly extend the protection of the 10 per cent. limit to those who handle cash in connection with retailing but who might not be defined as being engaged in retailing. I think that the Minister gave the example of someone who had collected the cash after goods had been bought from someone else who may not have been protected by the Bill as drafted. That person would now be protected. That is a small improvement that will affect a relatively small group of workers, but we welcome it.

We also welcome amendment No. 6, which ensures that the 10 per cent. protection applies to workers on a bonus scheme that makes their wages dependent on perhaps an absence of cash shortages or stock deficiencies. The wage that the 10 per cent. is calcultated on would include, not exclude, the bonus, which would make a loophole in the Bill that would allow employers to make even larger deductions. Not being confrontationist and unreasonable like the Minister, we welcome his amendments. It is a pity that he is not willing to accept the substantive amendment.

Mr. Trippier: I was grateful to the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) when he said that I was trying to make the measure sound good. I was trying to make my argument sound good, and I think that the news was good in my initial address to the House. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) has admitted that the Opposition welcome the fact that the Government have moved on several issues. I found it confusing when the hon. Member for Blackley said that I lacked conviction. He cannot have it both ways. He cannot be heard to say that I was trying to make my remarks sound good and follow that by saying that I lack coviction.

Ms. Clare Short: My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) was trying to be nice to the Minister.

Mr. Trippier: That is characteristic of the hon. Gentleman. It was uncharacteristic of the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo), however, to be unfair to me. The hon. Gentleman is quite an expert on giving certain examples—for instance, "What does the Minister think would happen if this, that and the other were to apply in a small business?" I tried to give some examples of my own. If the hon. Gentleman reads the *Hansard* reports of our proceedings in Committee, he will find that we fairly balanced out the examples that we presented. I shall give the hon. Gentleman a few more examples shortly. I shall think of as many as I can while I am on my feet. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if on this occasion I do not promise to write to him with a series of examples.

I gave the example of a collection for an office party because the amendment is s incredibly wide in its definition. It reads:

"the collection by the worker of amounts payable in connection with".

That embraces any aspect of a worker's employment. I gave an example — the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar plays this game, too—which was extreme, but there are others.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): The example of a collection for an office party was absurd.

Mr. Trippier: If that was absurd, what about this one? Let us suppose that an employee collects the wages from the bank——

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Trippier: I must complete my example.

Let us suppose that an employee collects the wages from the bank for distribution by the employer. What about the collection of trade union dues?

Mr. Eastham: I am obliged to the Minister for giving us the example of an employee going to a bank to collect the wages. I thought that security firms were used to undertake such dangerous and precarious tasks. What is happening these days? Are employees expected to collect a few thousand quid for their employers and to be at risk if the money is lost? Is that what he is saying?

Mr. Trippier: I am amazed that the hon. Gentleman has advanced that argument. One of the reasons for repealing the Truck Acts was to try to pay employees in a cashless form. I think that I have given a good example. The hon. Member for Colne Valley has directed attention to "any" in the context of anything that could be linked with employment. Surely the example that I gave to the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar initially was very fair.

Ms. Clare Short: If someone is sent to the bank to collect the wages and some of the money disappears, is the Minister suggesting that that person will be dealt with by means of a deduction from his wages rather than by calling in the police? I think that is another absurd example.

Mr. Trippier: I am not responsible for tabling the amendment that we are now considering. I honestly think that Opposition Members should have considered more carefully what they are tabling. The hon. Lady seems to suggest that it is a good thing——

Mr. Evans: The Minister's stupid examples prove that he cannot even grasp the purpose of the amendment.

Mr. Trippier: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, on such matters he is not quite the expert; he has not been as involved in the legislation as some of his hon. Friends. I welcome his interventions on most occasions, but on this occasion, as the intervention was from a sedentary position, perhaps he will allow me to refer to another example, although that is hazardous, because, after every example I now give, someone will leap up and try to question it. The point that I am trying to make is that there are so many different examples that one could give because the amendment is so wide.

Mr. Thurnham: As we are thinking of examples, may I remind my hon. Friend of an example that we discussed in Committee of a company that was controlled by the previous Labour Government, Sealand Petroleum Ltd., which had the largest policy of deductions of any of the firms that we considered? It deducted 25 per cent. of pay.

Mr. Trippier: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that point. When the hon. Member for Blackley made his speech, he said that I was trying to make the measure sound good, and so on. He referred several times to the word "protection". I have used it in my speeches many times in Committee. But the law as it presently stands, before the Bill becomes an Act of parliament, allows deductions to be made at the rate of 100 per cent. We are building in protection for people who are particularly involved in the retail sector by limiting the deductions to 10 per cent. on a pay day.

Ms. Clare Short: Why not apply the protection to more workers?

Mr. Trippier: The reason is obvious. We went through the consultation process—I referred to that on many occasions in Committee—and there was no demand for the protection to be more widespread. It is in retail employment that those problems have arisen in the past.

Mr. Eastham: In view of the fact that the Minister is choosing to go back on the old ground of our inquiry in Committee, may I remind him that we pointed out on numerous occasions that we objected most strongly that the employer could make an arbitrary decision to make deductions from pay? We said that he should go through the process of law and prove his entitlement. Under this proposal he will not need to have any other legal right than the Bill.

Mr. Trippier: We are in danger of rehearsing many arguments that we discussed in Committee. The truth is that the Opposition would accept—I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, in his heart of hearts does accept—that we are building in added protection for the worker with this part of the Bill. The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to admit that in Committee.

On this group of amendments, and specifically on the Opposition amendment, the hon. Member for Ladywood suggests that, as a result of the Bill becoming law, masses of money will be taken out of employees' wage packets.

Ms. Clare Short: And deductions will increase.

Mr. Trippier: Frankly, I have never heard so much nonsense. I believe that the reverse will be the case.

Ms Clare Short: That is speculation.

Mr. Trippier: It is speculation and hypothesis at this stage, but we would not introduce a piece of legislation such as this if we thought that that would happen. It is clear to any observer that this part of the Bill gives the worker more protection than he enjoys at the moment.

I ask the House to reject the Opposition amendment.

Mr. Mikardo: As the Minister appeared to have the leave of the House to speak for a second time without asking for it, may I assume that I have similar leave and put a point—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Why is not sauce for the goose sauce for the gander?

We have had another example of the Minister flapping around without direction—a bit like a pterodactyl that has strayed into the wrong geological age—as soon as he strays from the bits of paper that his advisers give him. We saw an example of that a moment ago with the Minister's nonsense about people going to collect money from banks. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) was right to make her intervention. Does the Minister really mean that if someone goes to collect money from the bank for an employer, gets mugged on the way back and the money is taken away, the employer can deduct that money from the employee at the rate of 10 per cent. every week?

12 midnight.

We are not dealing in theories. Unhappily, we know that many people have been mugged after collecting money from the bank. We are almost at the stage when it is dangerous to be a bank robber, because a bank robber is liable to be mugged on his way to the escape car after robbing a bank. The Minister is saying that an employee who may unwillingly and reluctantly go to collect money and who gets mugged will have the money deducted from his wages. How can the Minister call that a good example? Ye gods and little fishes!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will put the Question on Lords amendments Nos. 3 and 4 and then on the manuscript amendment. That should help the House to understand how this will be done.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 4, line 11, at end insert ", or

(b) the collection by the worker of amounts payable in connection with retail transactions carried out by other persons directly with members of the public or with fellow workers or other individuals in the personal capacities;"

Read a Second time.

Manuscript amendment proposed to the Lords amendment: in line 6, at end add—

"or

(c) the collection by the worker of amounts payable in connection with any aspect of the worker's employment."—*[Mr. Nellist.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 40, Noes 111.

Division No. 278] **[12.04 am**

AYES

Ashdown, Paddy	Livsey, Richard
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Bermingham, Gerald	McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Boyes, Roland	Maclennan, Robert
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*	McWilliam, John
Caborn, Richard	Michie, William
Clay, Robert	O'Neill, Martin
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Parry, Robert
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*	Patchett, Terry
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*	Pendry, Tom
Dixon, Donald	Pike, Peter
Eastham, Ken	Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*	Randall, Stuart
Fisher, Mark	Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Godman, Dr Norman	Skinner, Dennis
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*	Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Home Robertson, John	Wainwright, R.
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	
John, Brynmor	Tellers for the Ayes:
Kirkwood, Archy	Mr. David Nellist and
Leighton, Ronald	Mr. Ian Mikardo.

NOES

Amess, David
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.
Lords amendment No. 5 agreed to.

Clause 4

PROVISIONS SUPPLEMENTARY TO SECTIONS 2 AND 3

Lords amendment: No. 7, in page 7, line 1, leave out "whether or not" and insert "notwithstanding that".

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 8, in page 7, line 16, leave out

"receive any amount from the worker on account"

and insert

"recover an amount from the worker in respect"

No. 9, in line 38, at end insert

"; and references in this Part to the recovery from a worker of an amount in respect of a cash shortage or stock deficiency accordingly include references to the recovery from him of an amount in respect of any such conduct or event as is mentioned in paragraph *(a)* or *(b)*."

No. 11, in clause 7, page 10, line 25, leave out "section 121(2)" and insert "paragraphs *(a)* to *(d)* of section 122(4)".

No. 12, in line 27, leave out "and" and insert—

"( ) statutory sick pay under Part I of the Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982; and".

No. 13, in line 29, leave out "that" and insert "the 1978".

No. 32, in schedule 5, page 40, line 34, at end insert—

"1982 c. 24.	Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982.	Section 23A(2)."

No. 33, in page 40, leave out lines 35 and 36.

Mr. Trippier: Lords amendment No. 7 is designed to clarify the requirements of clause 4(3). The present wording of subsection (3) might suggest that, even if a payment made on or after the date of a worker's final instalment of wages fails to satisfy the requirements of clause 1(2), there is some merit in considering whether it satisfies the time limit in clause 3(3)*(b)*. This is clearly undesirable. Replacing the words "whether or not" by "notwithstanding that" improves the clarity of the clause and makes it apparent that, if the requirements of either clause 1(2) or clause 3(3)*(b)* are not satisfied, there is no need to look at the requirements of the other clause. The amendment is intended to clarify the position to help employers and workers, and I ask hon. Members to accept it.

Lords amendment No. 8, which should be read with Lords amendment No. 9, was tabled in the interests of consistency and clarity. It brings the wording of clause 4(5) into line with subsection (4) of clause 4 by changing subsection (5) to read

"the employer . . . is entitled to recover any amount from the worker in respect of a cash shortage or stock deficiency",

rather than

"the employer is entitled to receive any amount from the worker on account of a cash shortage or stock deficiency."

The amendment thus ensures that language is used consistently in subsections (4) and (5). The two amendments together also clarify the extent of the protection provided by subsection (5) of clause 4.

12.15 am

The words added by amendment No. 9 at the end of subsection (6) of clause 4 make it clear that, in proceedings by employers to recover amounts from workers, a court is required to limit the rate at which it orders the worker to make payments to the employer so that the 10 per cent. limit is not broken if the amount which the employer is entitled to recover is in respect of a cash shortage or stock deficiency with its wider meaning, that is embracing deductions and payments on account of conduct leading to a shortage or deficiency. The amendments thus help the worker and close a small possible loophole. I believe that these amendments achieve the clarity we seek. They help to ensure that the protection given to workers by the Bill cannot be evaded, and I commend them to the House.

Amendments Nos. 11, 12 and 13 merely update a reference in the Bill to another piece of legislation and are of no consequence in terms of policy.

[Mr. Trippier]

There is a reference in clause 7(1)*(d)* to section 121(2) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978. This section of the 1978 Act will be repealed when a provision of the Insolvency Act 1985 is brought into operation next December. The amendments simply delete the reference to section 121(2) and insert other references which achieve the same effect.

Amendment No. 32 is a straightforward amendment. Section 23A(2) of the Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982, inserted by the Health and Social Security Act 1984, schedule 7, paragraph 8, applies the Truck Act 1896 to agreements to make deductions from statutory sick pay. Clause 11 repeals the Truck Act 1896. However, as statutory sick pay is within the definition of wages in clause 7, the provisions on deductions in part I will apply to it. Section 23A(2) is, therefore, redundant and can be repealed. This is achieved by the amendment.

Amendment No. 33 is a purely technical amendment, which removes a provision of the Building Societies Bill from the list of provisions to be repealed by the Wages Bill. That provision amends the Payment of Wages Act 1960, which is itself repealed by the Wages Bill. The amendment is needed because part I of the Wages Bill may well come into operation before the Building Scocieties Bill.

In general, these amendments are all technical amendments tabled in the interests of clarity and consistent use of language, and to update redundant references. I ask the House to agree to them.

Ms. Clare Short: We welcome amendment No. 7 because it is another minor expansion of the protection afforded to workers. When the Bill was originally drafted, it provided that an employer could go back indefinitely in time to find stock shortages or cash deficiencies and then make a deduction. We sought a change in the Bill to limit to 12 months the length of time an employer can go back, which was some improvement.

We are unhappy that the Bill provides that the whole of a worker's final wage can be confiscated by his employer, and even more unhappy that sickness and maternity pay are included in wages that can be confiscated for disciplinary reasons. But this amendment at least ensures that when an employer seeks to take large chunks of a final payment of wages, he can go back only 12 months to find a cash deficiency or stock shortages.

As we said in Committee, there was a real danger that, after a worker had worked happily for an employer for many years, they might then fall out, and the employer might seek to penalise the worker who was leaving by going back over many years, claiming that there were shortages and stock deficiencies which it would be virtually impossible to disprove.

We also support amendments Nos. 8 and 9 which limit to 10 per cent. the amount a court can deduct for behaviour leading to a stock shortage or cash deficiency. Although it is only minor, it is a slight extention of the protection in the Bill.

I ask the Minister a question on amendment Nos. 11, 12 and 13. The Minister told us that the reference in the new legislation is similar to that in the old that has been removed. However, he has not specified what the differences are. If they are similar but not the same, it is important that we know what the differences are.

I have said that we object strongly to the inclusion of sick pay in the list of pay that can suffer deductions. That is referred to in another amendment. We fought the Government on that. We failed, in the past, to move similar amendments. The amendments are technical and simply tidy up the Bill. We have no objection to them.

Mr. Trippier: In response to the hon. Lady's question, there are no differences.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 6

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS RELATING TO COMPLAINTS

Lords amendment: No. 10, in page 10, line 7, after "of" insert "any provision of this Part"

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment was tabled by my noble Friend to honour an undertaking that he gave in Committee in the other place. It strengthens the provisions of the Bill from the point of view of the worker. The Bill as it was previously drafted made it clear that any agreement between an employer and employee that sought to exclude the complaints procedure would have no validity. The amendment makes it clear that any provision in any agreement that tries to exclude or limit the operation of any provision of part I will be void. The result is that no worker can come under pressure to agree to abrogate his rights as provided by part I.

Mr. Nellist: As the Paymaster General has said, amendment No. 10 makes void any provision in any agreement to exclude or limit the rights of a worker to go to an industrial tribunal in respect of the unauthorised deductions that appear in clause 5. The interesting point about the amendment and the industrial tribunals to which it refers is that during the lengthy debates in Committee the industrial tribunals were the life-line that the Government offered workers to deal with all the problems that we thought could arise from part I.

This afternoon, with my comrades, I predicted — I almost ran a raffle on it — how long it would take the Minister to refer to industrial tribunals. He did so in less than three minutes in his first contribution from the Dispatch Box. That is indicative of the fact that the industrial tribunal system is what the workers will need should there be any problems with the introduction of the legislation. Obviously the Lords amendment is designed to compound and expand on that premise put forward in Committee.

Committee Members argued against the amendment. The whole ethos of this part of the Bill is the presumption that a worker is guilty of an offence that has led to an alleged shortage. The Government say to such a worker, "Go and prove your innocence before an industrial tribunal." Therefore, an employer becomes the judge and jury. He decides whether a worker is guilty. A worker has to prove his innocence. That is a complete turning on its head of what I was taught in school. No doubt other hon. Members were taught that the basic concept of British justice is that a person is innocent until he is proved guilty. The Government have done a 180 degree U-turn, or S-bend, in their treatment of workers.

Committee Members argued—this is crucial to Lords amendment No. 10—that for workers to be offered that lifeline meant a loss to them of some enormity. It may be that as a matter of principle a worker wants to prove his innocence in an industrial tribunal, but he would probably have to lose a day's pay to take that opportunity.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): It may be two.

Mr. Nellist: As my hon. Friend says, it may be two. The geographical spread of industrial tribunals is not such that workers have only to walk to the end of their street to go to one. In many cases they have to travel miles, and that involves considerable travel expenses. It is not unknown for industrial tribunals to adjourn on one day and give a verdict the next. That involves overnight accommodation, and so on. Those were the basic points of disagreement. All those costs could be doubled if the worker, on a point of principle, wanted to bring a colleague from his work place as witness to back up his case.

Mr. Caborn: Does my hon. Friend agree that the pre-hearing assessments are doubling all these costs, because of the legislation brought in by this Administration? Because of the geographical spread of those involved, the hearing could take four of five days in respect of the limited amount that the employer is trying to take off the employee.

Mr. Nellist: My hon. Friend, with his great shop floor experience and experience of industrial tribunals, has anticipated one of the points that I shall make later. He has made a good point about the potential burdens on workers who exercise their rights. This clause carries a series of caveats because of the expense imposed on the workers.

As ever, even when we are lucky enough to have a few weeks between a Bill being passed in the Commons and being considered in the other place, parallel developments take place about which no one tells Committee Members. One matter to which the Paymaster General and the Under-Secretary of State did not refer, and which was not considered in the other place, has a great bearing on the amendment. I am referring to a press release put out by the Department of Employment on 18 June, entitled:

"Government seek views on industrial tribunal fee proposal".

It mentioned the White Paper, Cmnd. 9794, "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" and it contained a proposal to charge a £25 fee for every one using the industrial tribunal system.

In Committee the Minister gave the arguments for the industrial tribunal system, but the press release contains all the arguments against it. It states:

"The main problem employers have encountered with employment protection legislation is the cost and management effort required to deal with ill-founded claims to industrial tribunals which also result in considerable public expenditure though they may cost the applicant little or nothing."

I disagree with that. The press release continues:

"The Government are therefore considering introducing a requirement for applicants to pay a fee, perhaps £25, when making an application to an industrial tribunal. Such a fee would be refundable if an applicant won the case at the tribunal or a subsequent appeal, or if the claim were withdrawn before the date for a full tribunal was fixed."

On the one hand, despite the fact that the Bill is designed to presume their guilt, the Government are offering workers the chance to prove their innocence by going to an industrial tribunal, but on the other hand, they are seeking to discourage workers from using that mechanism by charging a fee of £25 before they put any evidence to the tribunal.

Mr. Mikardo: It is even worse than my hon. Friend says. The Government are not just discouraging people from going to the tribunals. They have built a barrier in a paper called "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers".

Mr. Nellist: That is absolutely true. It is a little difficult, because the press release and the White Paper do not make it clear whether all cases go before industrial tribunals or whether only unfair dismissal or sexual discrimination cases do so. In any case, the consultation period ends in September. Tonight we are asked to accept on our constituents' behalf the use of industrial tribunals with the possibility that, in a couple of months, the Government will bring forward their proposals to introduce a £25 fee.

Earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I raised our difficulties with you, because the Bill had received its Third Reading in the other place only last night and it was not until this morning that we saw the Government's final amendments when they were printed and available in the Vote Office. There has not been much time for people to get in touch with me.

This morning I received a memorandum which pertains to this clause. It was from the British Institute of Management. It is not normal for me to quote the British Institute of Management, but, as somebody once said, "any port in a storm". The BIM says that it does not think it is helpful

"to regard all cases lost at tribunals as ill-founded. Cases could be lost on technicalities. Tribunals did not divide claims into black and white, but judged from their experience where the balance lay. Such claimants should not be deterred from seeking justice."

I submit that passing this Lords amendment, with the implication of a £25 fee in a couple of months time before people can use the facility in the Lords amendment, is a discouragement and a deterrent to those seeking to prove their innocence.

The memorandum goes on to say that the British Institute of Management

"was not convinced of the necessity to introduce a fee for applications; it would be preferable to encourage more use of the existing pre-hearing system."

That was the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn).

The BIM added:

"It should be noted . . . that in a recent consultation with its members only 17 per cent. sought to reduce employment protection legislation."

Perhaps we might come back to that statistic on future occasions when, from the Dispatch Box, we are told what wide support the Government's measures have among British management for attacking the rights of workers and their trade union institutions and organisations.

All the way from 25 July last year, when the bones of the Bill were announced in this Chamber, to its appearing in a more structured form later in the year to a Committee being set up, the message of the Minister was, "Go to the industrial tribunals." We now find that people are being discouraged from taking that avenue.

Mr. Caborn: The cost factor of my hon. Friend's point needs underlining. In Sheffield in the past few days a case was taken to an industrial tribunal for wrongful dismissal. I have been involved in the case. The fees to the lawyers

[Mr. Caborn]

on one side were over £1,000. Therefore, about £2,000 to £2,500 was spent on lawyer's fees alone, and it never went through the door of the tribunal. If people have to defend themselves and prove their innocence before industrial tribunals, we are talking about considerable amounts of money. As I said, in the case to which I referred the sum involved was in excess of £2,500 without the tribunal even being involved.

Mr. Nellist: My hon. Friend is right. As these large sums of money are in themselves a discouragement, we may ask ourselves why there is to be a further £25 fee to rub salt into the wound and provide a further indignity to discourage workers from using industrial tribunals.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central mentioned pre-hearing tribunals. There are already financial penalties under the industrial tribunal system against certain categories of dismissed claims. Tribunals are already empowered to award costs where either party acts

"frivolously, vexatiously or otherwise unreasonably."

To complete my argument, I checked to see what case would define those two words. It is a relief to be able to say that I have the case in front of me. "Frivolous" and "vexatious" were defined in E. T. Marler Ltd. *v.* Robinson in 1974 as follows:

> "If the employee knows that there is no substance in his claim and that it is bound to fail, or if the claim is on the face of it so manifestly misconceived that it can have no prospect of success it may be deemed frivolous".

It goes on:

> "If an employee brings a hopeless claim not with any expectation of recovering compensation but out of spite to harass his employers or for some improper motives he acts vexatiously".

There are already sufficient definitions of frivolous and vexatious for the point to be dealt with, particularly at a pre-hearing assessment level, and to see whether a worker is genuinely trying to prove his innocence or is engaged on a campaign of spite.

Lords amendment No. 10 enhances the argument that we had throughout the Committee stage about the Government encouraging workers to use the industrial tribunal system. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), who is not with us this evening, unfortunately, was the only Tory Member who argued against the industrial tribunal system. He used the same arguments as the Minister and Paymaster General used in their press releases to back up the £25 fee. The Government are encouraging workers to use industrial tribunals, but at the same time are trying to discourage them by the imposition of the £25 fee.

A final indignity is that even if we pass the amendment and then the Bill, and a worker chooses the industrial tribunal to prove the innocence which, under British law, should be assumed from the outset, and wins the case, he can get back to work next morning and be sacked if he has not worked there for two years full time or for five years part-time. He cannot go back to the tribunal a second time, because he has no protection against unfair dismissal.

I advise workers to rely, not on the amendment, on clause 5, on industrial tribunals or on the injection of the legal process into the workers' movement, but on their traditional trade union organisation, because the strength of those organisations can protect them when employers act unreasonably against them by deducting money to which they are not entitled.

Ms. Clare Short: The points that my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) made about tribunals and the proposal to impose, in effect, a £25 fine on anyone who tries to go to a tribunal are important and relevant. They deserve, at some point, some comment from the Ministers whether they propose that the £25 will apply in the case of tribunal applications where people are complaining that a deduction has been wrongly made.

In Committee we talked at length about the fact that people will be subjected to deductions that will not only make them short of money—as we all know, workers in retailing are low paid—but cast a doubt on their integrity and honour. A relatively small amount of money might be involved — a £5 deduction, for example. However, the suggestion is that the individual has behaved dishonestly. He might feel deeply aggrieved and want to go to the tribunal to put the record straight and have his honour protected, but another barrier has been put in his way. In his defence of this part of the Bill, the Minister relied heavily on the ability of any worker to go to a tribunal. The introduction of a £25 fee leans against many of the undertakings that he gave in Committee and will not make it easy for workers to have access to a tribunal.

I am glad that the Paymaster General was straightforward in saying that Lords amendment No. 10 was the implementation of an undertaking given in Committee. We said that it might be possible for an employer to impose a contract on a worker, or make one with him that would remove the protections of the Bill, but we were told that would not be possible. The Government obviously had another look, decided that it would be possible, and introduced this amendment, so that it would be impossible for an employer to go behind the door and reduce the protections, limited though they are, that are afforded to workers.

Does this clause make it impossible for workers, through their trade unions, to get better protection than is afforded in the Bill? Does it work both ways? Does it mean that they must be subject to the 10 per cent. deduction, whether the employer wishes to impose it or whether they have the strength to impose further conditions? We welcome the change. It implements an undertaking that was given at our request, but I should be grateful for an answer on that point.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The press release that was quoted by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) invited comments as part of the consultation process upon our proposal to introduce a returnable fee of £25 for those who wish to apply to industrial tribunals. I listened with great care to his speech and regard it as an interesting contribution to the consultation process that is now under way. As it happens, this amendment has nothing whatever to do with access to industrial tribunals. That is already provided for and protected by the provisions of the Bill.

This amendment was moved in another place to make it clear that, in addition to the protection already provided by the Bill, any attempt to reach an agreement between an employer and an employee that seeks to set aside or limit any provision in part I is void. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) welcomed that

protection. It would apply only if an agreement was entered into between an employer and an employee that sought to exclude or limit the operation of part I. I do not believe that any agreement that gave additional protection to the employee would fall foul of that provision. It would be open to the employer to give greater protection to the employee than is provided for by the Bill, if he so wishes.

Ms. Clare Short: But if workers reach an agreement that there will be no deductions in certain circumstances, it will limit the provisions of the Bill which allow for deductions in those circumstances.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. Deductions are lawful only if there is an agreement in the first place between the employer and the employee which allows them. If the contract of employment does not allow for deductions, all it means is that the Bill does not apply. This amendment in no way weakens the protection that is given to an employee.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 14

WAGES ORDERS

Lords amendment: No. 14, in page 16, line 1, leave out "section 17(4)" and insert

"section (*Computation of remuneration*) (2(*b*) and 3(*b*)"

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following Lords amendments: No. 16, in clause 16, page 18, leave out lines 12 to 32 and insert—

"16.—(1) If, in the case of any worker to whom an order under section 14 applies, the amount of remuneration paid to the worker by his employer in respect of any week is less than the statutory minimum remuneration provided for him by the order in respect of that week, the worker shall be taken to be entitled under his contract to be paid the difference between those two amounts as additional remuneration in respect of that week."

No. 17 in page 18, line 33, leave out "relation to" and insert "respect of"

No. 18, in page 18, line 34, leave out "remuneration not less than" and insert

"an amount of remuneration equal to, or exceeding,"

No. 19, in page 19, line 16, leave out from "*(a)*" to "by" in line 19 and insert

"the statutory minimum remuneration provided for the worker in respect of the week in question"

No. 20, in page 19, line 21, leave out "actually so paid" and insert "paid to the worker"

No. 21, in page 19, line 42, at end insert—

"( ) Any reference in this section, in relation to a worker, to remuneration or statutory minimum remuneration in respect of a week shall be construed as a reference to remuneration or statutory minimum remuneration in respect of the following, namely—

(a) in the case of a time worker, time worked by the worker in that week, and

(b) in the case of a piece worker—

(i) work executed by the worker in that week, and

(ii) any such time as is mentioned in section 15(4) occurring during that week."

No. 22, after Clause 16 insert the following new clause—

Computation of remuneration

" .—(1) For the purpose of determining, for the purposes of this Part, the amount of remuneration paid to a time worker by his employer in respect of time worked by the worker in any week there shall be added together—

(a) the total amount of any money payments made by the employer to the worker, on or before the relevant pay day, by way of remuneration in respect of time worked by him in that week, and

(b) the total amount of any deductions made by the employer (whether in accordance with Part I or not) when making the payment of wages which consisted of or included those money payments, apart from deductions falling to be left out of account under this paragraph by virtue of subsection (2),

and then, from the aggregate of those amounts, there shall be subtracted the aggregate of—

(i) the worker's necessary expenditure in connection with his employment to the extent that such expenditure consists of payments to persons other than the employer, is attributable to that week and is not met, or designed to be met, by an allowance paid to him by the employer, and

(ii) the total amount of any payments received from the worker by the employer (whether in accordance with Part I or not) and falling to be taken into account under this paragraph by virtue of subsection (3).

(2) The following deductions shall be left out of account under subsection (1)*(b)*, namely—

(a) any deduction in respect of the worker's necessary expenditure in connection with his employment to the extent that the deduction is attributable to the week in question,

(b) any deduction in respect of the provision of living accommodation for the worker by the employer to the extent that the deduction exceeds any limit for the time being in force in relation to the worker by virtue of section 14(1)*(c)*, and

(c) subject to subsection (4), any other deduction made by the employer for his own use and benefit (and accordingly not attributable to any amount paid or payable by him to any other person, or to any authority, on behalf of the worker).

(3) The following payments by the worker shall be taken into account under subsection (1)(ii), namely—

(a) any payment in respect of the worker's necessary expenditure in connection with his employment to the extent that the payment is attributable to the week in question,

(b) any payment due from the worker in that week in respect of the provision of living accommodation for him by the employer to the extent that the payment exceeds any limit for the time being in force in relation to the worker by virtue of section 14(1)*(c)*, and

(c) subject to subsection (4), any other payment due from the worker in that week and retained by the employer for his own use and benefit (and accordingly not attributable to any amount paid or payable by him to any other person, or to any authority, on behalf of the worker).

(4) Subsections (2)*(c)* and (3)*(c)* do not apply—

(a) to deductions made or payments received by the employer on account of any of the following matters, namely—

(i) any conduct of the worker or any other event in respect of which he (whether together with any other workers or not) has any contractual liability,

(ii) any advance under an agreement for a loan or any advance of wages, or

(iii) the purchase by the worker of any shares or other securities or of any share in a partnership; or

(b) to deductions made or payments received by the employer on account of any goods or services supplied by the employer with the worker's prior agreement or consent to the extent that any such deductions or payments do not result in the

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

employer recovering from the worker an amount exceeding the cost to the employer of supplying the goods or services in question;
and accordingly any such deductions shall not be left out of account under subsection (1)*(b)* and any such payments shall not be taken into account under subsection (1)(ii).

(5) For the purposes of subsection (4)*(b)* the cost to an employer of supplying any goods or services shall—

(a) where he supplies goods or services of the kind in question in the course of his business, be taken to be the amount which he would have obtained for the goods or services if they had been supplied in the course of that business; and

(b) in any other case, be taken to be the amount of expenditure incurred by the employer in connection with the supply by him of the goods or services.

(6) The preceding provisions of this section shall apply to a piece worker as they apply to a time worker but as if, in subsection (1), any reference to remuneration in respect of time worked by the worker in any week were a reference to remuneration in respect of—

(a) work executed by him in any week, and

(b) any such time as is mentioned in section 15(4) that occurs during the week.

(7) In this section—

"deduction" does not include any such deficiency in the payment of wages as is mentioned in section 8(3);

"money payment" means—

(a) a payment in cash,

(b) a payment by cheque or by a money or postal order issued by the Post Office, or

(c) a payment (however effected) into any account kept with a bank or other institution;

"relevant pay day", in relation to any week of a worker's employment, means the day on which his remuneration in respect of that week is payable;

"wages" has the same meaning as in Part I."

No. 23, in clause 17, page 20, line 7, leave out Clause 17.

No. 27, in clause 19, in page 23, line 44, after "of" an amount of"

Mr. Trippier: This group of amendments relates to the enforcement of wages orders and the method of calculation of remuneration to be regarded as paid to the worker for the purposes of comparison with the statutory remuneration due under the order. They are technical amendments. I hope that the House will accept them.

Mr. Nellist: I want to use this as an illustration of a point that has been made twice before this evening. We are debating new clause 17.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are debating the Lords amendments. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will stick to them.

Mr. Nellist: These amendments have the effect of introducing new clause 17. It renumbers the clauses and alters the operation of the former clause in the Bill when it left this House.

There was very little debate in the other place on this group of amendments. It amounts to four columns of debate in the *Official Report*. The typeface of the *Official Report* in the other place is significantly larger than that of this House. The printing of the new clause took up a further two and a half columns. A further column dealt with requests from various peers for notes on clauses. At that point Lord McCarthy said that he had not yet understood the amendments to the clause. He has wide experience of industrial law and industrial relations law. If, over the days and weeks of debate in the Lords, he could not understand it, how can we be exepected to understand it in nine or 10 hours today?

On Report in the Lords, this group of amendments was briefly discussed in a debate covering three columns of *Hansard*. Lord McCarthy said:

"We feel that it is still a most dreadfully written and complicated clause."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 8 July 1986; vol. 478, c. 244.]

12.45 am

The reason for all the points of order yesterday and today is that last night in the Lords on Third Reading, this group of amendments was subject to further Government amendments to tidy up the introduction of new clause 17 which defines wages. Even the Government failed to understand what they were doing in early July, and last night in the Lords they were still amending the Bill. Despite that, we are expected in a few hours to comprehend and grasp everything they have done. The Government spent last night clarifying and improving the Bill by tabling this group of amendments. That is further proof of the justice of the points of order that we raised. This is a totally unacceptable way for the people that we represent, low-paid workers, to have their future decided.

Ms. Clare Short: We all know that it is late and none of us wants to stay up any longer than necessary. I am surprised that the Minister did not talk at rather greater length about new clause 17. It is an extremely important clause, and without further comment he simply said that they are technical amendments and told us that he assumed they are acceptable.

I have the same difficulties as my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) about new clause 17. I have tried to go through it and it seems to be an improvement on old clause 17, but I not sure of that because I have not had enough time to give it close scrutiny. It needs to be scrutinised in Committee, when we could go through it line by line and delve into it. When we scrutinised the other parts of the Bill in Committee we came up with all sorts of inadequacies and the Government made a number of changes. I fear that there are probably loopholes and faults in new clause 17 which none of us have had time properly to scrutinise.

It is welcome in new clause 17 that necessary expenditure in the course of a worker's employment on such items as tools and clothing that he might have to wear in his employment is deducted before it is decided whether or not the rate he is being paid is the statutory minimum. It is also welcome that any excessive charges for accommodation should be excluded, although I find that provision odd, because under the provisions of the Bill wages councils have power to set limits to the charges for accommodation for those over 21.

In future we expect to see under-21-year-olds being charged for accommodation when they work, for example, in a hotel at a rate well above that charged to the adults whom they work alongside. That would be a major injustice. Given that it would be illegal to overcharge, it seems odd that that provision has been included, but perhaps there is some explanation for that.

I am afraid I have another query on new clause 17(4). The notes circulated by the Department of Employment tell us that if a deduction is made for

"any conduct of the worker or any event for which he is contractually liable, either personally or along with other

workers. This includes disciplinary deductions such as fines for lateness, recompense for damage to the employer's property, etc"

such a deduction would not be included in a reference to the statutory minimum wages council. Why is that so? Why are deductions of that sort not to be counted in calculating the national minimum wage? That seems wrong and inappropriate.

It is obviously right that there is a provision in the new clause which means that workers cannot in future be paid in truck by being given some of the goods that they produce. That practice is growing in my constituency in the new appalling low-paying sweatshops that are springing up in the west midlands. Some of the Asian women working in those sweatshops are given a number of garments at the end of the week together with measly and illegal sums of money. The garments are supposed to count towards their wages. There is a provision that says that vouchers and things like that which are given to workers and which can be exchanged for goods will not count towards the statutory minimum wage. That is obviously a good thing.

It is ironical that we have been told throughout discussions on the Bill that the Government are in favour of simplification so that wages councils orders can be understood by everyone, and then we have clause 17 which is horrendously complicated and difficult to understand. I am sure that many lawyers will make a lot of money out of it on the backs of the low-paid workers who will be paid even less in future as a consequence of the Bill.

Mr. Wainwright: Whatever the purpose of the amendment — the Government would have us believe that it is benign—it undoubtedly adds further obscurity to an already incomprehensible clause. That should not be tolerated even at this hour and under the extraordinary time pressure which the Government have thought fit to inflict upon the House.

As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) has said, the lengthy language of the findings of some wages councils in the past is positively lucid compared with this and one or two other clauses in part II. So the Government's case that they are somehow getting rid of a lot of bureaucratic language and introducing a simple system is bogus and will be seen to be bogus when the Act is circulated to employers.

We must ask the reason for this obscurity. I acquit Ministers of revelling in obscurity for its own sake, but there is no doubt that the obscurity arises because the Government are determined to cast a death spell over the whole system of wages councils. Rather than honestly abolish them, because that would have provoked some of the kinder Conservative Members to expostulate, they are slowly poisoning them by the grotesque device of confining wages councils to single awards only. Only a Government steeped in early Victorian attitudes could possibly suppose that single awards could conceivably even begin to cover the vast complexity of modern industrial and commercial arrangements.

Having once set out on the demeaning path of confining wages councils to single awards and single hourly rates, the Government have been caught up in a web of bureaucratic language. I confidently predict that even this amendment will not put matters right. This will not be an effective part of the statute and the courts will soon ridicule—as I hope the courts always will ridicule bad legislation—the manifest defects of this unfortunate part of the Bill. It is only with a heavy heart that one can even begin to contemplate accepting the amendment.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I rise to agree with much of what has just been said. The clause is particularly difficult to understand and I am amazed to find it at a time when we are doing everything possible to reduce the complexity of legislation, particularly when it affects people who are often at a considerable disadvantage. One must bear in mind that such legislation impinges on the daily lives of people who often do not have the advantage of being able to understand the law. That is therefore all the more reason why it should be less complicated.

I speak as one who has taken a considerable interest in trying to reduce the obscurity and complexity of the law. In a previous incarnation I had some responsibility for drafting legislation. Indeed, I helped to draft the Small Business Bill, and it took only two clauses — *[Interruption.]* But there is a serious point to be made despite the somewhat cynical attitude displayed by Opposition Members, including one of my colleagues on the European Legislation Committee. I am sure that he will acknowledge that I have repeatedly spoken about the obscurity of legislation.

I am anxious to ensure that we simplify the law. Ordinary people, particularly those who are less well off and less advantaged than others, find that it is not easy to gain access to legal advice, which is often expensive. They should at least be able to understand the provisions in question. I urge the Government to consider what the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) has said. I agreed with much of it.

Mr. Mikardo: I rise briefly to respond to what the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) said about the obscurity of this legislation and to what the hon. Member for Colne Valley called the horrendously complicated nature of it.

Subsection (1) of the new clause consists of a single sentence of 232 words. It should go into the "Guinness Book of Records". I defy anyone to disentangle a single sentence of 232 words, especially if it begins not with a principal clause, but with a sub-clause, and then a sub-sub-clause within the sub-clause in the very first line. It starts with a parenthesis and a parenthesis within the parenthesis in the first line, which consists of only 10 words or so, and then goes on for another 222 words before reaching the main clause.

Those of us who were taught parsing and about Nesfield and the purity of the English language cannot begin to understand. The hon. Member for Stafford was right to say that we should try to draft legislation so that the ordinary chap does not have to pay a lawyer £1,000 to go to court to discover its meaning.

Mr. Wainwright: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that Lords amendment No. 14 either has one parenthesis mark too many or one too few? It is clear from the second line of the amendment that there is an opening bracket but no closing one. Will the Government explain their drafting?

Mr. Mikardo: We had a similar example earlier. It is a bit much if ordinary workers are supposed to understand and to rely for their protection on that sort of language. I know that it is not easy to draft legislation, but I cannot believe that it is beyond the wit of parliamentary draftsmen to split 232 words into three "short" sentences of 80 words apiece, which would be surely long enough.

Mr. Trippier *rose*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the Minister have the leave of the House to speak again? I take it that he has.

I am

Mr. Trippier: It is probably stretching credulity to breaking point for the House to believe, as the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) has suggested, that the man in the street is expected to understand Bills or Acts. I have never believed that, but I am sympathetic to many of the arguments which have been advanced by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

When the Bill was in Committee, no complaint was made about the complexity of the clause. References to the *Hansard* reports of the debates in Committee will make that clear. Opposition Members were concerned because they did not believe that the Government were protecting workers. That was the issue raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). They did not accept that workers were being protected in the way that I suggested in Committee and I agreed to reconsider the clause. The main reason for presenting the clause in its proposed form—it would be silly of me to deny that it is more complex now—is to meet the objections made by Opposition Members in Committee, and many of those who are in their places this morning were members of the Committee. An effort has been made to meet what they had to say about the unscrupulousness of some employers, which would be evident if they were to circumvent their obligation to pay workers any less than the statutory minimum laid down by the wages council.

The following are the four main changes which have been made. First, the calculation of remuneration paid now relates specifically to the amount paid to a worker for time worked, or, in the case of a piece worker, work done in any week, and to the deductions or payments made by the worker to the employer which have been made in or are attributable to the same week. Secondly, in accordance with the undertaking that I gave hon. Members in Committee,

"the worker's necessary expenditure in connection with his employment"

which is paid to a third party is to be subtracted from the amount of money paid to the worker by the employer unless this has been met by an allowance paid by the employer. The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) was especially anxious that I should try to meet that point. Perhaps he will recall that and have an opportunity to express his thanks.

Mr. Nellist: It is not that late in the day. I accept that we are grateful that we received the departmental notes yesterday, so we have had one day more to consider them than we had to consider notes at a previous stage in the Bill's consideration. The explanation of the necessary expenditure makes a division between travel costs in connection with the employer's business and travel-to-work expenses. Why do the Department and the Minister think that it is all right to take account of travel costs on the employer's business and not the employee's costs in getting to the business in the first place?

Mr. Trippier: If the hon. Gentleman had listened—I am sure he did, actually—to what I was saying prior to allowing him to intervene, he would understand. If we are talking about outworkers or homeworkers, his case is somewhat weak. It would be travel to collect the work from where the homeworker would do the work. I was referring to the issue which was raised specifically in Committee.

Thirdly, provision has been made for any charge made for

"any goods or services supplied by the employer with the worker's prior agreement or consent"

to be an allowable deduction or payment, provided that the charge made does not exceed the amount that the employer would have obtained for the goods or services in the course of his business. That was another issue that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East asked me to meet, as did the hon. Member for Ladywood, and it has been met.

I apologise, especially to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who is as keen as I am to simplify on every conceivable occasion, for the complexity of the provisions that are before us. I hope that I can persuade my hon. Friend, if not Opposition Members, that is has not been possible to simplify and to meet the issues that were raised by hon. Members in Committee. I think that it is safe to say that if we have not been able to cover the loopholes to which I have referred, the ability of others to do so can be safely challenged.

I know that there is a compelling case, put by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar, when he asked how one expected the man in the street or the worker to read the legislation. Not only the average man in the street, but many Members of Parliament, do not understand the Bills that they are expected to consider on the Floor of the House or in Committee. That includes the hon. Gentleman. No one is an expert on that. The hon. Gentleman, on an earlier point of order, referred accurately to the fact that the whole Bill is complex. He is absolutely right; it is extremely detailed.

I again apologise to the House that we have not been able to cover the loophole without this precise wording.

Mr. Wainwright: Will the Minister give the House the correct version of the second line of Lords amendment No. 14, which, as it stands, is manifestly incorrect? A bracket starts that never ends.

Mr. Trippier: It must be a printing error.

Mr. Nellist: Resign.

Mr. Trippier: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman thinks that it is a matter of resignation. He must forgive me if I do not wish to meet him on that point, because the House is about to rise and I am looking forward to the recess.

The simple solution is to omit the first bracket. The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) should be satisfied with that, and I shall endeavour to meet him on that point.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 15, in page 17, line 19, after "time" insert "being"

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 26, in clause 19, page 22, line 20, leave out "has dealings" and insert "is dealing"

No. 28, in clause 25, page 27, line 4, leave out "under his contract"

No. 29, in page 27, line 9, at end insert
"and "employed", in relation to a worker, accordingly means employed under his contract;"

Mr. Trippier: I am sure that these amendments will be widely and warmly welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I ask the House to accept them.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

New Clause

APPORTIONMENT OF REMUNERATION

Lords amendment: No. 24, after clause 17, insert the following new Clause:

" .—(1) This section applies where

(a) in respect of part of the time worked by a time worker in any week ("the relevant period") the worker is entitled to the statutory minimum remuneration provided for him by an order under section 14, and

(b) in respect of the remainder of the time worked by him in the week ("the remaining period") the worker is not entitled to any such remuneration or is entitled to any such remuneration by virtue of another such order;

and in this section any reference to the worker's computed remuneration is a reference to the amount of the remuneration paid to the worker in respect of the time worked by him in the week in question as determined in accordance with section *(Computation of remuneration)*.

(2) Subject to subsections (3) to (5), the amount of the worker's computed remuneration that is to be attributed to either the relevant period or the remaining period for the purposes of this Part shall, if not apparent from the terms of the worker's contract, be the amount which bears to the total amount of the workers's computed remuneration the same proportion as the relevant period, or (as the case may be) the remaining period, bears to the total time worked by the worker in the week in question.

(3) Where any particular amount falling to be added or subtracted under section *(Computation of remuneration)* (1) as it applies to any week is exclusively referable to the relevant period, the amount of the worker's computed remuneration to be attributed to that period for the purposes of this Part shall be determined by either—

(a) adding the unattributed balance of that particular amount to the amount to be attributed to that period in accordance with subsection (2) above, or

(b) subtracting the unattributed balance of that particular amount from the amount to be attributed to that period in accordance with that subsection,

according to whether that particular amount falls to be added or subtracted under section *(Computation of remuneration)* (1); and a corresponding adjustment shall be made in the amount of the worker's computed remuneration to be attributed for the purposes of this Part to the remaining period.

(4) In subsection (3) "the unattributed balance", in relation to the particular amount in question means so much of that amount as is not taken into account for the purpose of determining the amount to be attributed to the relevant period in accordance with subsection (2).

(5) Where any particular amount falling to be added or subtracted under section *(Computation of remuneration)* (1) as it applies to any week is exclusively referable to the remaining period, subsections (3) and (4) shall apply to any particular amount as if—

(a) any reference to the relevant period were a reference to the remaining period; and

(b) the reference in subsection (3) to the remaining period were a reference to the relevant period.

(6) The preceding provisions of this section shall apply to a piece worker as they apply to a time worker but as if—

(a) any reference to time worked by the workers in any week were a reference to work executed by him in any week;

(b) the word "work" were substituted for the word "period" wherever occurring;

and for the purposes of those provisions as they apply to a piece worker in accordance with this subsection the worker shall be treated as executing work during any such time as is mentioned in section 15(4)."

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 30, in clause 25, page 28, line 23, leave out subsections (3) and (4) and insert—

"( ) Notwithstanding section 14(3)—

(a) where a worker is employed partly for the purposes of his employer's business and partly not, nothing in any order under section 14 shall apply to the worker in his employment otherwise than for the purposes of that business, and

(b) where a worker is employed for the purposes of his employer's business both in an employment to which an order under section 14 applies and in one to which that order does not apply, nothing in that order shall apply to the worker in the second of those employments."

Mr. Trippier: Amendment No. 24 introduces a new clause that modifies the provisions of the new clause after clause 16, which we have discussed. It states how that clause is to be applied in cases where a worker's employment is only partly within the scope of a wages order, or within the scope of more than one such order. Essentially, it is a matter of apportioning the amount of remuneration calculated as paid to the worker between the in-scope and the out-of-scope work. The apportionment is to be made according to the proportion of time spent on work of each type, except where the worker's contract provides otherwise. In the event that any element of the remuneration is attributable wholly to work of one type, the calculation of apportionment has to take account of that fact.

Amendment No. 30 is related to the inclusion of the new clause after clause 17. As presently drafted, subsections (3) and (4) include the phrase

"nothing in this Part . . . shall be construed as applying".

The amendment replaces that with

"nothing in any order under section 14 shall apply".

The amendment also qualifies clause 14(3), which would otherwise have the effect of making a wages order applicable to workers whether they were employed either fully or partly on work to which the order applied. The new clause, in effect, carries forward the similar provision in clause 18 of the Wages Councils Act 1979. I commend it to the House.

Ms. Clare Short: This is an enormously complicated provision, similar to the one that we have just discussed. Unfortunately, my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) is not here to add up the words and length of the sentences. It is all about how to calculate the relevance of the statutory minimum wage to workers who are partly covered and partly not covered by a wages council order.

Given that position, such complicated provisions are necessary. We put it to the Minister before we discussed the Bill, and I put it to him again now, how much better it would be to rationalise the coverage of wages councils orders. We gave the Minister example after example in Committee of workers, parts of whose jobs were covered by wages councils orders and other parts which were not

[Ms. Clare Short]

so covered. The Minister also gave examples of someone who cleans as well as works in a shop who is covered by two different wages councils orders.

The Government's refusal to make any provision in the Bill for the review of scope to rationalise these anomalies is another example of the point made by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) that the Bill has a hidden agenda underpinning it—to phase out, minimise and undercut wages councils and make them less and less effective so that they will be brought into disrepute and can eventually be killed off.

The necessity for this very complicated provision is simply that the the Government will not rationalise the coverage of wages councils orders. We must accept that now, but the better remedy would be to ensure that most workers were covered all of the time by one wages council order and not to have people partially protected. There is the example of the post office in which someone working behind the sweet counter was protected but not protected if he went to sell the stamps. That ridiculous mess will not be put right because there are no provisions in the Bill to correct that position.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 18

OBLIGATION TO KEEP RECORDS ETC.

Lords amendment: No. 25, in page 22, line 6, at end insert—

"(2A) Where any such workers are homeworkers, the employer shall notify them in the prescribed manner of the matters mentioned in subsection (2)."

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment fulfils a commitment given to the Committee to the effect that employers who make use of the services of home workers will be required, once the legislation takes effect, to notify those home workers in the prescribed manner of the contents of wages councils notices of proposals, of orders which affect them and of any other matters which may be prescribed.

I am confident that the Opposition will welcome the amendment, and I commend it to the House.

Ms. Clare Short: Of course we welcome the amendment. We know that home workers are some of the most exploited and under-paid workers covered by the Bill. At least the provision that requires employers to inform them of their rights will make it slightly more likely that they will receive their rights under the law. We welcome the amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Schedule 2

CONSTITUTION ETC. OF WAGES COUNCILS

Lords amendment: No. 31, in page 34, line 26, leave out "3" and insert "5"

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment enables the Secretary of State to appoint up to five independent members to sit on a wages council, instead of a maximum of three as at present. The amendment has been tabled to enable the Secretary of State to make additional appointments to the councils where from time to time there might be difficulty in the independen members attending in adequate numbers. There have been occasions on some councils when it has been possible for only one independent member to be present when representations are being considered. Plainly that is unsatisfactory, and we therefore seek this power.

This power will be used by the Secretary of State only for those councils where the need arises. The power is purely discretionary and is unlikely to be used where the independent members of a council are encountering no difficulties. There was a debate in another place on this matter. I hasten to assure the House that the proposal is made purely for convenience, to ensure that the position does not arise where only one independent member is left with a key role to play in a council. We have no intention of using the power to pack a council with our supporters. The suspicions voiced by Lord McCarthy—I am not sure whether they were serious—in another place are groundless.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I inform the House that this amendment involves privilege.

Mr. Mikardo: I hope that the House will not agree with the Lords in this amendment. I understand and sympathise with the kind of problem that the Minister has described, where the matter is left to one chap because only he has turned up out of the three. First, members should not be appointed unless they give an undertaking that they will, barring illness or accident, be regular attenders at their jobs. If they take on the job, they should undertake to deal with it properly and regularly. Secondly, far too many independent members are appointed to far too many wages councils. Being an independent member of a wages council is almost like being part of a profession, and some people are members of several councils. One reason for poor attendance may be that one person is a member of three wages councils which are meeting at the same time. He cannot be in three places at once.

1.15 am

The Government must find people who will not take on too many wages councils and who can guarantee their attendance. The Minister says that he will use the powers only in emergencies, but the power will exist and he may not be the Minister for ever. Indeed, I doubt whether he will be the Minister for ever.

Ms. Clare Short: He is not even in charge of them. It is that other nasty fellow.

Mr. Mikardo: My hon. Friend is right. He is not in charge of them anyway. The power to appoint five independent members is a power to distort the entire structure and to weaken the influence of the representative members contrasted with that of the independent members. It would dilute the representative character of a council. The power should not be given to the Secretary of State, and I hope that the House will not accept the amendment.

Mr. Wainwright: On this occasion, I differ from the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo). I believe that the Government have sincere motives for extending the number of members to five. I shall give an example which I mentioned in Committee. More than 12

years ago, I and my Liberal colleagues discovered that the wages council which dealt solely with lace workers, who were based almost entirely in and around Nottingham, had not even met for several years. There had been a total failure to call the council members together. When we investigated the matter, we discovered that the reasons were that the employers did not want it to meet, the trade union representatives had been conned into believing that the workers would lose their jobs if there was an adjustment in wages and—this is the nub of the matter—the independent members, or what was left of them, were lazy and did not wish to activate the council.

We must go behind attendance at a meeting and question whether there are enough members to ensure that the council can be called together. There is sense in the amendment, and I hope that Ministers will take the opportunity to assure the House that, under their regime, no wages council will be allowed to go for several years without meeting.

Ms. Clare Short: The Labour party objects strongly to the amendment. The notes circulated by the Department say that the people working in the retail industry called for it. Who are they supposed to be? The National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers is strongly opposed to the amendment, as is the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers. USDAW said that, many years ago, it called for the appointment of more independent members because of the problem of non-attendance, but that the suggestion was that those additional independent members should be appointed by the trade unions and the employers. The Government are not complying with that part of the recommendation.

All unions believe that, given the absolute determination of the Secretary of State for Employment, in everything he does, to cut the wages of the lowest paid, he will have ulterior motives and will stuff the wages councils with so-called independent members who will be in favour of low wage settlements, which will make it more difficult for the trade union representatives to achieve reasonable settlements. That is the view of major trade unions in wages council industries, and it is the serious view of the Opposition. We are not just saying it or protesting. We watched the Secretary of State start off in the Manpower Services Commission, and have seen the damage that he did there and the damage that he continues to do. We do not trust him with these powers.

If members of wages councils are hopeless, moribund and lazy, the answer is not to appoint more hopeless, moribund and lazy independent members, but to appoint different people, to make appointments conditional upon attending meetings, and to push people off if they do not attend. Simply enlarging the number of appalling people who appear to have been members of the laceworkers' wages council, to which the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) referred, does not necessarily remedy the problem.

Mr. Wainwright: It is not a matter of failing to attend meetings but of a member of the council activating the process and ensuring that meetings are called.

Ms. Short: I understand that, but I am not at all sure that increasing the number of independent members from three to five will ensure that meetings are called. I understand the hon. Gentleman's reasons for supporting the amendment, but I question whether it would achieve the objective that he intends.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply to the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Clarke: It was the Retail Consortium which first raised with us increasing the number of independent members. It wanted to increase their number by agreement between both sides of industry, but that would rather contradict the definition of independent members. The problem arose because, in that council, there have been times when only one independent member has been present to hear the representations of both sides. That is unsatisfactory.

Ms. Short: If people are not attending or doing the job, does not the Minister have any powers to get rid of them and appoint more active independent members?

Mr. Clarke: We are not necessarily talking about lazy attenders or people who are not normally attenders. If somebody is spectacularly lax as happened in the case given by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright)—he gave a startling account of the affairs of the laceworkers' wages council—it would be necessary for the Secretary of State to appoint some more reasonable members. The best members can sometimes find it difficult to attend, however, and if there are only three members, that risk is increased. Every now and again, only one will be able to attend if there are only three members, but that risk is reduced if we increase their number to five. It is only a discretionary power, and it will be used only in those councils where that problem might arise.

The suggestion of an increase was supported by the chairman of the all-party group on retail trade in a letter to the Secretary of State.

Ms. Short: When?

Mr. Clarke: That was my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg), who I think was writing as chairman of the all-party group.

Ms. Short: When?

Mr. Clarke: Recently—after the Retail Consortium suggested that we should increase the number of independent members. That is why the amendment was made. When it was tabled, we did not expect it to be controversial. It ought not to be. The hon. Lady claims that it would somehow pave the way for my right hon. and noble Friend to start misusing his power of appointment and to appoint people who are not genuinely objective or independent.

Ms. Short: Absolutely.

Mr. Clarke: I refute the suggestion that my right hon. and noble Friend would contemplate doing any such thing. Any Secretary of State has the power, if he wants to misuse it, to appoint anybody he wants as one of the three independent members. We shall try to find conscientious and independent members, and to increase

[Mr. Clarke]

the independent membership of councils in which there might be a risk of the number attending falling too low. On that basis, I commend the amendment to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, one with Special Entry.

Schedule 6

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS AND SAVINGS

Lords amendment: No. 34, in page 41, leave out lines 11 to 19 and insert—

"4.—(1) Where at any time during the period of two years ending with the date of an offence under section 16(3) of this Act an order under section 14 of the 1979 Act applied to the worker in relation to whom the offence was committed, or to any other worker employed by that worker's employer, section 16 of this Act shall have effect in relation to any such time as if—

(a) in subsections (4) and (7), any reference to any other failure on the part of the employer to pay an amount of remuneration equal to, or exceeding, the statutory minimum remuneration provided for a worker by an order under section 14 of this Act were a reference to any failure on the part of the employer to pay an amount of remuneration equal to, or exceeding, the remuneration for the time being fixed in relation to a worker by an order under section 14 of the 1979 Act or by a permit under section 16(1) of that Act;

(b) in subsection (5), the reference to the statutory minimum remuneration so provided were a reference to the remuneration so fixed; and

(c) subsection (6) were omitted.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (4) and (5) of section 16 of this Act, as they have effect in accordance with sub-paragraph (1), the following matters, namely—

(a) the question whether an employer has failed to pay an amount of remuneration equal to, or exceeding, that fixed by any such order or permit under the 1979 Act as is mentioned in that sub-paragraph, and

(b) the amount referred to in subsection (5)*(b)*,

shall be determined in accordance with sections 17 and 18 of the 1979 Act, and not in accordance with sections *(Computation of remuneration)* and *(Apportionment of remuneration)* of this Act."

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker With this it will be convenient to consider the following Lords amendments: No 35, in page 41, line 23, leave out from beginning to "and" in line 24 and insert

"an amount of remuneration less than that fixed by any such order or permit under the 1979 Act as is mentioned in paragraph 4(1)"

No. 36, in page 42, line 2, after "affect" insert—

"*(a)*"

No. 37, in page 42, line 3, after "(1)" insert—

", or

(b) any right of a worker to any annnual holidays or to any holiday remuneration in respect of those holidays,"

No. 38, in page 42, line 10, after second "of" insert ", or in connection with,"

No. 39, in page 42, line 14, at end insert—

"( ) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-paragraph (1), an order under this paragraph may make provision in connection with preserving the effect of rights to which paragraph 5(4)*(b)* above applies."

Manuscript amendment to Lords amendment No. 39, in line 4, leave out "*(b)*".

Mr. Trippier: I wish to concentrate on amendments Nos. 36 to 39 because amendments Nos. 34 and 35 are technical, as I am sure the Opposition will accept. I shall also deal with the manuscript amendment now before the House.

Amendments Nos 36 to 39 relate to the accrued rights of workers to holidays and holiday pay at the date a wages order ceases to apply to them. Wages council workers are not entitled to paid holidays in their first year of service. The rights they accrue in each year are based on length of service and are allowed in the following year. Schedule 6 as at present drafted enables the Secretary of State to make an order preserving such accrued rights as at the date a wages order ceases to apply to a worker. As it would have been impossible to make such an order on the date of Royal Assent and for it to take effect from that date, provision was made for it to have retrospective effect. However, as workers under the age of 21 are to be excluded from the system from Royal Assent, problems are likely to arise in safeguarding their rights through an order made at some future date. The amendments therefore preserve the accrued holiday entitlement for under 21s as at the date of Royal Assent and for other workers as at the date the relevant wages order ceases to apply to them. The existing provision enabling the Secretary of State to make an order has been retained as a safeguard should it prove necessary at some future date to clarify the preserved rights provision.

The manuscript amendment seeks to preserve any other rights of workers under the age of 21 in addition to the accrued holiday entitlement preserved by amendment No. 39. The Government believe that it is necessary to exclude young people from the provisions of wages councils orders from the date of passing of this Bill. Any delay would have to be reckoned in terms of the number of job opportunities lost. We readily accept that holiday entitlement earned by service up to the date a wages council order ceases to apply to a worker should be preserved. That is only fair and proper. However, we do not accept that that exception should be extended to any other accrued rights.

Ms. Clare Short: Our manuscript amendment, grouped with these Government amendments, to which we do not object, draws attention to how badly those under the age of 21 are being treated under the Bill. They are to lose all their protection immediately it passes into law. The indecent speed with which the Bill has been brought from the Lords to the Commons means that they will lose that protection before rather than at the end of summer.

It is noteworthy that all other workers protected by existing wages councils orders will continue to be protected by the old orders until new orders are made under the Bill, but the minute the Bill receives Royal Assent those under 21 will cease to have any protection. That is the Bill's final nasty twist of the knife in the young.

The Government's case is based on an enormous falsehood — that a cut in youth wages will lead to a reduction in youth unemployment, and that high youth unemployment is caused by high youth wages. The truth is that youth wages are low by international standards and have fallen massively in the past few years as youth unemployment has grown rapidly. The experience of every developed country shows that when unemployment is

rising, it rises faster for young people than for any other age group for obvious reasons: they are marginal to the labour force, they are seeking to join it, they lack experience, and when employers can afford to be fussy about whom they employ, they tend not to employ young people. That is the experience of the United States of America, France and Germany. Youth unemployment has nothing to do with the wages profile of young people in Britain.

The Government's real strategy is to cut everybody's wages. To achieve that, they attack the most vulnerable, seeking to push their rates down, because it is easy to attack women's and young people's wages. If the labour of such vulnerable groups can be made cheaper, they can be made to compete with other groups and used as a lever to push down everybody's wages.

A series of measures, intended to cut the wages of young people has been taken by the Government. They have deliberately used the youth opportunities programme and the youth training scheme to do so. The allowance was set at a low level and it did not operate in line with inflation. If the allowance had kept pace with the original YOP allowance, it would have been about £40. The Government deliberately used the community programme to get the young unemployed, in their desperation, to accept badly paid and part-time employment. The young workers scheme was designed deliberately to cut wages. That unsuccessful scheme has been replicated for an older age group. The cuts in benefits for young workers were intended to make them accept less in order to work.

1.30 am

One would have thought that any decent Government would wish to protect the young in the first stage of their working life. If one were asked which group of workers needed protection, the young would be the first on the list. They have not worked before, and they do not have experience in looking after themselves and their wages and conditions of work. All decent countries have minimum wages legislation for the protection of young people. Britain is the only country to move away from that. That is why we had to resile from the International Labour Organisation convention on minimum wage protection, with which many underdeveloped countries managed to comply. Britain will not do so.

Such a removal of protection for young people will not create a large number of new jobs. If the cut in youth wages were to have done that, we would have seen a reduction in youth employment because their wages have dropped considerably. It will be a question of getting young people into work by throwing their mothers out of work. The people who work in the industries that are protected by wages councils are overwhelmingly women, and low-paid women.

Unemployment runs in families. If one person in a family is unemployed, it is likely that other members of his family will be unemployed. Young unemployed people are likely to have other unemployed members of their family. In so far as this nasty measure will have any effect at all, a few young people might get jobs, but a number of women, mothers and other young people, are likely to lose their jobs.

Our amendment draws attention to the fact that the only protection the Government will continue to give to young people is to ensure that their accrued holiday pay will be paid to them. Young people are to be treated even worse than other workers who lose protection under the Bill. The existing wages councils orders will continue in force for some time for adult workers, but that is not so for youth. On the day of Royal Assent, all their protections will be removed.

I have only one pleasure when I contemplate the consequences of the measure. It will take some time for the Government's strategy to work — for employers to shift and cut the wages of young people. By that time, we will have had an election and we will have a new Government who will bring in a proper national minimum wage, with proper protection for young people, so that we can move towards a decently paid, decently trained and decent investment economy instead of the sweatshop economy that the Bill leads us towards.

Mr. Caborn: Of all the hours that the Committee considered the Bill and our previous proceedings, this is the most despicable debate so far. It symbolises the Government's attitude not only to young people but to British industry. Nothing shows more clearly the drive to a low-wage economy than this section of the Bill.

I concur with everything that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said. The Government are driving down the wages of the under 21-year-olds simply to ensure that they will displace older workers, instead of training our young people, bringing them on to a decent wage level, and giving them protection. No other Western nation uses young people as fodder so it can have a low-wage economy. They look to young people as an investment for the future in terms of the training that is required by their industries. Anybody would think that Britain's industries have a wealth of trained talent. That is not so. The Bill will worsen that position. I hope that if the Labour party presses the House to a Division, which I favour, all those Conservative Members who cry out about British industry and its direction will join us in the Lobby.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Agriculture Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

PROVISION OF SERVICES AND GOODS CONNECTED WITH AGRICULTURE AND COUNTRYSIDE

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 4, at end insert—

"(2A) The provision which may be made under this section includes provision for the supply of such services and goods as are mentioned in subsection (1) above through any organisation; and the Minister shall establish an organisation through which such a supply may be made.".

1.35 am

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not intend to delay the House unnecessarily, but I do not think that you put our manuscript amendment on the Wages Bill to the vote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): We have considered that measure. The amendment was not moved.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I moved it, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Lady spoke to the amendment, but she did not move it. I got the impression that the amendment was not to be pressed to a Division. We have passed that point now.

Mr. Gummer: The amendment seeks to meet the fears of Committee Members that there was no obligation to maintain an advisory service. The Government were determined that that should be a false fear, but, so that there would be no misunderstanding, this amendment was moved and agreed in their Lordships' House.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): To debate the Bill barely 24 hours after it was given its Third Reading in the other place is contrary to reasonable government. A clause on tenants' rights in Scotland has never appeared in the legislation before, and we are seeing for the first time a substantial number of amendments to the tenants' rights clauses. I protest, not to the Minister of State, but to the business managers who did this to him.

I welcome the slight move on the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service. The "may" and "shall" debate seems to have ended in a draw. The Minister "may" still provide services, but, if he does, he "shall" provide a structure and organisation to carry them out.

We want to put on record our opposition to the present cuts. We want a commitment that there will be no further reductions in ADAS, whatever the revenue charging. The first pilot scheme — the plant laboratories charging scheme — has led to an 80 per cent. loss in the throughput of work in those laboratories, which is not an auspicious start to the new regime.

The same is true of the statement by Mr. Bawcutt, the head of the new ADAS marketing unit, that the aim of ADAS is to improve the efficiency of agriculture through the market. Does that mean producing still more? If so, will it be in the larger public interest? We believe that the charging clause, as admitted by Mr. Bawcutt, had a big effect on staff numbers and morale. We believe that the farmers' reaction at the Royal show, where they said that they would not pay for the services of ADAS if they could get advice free from other sources, is not an auspicious start.

I have tried to read Lord Belstead's attempts to differentiate between a chargeable and non-chargeable service. I still think that this is a recipe for disaster. The advisory work should be done free of charge, as a contribution by the Government towards re-orientating the whole of British agriculture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker I have to remind the House that this amendment involves privilege.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I do not wish to detain the House for long, but I should like to place on record the fact that amendment No. 1 will at least give the Minister the power to carry on with the advisory organisation, and that is better than what we had previously. At least there will be some mechanism in operation. Perhaps in the future it will provide the possibility of a better service than we are being given in clause 1.

We would like to place on record the fact that we regret that enshrined in clause 1 are charges for ADAS services. We deprecate this very much. At at time when farming is up against it and farm incomes are the lowest that they have been for 10 years, the slapping on of charges for the very services that could rescue the industry is totally inappropriate.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): This amendment is a modest improvement on what was in the Bill when we first saw it. However, it must be said that it does not, of itself, describe how the Government intend to exercise their discretion to make charges. I had hoped that the Minister would use this opportunity to say something more about that. There has been considerable debate in another place about the appropriateness of charging for advice that is required to enable statutory obligations to be met. In another place the Government refused to accept an amendment along those lines. That has been a matter of great disappointment to the farming industry, which properly feels aggrieved that the Government have refused to make that change.

It is not satisfactory that a Bill of this kind should embody such a wide discretion without any indication being given of the circumstances in which the Minister may choose to decide that it is appropriate to offer services, advice or goods free of charge. Perhaps in answering this short debate the Minister will find it possible to say something about that, because the industry is hanging on his words.

I agree with the remarks made by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) about the inappropriateness of putting such an important Bill and such important amendments before us without proper time being allowed to lapse for consultations and proper consideration of appropriate amendments. This is not a serious way to treat the industry. We will have more to say about that in the context of amendments which follow this one, which is a relatively modest change from the initial Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the Minister have the leave of the House to speak again? It appears that he does.

Mr. Gummer: I am pleased that some hon. Members have seen that this amendment, like almost every amendment before the House, is an attempt by the Government to move towards the Opposition and others in the criticisms that they have made. In that sense it seems sensible to debate them tonight, even though it is a short time after their Lordships' debate, to try to ensure that the Bill goes on to the statute book so that the benefits of it can soon be seen in agriculture. I believe it to be a benefit to agriculture that in Britain, as in most of the Common Market countries, it will be seen that advice should be as close to the marketplace as possible. Payment for that advice is part of ensuring that the advice that is given is commercially valued. That is a positive good, and not a disadvantage.

That positive good was dramatically shown at the Royal show this year, when we saw how the French and British advisory services operated side by side. What became clear to people, perhaps for the first time, was the extent to which other advisory services charge for the service that they give. In the House we hear hon. Members say how valuable those advisory services have been to those countries. I find it odd that we should be so unique that we feel that the only thing that is worth while doing is something that is done free. The amendment would be a valuable contribution to the closer working of agriculture and the market.

1.45 am

The need to get advice on statutory obligations is important. A large number of them are there to benefit the industry. It is not unreasonable that the industry should bear the cost of much of that, which is why we have seen to it that in future that is what will happen. The purpose of the clause is not to cast any doubt on the advisability or the wish of the Government to continue an advisory service. The intention is to make the advisory service more effective, more market oriented, and more useful to the farmer. As some doubt was put into the minds of the people because of the phrases in the Bill, we tried to insert into it a phrase that would give us the obligation to retain advisory services, while enabling the organisation to respond sensibly and quickly to changes in demand for particular goods or services. That is why the amendment should help Opposition Members who had that fear. I hope that the House will accept it.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the right hon. Gentleman go a little further in explaining his attitude to the statutory obligations? He said that some of them would have to be paid for. Does he have it in mind to make some exceptions to the general rule about keeping close to the market?

Mr. Gummer: With my natural reticence, I was making sure that I had covered all eventualities. It is reasonable to charge for advice on statutory duties where they benefit the industry.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4

CONSTITUTION AND FUNCTIONS OF HOME-GROWN CEREALS AUTHORITY

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 3, line 20, leave out "one" and insert "two".

Mr. Gummer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 3, in page 4, line 17, leave out "of that subsection".

Mr. Gummer: Amendment No. 2, to provide for at least two independent members of the authority who would fill the offices of chairman and deputy chairman, was originally tabled on Report by the Opposition but not moved. However, two other amendments that flowed from the proposed change were moved and accepted, and it was necessary to tidy up the situation. Similarly, amendment No. 3 tidies up the drafting of the clause, removing part of it.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): It is probable that one of the reasons why we are debating this Lords amendment is the fast work by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you were in the Chair on Report. You caught both the Minister and I on the hop, so the amendment was not dealt with.

We covered the point of the amendment in Committee. We were rather concerned that there would be one solitary independent member of the Home-Grown Cereals Authority who would also be the chairman. We thought that there was a need for proper representation of the independent public interest on the authority and for a guarantee for some back-up for the independent chairman, particularly when there might be conflict between the evenly balanced interests of the growers and the processors on the HGCA.

We welcome this minor amendment, and the guarantee that there will be at least one further independent representative on the HGCA.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

Clause 7

CONSTITUTION AND LEVY SCHEMES OF MEAT AND LIVESTOCK COMMISSION

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 3, line 20, leave out "one" and insert "two".

Mr. Gummer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following Lords amendments: No. 5, in page 7, line 43, at end insert—

"*(d)* in subsection (6) (provision in levy schemes for persons on whom levy imposed to recover all or a specified part of sums paid by them from others) the words 'all or a specified part of' shall be omitted; and

(e) after that subsection there shall be inserted—

"(6A) Where a levy scheme makes such provision as is mentioned in subsection (6) above it shall —

(a) authorise the Commission from time to time to determine the proportion of the sums paid under the levy scheme which shall be recoverable;

(b) specify whether the Commission may determine that the whole of those sums shall be recoverable and, if not, the maximum proportion of them which they may determine shall be recoverable; and

(c) specify whether the Commission may determine that none of those sums shall be recoverable and, if not, the minimum proportion of them which they may determine shall be recoverable.'."

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

No. 51, schedule 3, in page 27, line 55, column 3, leave out "(4)" and insert "in subsection (4)"

No. 52, in page 27, line 57, column 3, at end insert "and in subsection (6) the words "all or a specified part of"

Mr. Gummer: These amendments are intended to introduce limited additional flexibility into the Meat and Livestock Commission's levy arrangements. As originally drafted, clause 7 gave the MLC the ability to include in a levy scheme special arrangements for particular parts of the levy. This will enable the MLC to make special funding arrangements for certain activities, such as meat promotion or research and development. In particular, it will enable the commission to stipulate that the two groups of levy payers—slaughterers and livestock producers—should each pay a different proportion of these parts of the levy in line with the industry's own wishes.

These amendments go a small step further by providing for the proportions payable by each sector to be fixed administratively within the limits laid down in the levy scheme. This will mean that where only minor adjustments are proposed the MLC will be able to act on its own initiative without having to go through the lengthy process of submitting a new or amending levy scheme. This seems to us to introduce worthwhile additional flexibility into the arrangements, but I must stress that the MLC's freedom of manoeuvre will be restricted by whatever limits are written into the basic levy scheme, which will be subject to the closest scrutiny by the industry, by Ministers and by Parliament. I am sure the House will agree that this is an important safeguard. Therefore, we have tried to introduce enough flexibility to make it a useful way of giving the MLC a chance to make small alterations while not in any way giving it a power which could be abused.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

New Clause

CONSOLIDATION OF AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SCHEMES

Lords amendment: No. 6, after clause 10, insert the following new clause—

" . After paragraph 5 of Schedule 1 to the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958 (amendment and revocation of agricultural marketing schemes) there shall be inserted—

"5A. — (1) Where the Minister considers it appropriate to do so he may—

(a) prepare a consolidation of any scheme as it has effect with amendments ("the amended scheme"); and

(b) by order revoke the amended scheme and approve the consolidated scheme.

(2) An order made by virtue of this paragraph—

(a) shall state that it is made only for the purposes of consolidation; and

(b) may contain such transitional and consequential provision as the Minister considers necessary or expedient.".".

Mr. Gummer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 50, Schedule 2, in page 26, line 5, at end insert—

"In section 2(15) of the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958 for the words "or revoked" there shall be substituted the words "revoked or consolidated"."

Mr. Gummer: This amendment is put in at the request of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. It enables consolidation to take place. In many senses, therefore, it is a technical amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

VALIDATION OF APPLE AND PEAR DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL ORDERS.

Lords amendment: No. 7, insert the following new clause—

The Apple and Pear Development Council Order and the Apple and Pear Development Council (Amendment) Order 1980 shall be deemed to have been validly made notwithstanding that they were made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food acting alone rather than by that Minister and the Secretary of State acting jointly.".

Mr. Gummer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 26, clause 16, in page 14, line 32, leave out "section 13(12)" and insert "sections *(Validation of Apple and Pear Development Council Orders)* and 13(12)".

Mr. Gummer: At the time when the Government introduced this amendment my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food wrote to the hon. Members for Pontypridd (Mr. John), for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) and for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) in order to explain our reasons for introducing the amendment at a rather late stage. My noble Friend the Minister of State also gave a full explanation when moving the amendment in another place. Therefore, I propose to give only a brief summary on this occasion, unless hon. Members wish me to go into it in greater detail.

The purpose of the new clause is to remedy a technical fault in the making of two orders in 1980. Since the main purpose of the clause is to minimise possible difficulties for the affluent Apple and Pear Development Council, a worthy body that has the support of the British top fruit industry and, I believe, both sides of the House, I ask the House to agree to the Lords amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 8, in page 9, line 40, leave out subsection (2).

Mr. Gummer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 10, after clause 11, insert the following new clause—

'Rent arbitrations: milk quotas

.—(1) Where there is a reference under section 12 of the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 (arbitration of rent) in respect of land which comprises or is part of a holding in relation to which quota is registered under the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1986 which was transferred to the tenant by virtue of a transaction the cost of which was borne wholly or partly by him, the arbitrator shall (subject to any agreement between the land-lord and tenant to the contrary) disregard—

(a) in a case where the land comprises the holding, any increase in the rental value of the land which is due to that quota (or, as the case may be, the corresponding part of that quota); or

(b) in a case where the land is part of the holding, any increase in that value which is due to so much of that quota (or part) as would fall to be apportioned to the land under those Regulations on a change of occupation of the land.

(2) In determning for the purposes of this section whether quota was transferred to a tenant by virtue of a transaction the cost of which was borne wholly or partly by him—

(a) any payment made by the tenant in consideration for the grant or assignment to him of the tenancy or any previous tenancy of any land comprised in the holding, shall be disregarded;

(b) any person who would be treated under paragraph 2, 3 or 4 of Schedule 1 to this Act as having had quota transferred to him or having paid the whole or part of the cost of any transaction for the purposes of a claim under that Schedule shall be so treated for the purposes of this section ; and

(c) any person who would be so treated under paragraph 4 of that Schedule if a subtenancy to which his tenancy is subject had terminated, shall be so treated for the purposes of this section.

(3) In this section—

"quota" and "holding" have the same meanings as in the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1986;

"tenant" and "tenancy" have the same meanings as in the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986.

(4) Section 95 of that Act (Crown land) applies to this section as it applies to the provisions of that Act".

Mr. Gummer: Hon. Members may recall from our previous consideration of the Bill the provision which would enable tenants to claim compensaton at the end of their tenancies in respect of the milk quota attaching to that land. The existing provisions in clause 11(2) were intended to ensure that the prospect of compensation for the tenant in respect of milk quota should not affect the rent of the holding. It was suggested in another place that although the provision contained in clause 11(2) was fine so far as the quota allocated by the Minister was concerned, it would not be fair to apply it to the quota that the tenant effectively acquired through a land transaction and transferred to the holding covered by the tenancy. This is transferred quota in the Bill's terminology.

We recognised that this was a point for which we should make provision. If a tenant has paid for quota it is reasonable that it should be treated similarly to a tenant's improvement and disregarded in assessing the rent. Amendment No. 10 does this.

Subsection (1) of the new clause, which is amendment No. 10, makes it clear that transferred quota acquired by the tenant is to be disregarded at a rent review. A tenant will not be charged rent on it because it will be treated in a similar way to a tenant's improvement. The original intention of clause 11(2) is preserved in the new clause by saying that transferred quota is to be disregarded. Subsection (1) makes it clear that quota allocated by the Minister is not to be disregarded. Thus, the fact that a tenant may be eligible for compensation in respect of allocated quota when eventually he gives up the holding will not affect the rent payable in the meantime.

Subsection (2)*(a)* of the new clause makes it clear that if an incoming tenant has made a payment to the landlord on taking over a holding to which quota is attached, this does not count as the acquisition of transferred quota. That is because it would not be appropriate for this legislation to intervene in private agreements involving a quite different type of transaction into which the two parties freely enter.

Subsection (2)*(b)* and *(c)* of the new clause also make it clear that the statutory successor or assignee of the original tenant who was there when the quotas were bought in and the head tenant of an original sub-tenant are to be treated in the same way as the original tenant. If the original tenant paid for the quota in connection with a land transfer, then his entitlement not to be assessed for rent on the transferred quota will pass to his successor. Hon. Members may recall this concept is similar to that already contained in the compensation provisions where the entitlement to compensation passes from the original tenant to the successor. This is to clear up what might otherwise have been an anomaly.

Mr. John: Although the major milk quota debate is to take place later, perhaps I could raise one point at this stage about greater flexibility, because I know that flexibility is the main aim of all hon. Members when dealing with milk quotas. As the Minister will know, because I have raised it with him, I am extremely worried about the sort of case where the tenant has made an exceptional contribution, such as the provision of fixed equipment or buildings, towards the building up of the milk business.

Although one cannot formally amend the Bill, special consideration should be extended to people in this special category. That could be done by the Minister making it clear that they merit special consideration. Perhaps he could also tell the arbitrators or the arbiters in Scotland of that fact so that when arbitrations come before them they will be guided by what the House feels to be the case: that where a tenant contributes substantially towards the building up of a milk business that should merit special consideration.

Mr. Maclennan: Although I accept that the proposal to require the transferred quota to be disregarded by the arbiter is sensible and a distinct improvement, the clause draws attention to the anomalies that are created by the concept of quotas allocated or transferred and excess and standard quotas. Although the clause is a modest improvement towards safeguarding the tenant's rights, I agree with the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) and I hope that we can return to the matter and discuss it at greater length in the debate on quotas.

Mr. Gummer *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker Does the Minister have leave to address the House again? I take it he does.

Mr. Gummer: I agree with the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) that it is most important that people understand exactly how they stand about quotas. I say to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) that any system that seeks to approach what is a matter of real disagreement—not just between tenant and landlord but between incoming and outgoing tenants—is bound to encounter difficulties. There is no way of getting over the difficulty that, for the landlord, the quota results in an increase in value but not necessarily, indeed rarely, does it result in any money in his hand. The money in his hand, if it is to be passed out to an outgoing tenant, must be gained from someone else, and the other person who can give it to the landlord will be the incoming tenant. Therefore, there is a real interest division between the incomer and the outgoer.

2 am

In those circumstances, we cannot avoid having a situation and a system which needs careful explanation

[Mr. Gummer]

and consideration, and that is what the area has been given. I know that the hon. Member for Pontypridd is concerned that there should be no misunderstanding. Therefore, I accept that there are cases where the tenant has taken over a non-dairy holding—for example, what really turns out to be a greenfield site—and through his own hard work and by investing his own money turns it into a flourishing milk enterprise. That puts him in a different circumstance from many others. In those circumstances the landlord has contributed virtually nothing except the land itself. I think that all hon. Members will agree that in such a case the arbitrator should take full account of what the tenant has done, so that the tenant will be credited with much the greater part of the quota.

I happen to be confident that the Bill, as amended in another place, will achieve that effect. Two distinct mechanisms operate to that end. First, there is the calculation of the standard quota. That calculation is now formulated in such a way as to make it clear that the tenant is to get full credit for management practices, such as milking three times a day or feeding high levels of concentrates — practices which will have boosted production in the base year above what one would normally expect. Quota earned by those practices will be excess quota—quota in excess of the standard quota for the holding—and the tenant will get 100 per cent. of the value of that quota.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): My hon. Friend will know that in another place my noble Friend Lord Stanley, a constituent of mine, moved an amendment which he later withdrew which was very much related to the disparity between the 500 litre difference between less favoured areas—marginal land—in Scotland, and that in England and Wales. The reply of my noble Friend Lord Belstead was to the effect that that would be a difference of no more than one fifth of 1 per cent. Can my hon. Friend confirm that that is the case? If the difference is so minimal why is it necessary to continue to have this difference of 500 litres?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend would not expect me to do other than to support that which my noble Friend said in the other place. To the best of our knowledge, the figures that he gave are correct.

There are differences between England and Wales and Scotland. We have sought to try to recognise those and my hon. Friend will be presenting to the House some of the changes which we have in mind which have gone through the other place in that respect. I hope that my hon. Friend will listen carefully to them. I am sure that he will see that, because the circumstances of land tenure are different, because the distribution of land on which dairy herds are found is different, because the proportion of LFAs which have dairy herds on them is different, the circumstances may be said to be completely different.

As is the custom in these matters, the proposals to deal with the problems are different to meet different circumstances. It does not help to suggest that we should not treat Scotland in the way in which we have done in the past, because the law in Scotland is different from that in the rest of the United Kingdom and it is also true that the circumstances of dairying are different.

That is not the only way in which we are trying to meet the demands which the hon. Gentleman put. There is a calculation of a tenant's fraction which is the tenant's share of the standard quota—in other words, that which is not affected by the excess quota calculation about which we have talked. That is simply the tenant's share of the total annual value of the holding, including the land, buildings and fixed equipment.

In a case where a tenant has taken over a greenfield site, the tenant's share will be high because of the basis of that calculation. All the buildings and fixed equipment will be his, so the full annual value of those will go into the calculation on the tenant's side. On the landlord's side there will be just the land. The annual value of the land is shown by the rent, which one would expect to be relatively low in the type of case that I am discussing. So the tenant's fraction of the standard quota will be substantial. When one adds it on to the excess quota, the tenant will be getting, under the Bill as it now stands, a very high proportion in total of the full value of the quota.

But I have been disappointed by a tendency in certain quarters to minimise the value of the quota compensation provisions. I have even heard it suggested that there is a de facto maximum cut-off for the tenant's fraction, and that valuers will never award more than a certain percentage. I heard that again about two days ago when I was speaking in Lancashire. But that is not so. There is nothing implicit or explicit that would warrant such an interpretation. I have taken the point, and I am determined that that interpretation should not be made.

It is important to be clear. To put people's minds at rest, I intend to write to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and to the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers, putting it on the record that there is no cut-off, and that valuers are free to award as high a tenant's fraction as they consider appropriate. I hope that I have reassured the House that the Bill leaves arbitrators free to give full credit to the tenant, who has effectively done everything with the exception of providing the land.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I am extremely glad to hear that. Recently I had a meeting with my branch of the NFU at which those concerns were raised. People encountered considerable difficulties when the original milk quota round was going on, over the manner in which the tribunals adjudicated. Some people felt that it was unfair. Will the Minister influence as much as possible the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and others to ensure that those who are appointed are properly and fully qualified to deal with the questions, have the relevant skills——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mr. Cash: —and are in a position to judge the outcome fairly on behalf of both parties.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right, that we naturally want to eliminate any sense of unfairness. However, he would probably agree with me that in so contentious a matter, where there is considerable concern among landlords and their incoming or outgoing tenants some will always feel hard done by. The same is true of the original allocation of quotas. It is most important that every effort should be made to ensure that there is no reason for that, although it may still occur. I hope that the House will accept that by agreeing to do this, I shall meet the particular concern that has been raised.

Sir Paul Hawkins (Norfolk, South-West): I am a member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and was an arbitrator for many years. The arbitration procedure is fair. People who are fully qualified are chosen to do the work. The unfortunate thing about the whole quota system is that the incomer—probably a younger man who has to go into the holding—is often forgotten. The more the outgoer has to receive, the more the ingoer faces. The incomer is often far worse off, because he has a very heavy burden in the amount of ingoing that he has to pay for everything else. I hope that that is borne in mind.

Mr. Maclennan *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thought that the hon. Gentleman had already addressed the House once.

Mr. Maclennan: I have not addressed the House on this amendment.

The House will have listened carefully to the Minister's words, which were clearly designed to reassure the industry——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I recollect that the hon. Gentleman has already spoken once to this group of amendments. He can only address the House once on this group of amendments.

Mr. Maclennan: With respect, I have not addressed the House. The Minister has tried to put the industry's anxieties to rest. For the avoidance of doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a number of issues which the Minister raised which are certainly germane to a later——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman can address the House only once on an individual amendment or a group of amendments when we are discussing Lords amendments. It was within my clear recollection that he had addressed the House once on this group. If he insists that my memory is in doubt, I shall have to accept that.

Mr. Maclennan: I am sure that your memory is extremely good, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and at this time of night it is possible that mine is faulty.

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

COMPENSATION TO OUTGOING TENANTS FOR MILK QUOTA

Lords amendment: No. 9, after clause 11 insert the following new clause—

" . Schedule *(Scotland: Tenant's compensation for milk quota)* to this Act shall have effect in connection with the payment to outgoing tenants who are—

(a) tenants of agricultural holdings within the meaning of the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Act 1949;

(b) landholders within the meaning of section 2 of the Small Landholders (Scotland) Act 1911;

(c) statutory small tenants within the meaning of section 32(1) of that Act;

(d) crofters within the meaning of section 3(2) of the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1955,

of compensation in respect of milk quotas.".

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 49, new schedule, before schedule 2, insert the following new schedule—

TENANTS' COMPENSATION FOR MILK QUOTA: SCOTLAND

Interpretation

1.—(1) In this Schedule, except where the context otherwise requires or provision is made to the contrary—

"allocated quota" has the meaning given in paragraph 2(1) below;

"holding" has the same meaning as in the 1986 Regulations;

"landlord" means—

(a) in the case of an agricultural holding to which the 1949 Act applies, the landlord within the meaning of section 93(1) of that Act;

(b) in the case of a croft within the meaning of the 1955 Act, the landlord within the meaning of section 37(1) of that Act;

(c) in the case of a holding within the meaning of the 1911 Act to which the 1949 Act does not apply, the same as it means in the 1911 Act;

"milk quota" means—

(a) in the case of a tenant registered in the direct sales register maintained under the 1986 Regulations, a direct sales quota within the meaning of those Regulations; and

(b) in the case of a tenant registered in the wholesale register maintained under those Regulations, a wholesale quota within the meaning of those Regulations;

"registered", in relation to milk quota, means—

(a) in the case of direct sales quota, within the meaning of the 1986 Regulations, registered in the direct sales register maintained under those Regulations; and

(b) in the case of a wholesale quota within the meaning of those Regulations, registered in a wholesale register maintained under those Regulations;

"relevant quota" has the meaning given in paragraph 2(2) below;

"standard quota" means standard quota as calculated under paragraph 6 below;

"tenancy" means, as the case may be—

(a) the agricultural holding, within the meaning of section 1 of the 1949 Act;

(b) the croft within the meaning of section 3(1) of the 1955 Act;

(c) the holding within the meaning of section 2 of the 1911 Act;

(d) the holding of a statutory small tenant under section 32 of the 1911 Act;

(e) any part of a tenancy which is treated as a separate entity for purposes of succession, assignation or sub-letting;

"tenant" means—

(a) in the case of an agricultural holding to which the 1949 Act applies, the tenant within the meaning of section 93(1) of that Act;

(b) in the case of a croft within the meaning of the 1955 Act, the crofter within the meaning of section 3(2) of that Act;

(c) in the case of a holding within the meaning of the 1911 Act to which the 1949 Act does not apply, the landholder within the meaning of section 2(2) of the 1911 Act;

"tenant's fraction" has the meaning given in paragraph 7 below;

"termination" means the resumption of possession of the whole or part of the tenancy by the landlord by virtue of any enactment, rule of law or term of the lease which makes provison for removal of or renunciation by a tenant, or resumption of possession by a landlord, and in particular includes resumption of possession following—

(a) vacancy arising under section 11(5) of the 1955 Act;

(b) termination of a lease in pursuance of section 16(3) of the Succession (Scotland) Act 1964;

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

"transferred quota" has the meaning given in paragraph 2(2) below;
"the 1886 Act" means the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act 1886;
"the 1911 Act" means the Small Landholders (Scotland) Act 1911;
"the 1949 Act" means the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Act 1949;
"the 1955 Act" means the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1955;
"the 1986 Regulations" means the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1986.

(2) For the purposes of this Schedule, the designations of landlord and tenant shall continue to apply to the parties to any proceedings taken under or in pursuance of it until the conclusion of those proceedings.

Tenant's right to compensation

2. — (1) Subject to this Schedule, where, on the termination of the lease, the tenant has milk quota registered as his in relation to a holding consisting of or including the tenancy, he shall be entitled, on quitting the tenancy, to obtain from his landlord a payment—

(a) if the tenant had milk quota allocated to him in relation to a holding consisting of or including the tenancy ("allocated quota"), in respect of so much of the relevant quota as consists of allocated quota; and

(b) if the tenant had quota allocated to him as aforesaid or was in occupation of the tenancy as a tenant on 2nd April 1984 (whether or not under the lease which is terminating), in respect of so much of the relevant quota as consists of transferred quota by virtue of a transaction the cost of which was borne wholly or partly by him.

(2) In sub-paragraph (1) above—

"the relevant quota" means—

(a) where the holding consists only of the tenancy, the milk quota registered in relation to the holding; and

(b) otherwise, such part of that milk quota as falls to be apportioned to the tenancy on the termination of the lease;

"transferred quota" means milk quota transferred to the tenant by virtue of the transfer to him of the whole or part of the holding.

(3) A tenant shall not be entitled to more than one payment under this paragraph in respect of the same tenancy.

(4) Nothing in this paragraph shall prejudice the right of a tenant to claim compensation to which he may be entitled under an agreement in writing, in lieu of any payment provided by this paragraph.

Succession to lease of tenancy

3. — (1) This paragraph applies where a person (the successor has acquired right to the lease of the tenancy after 2nd April 1984—

(a) under section 16 of the Succession (Scotland) Act 1964;

(b) as a legatee, under section 20 of the 1949 Act or under section 16 of the 1886 Act;

(c) under a bequest of a croft under section 10 of the 1955 Act, or following nomination under section 11 of that Act;

(d) under a lawful assignation of the lease,

and the person whom he succeeded or, as the case may be, who assigned the lease to him is described in this paragraph as his "predecessor".

(2) Where this paragraph applies—

(a) any milk quota allocated or transferred to the predecessor (or treated as having been allocated or transferred to him) in respect of the tenancy shall be treated as if it had been allocated or transferred to his successor;

(b) where, under *(a)* above, milk quota is treated as having been transferred to the successor, he shall be treated as if he had paid so much of the cost of the transaction by virtue of which the milk quota was transferred as his predecessor bore (or is treated as having borne).

Sub-tenants

4. In the case of a tenancy which is sub-let, if the sub-tenant quits the tenancy—

(a) paragraph 2 above shall apply so as to entitle the sub-tenant to obtain payment from the head tenant, and for that purpose, references to the landlord and the tenant in this Schedule shall be respectively construed as references to the head tenant and the sub-tenant; and

(b) for the purposes of the application of paragraph 2 above as between the original landlord and the head tenant—

(i) the head tenant shall be deemed to have had the relevant quota allocated to him, and to have been in occupation of the tenancy as a tenant on 2nd April 1984; and

(ii) if the head tenant does not take up occupation of the tenancy when the sub-tenant quits, the head tenant shall be treated as if he had quitted the tenancy when the sub-tenant quitted it.

Calculation of payment

5.—(1) The amount of the payment to which a tenant is entitled under paragraph 2 above on the termination of the lease shall be determined in accordance with this paragraph.

(2) The amount of the payment in respect of allocated quota shall be equal to the value of—

(a) where the allocated quota exceeds the standard quota for the tenancy—

(i) the tenant's fraction of so much of the allocated quota as does not exceed the standard quota; together with

(ii) the amount of the excess;

(b) where the allocated quota is equal to the standard quota, the tenant's fraction of the allocated quota;

(c) where the allocated quota is less than the standard quota, such proportion of the tenant's fraction of the allocated quota as the allocated quota bears to the standard quota.

(3) The amount of the payment in respect of transferred quota shall be equal to the value of—

(a) where the tenant bore the whole of the cost of the transaction by virtue of which the transferred quota was transferred to him, the transferred quota; and

(b) where the tenant bore only part of that cost, the corresponding part of the transferred quota.

Standard quota

6.—(1) Subject to this paragraph, the "standard quota" for any tenancy for the purposes of this Schedule shall be calculated by multiplying the relevant number of hectares by the standard yield per hectare.

(2) Where by virtue of the quality of the land in question or of climatic conditions in the area the amount of milk which could reasonably be expected to have been produced from one hectare of the tenancy during the relevant period ("the reasonable amount") is greater or less than the average yield per hectare then sub-paragraph (1) above shall not apply and the standard quota shall be calculated by multiplying the relevant number of hectares by such proportion of the standard yield per hectare as the reasonable amount bears to the average yield per hectare; and the Secretary of State shall by order prescribe the amount of milk to be taken as the average yield per hectare for the purposes of this sub-paragraph.

(3) Where the relevant quota includes milk quota allocated in pursuance of an award of quota made by the Dairy Produce Quota Tribunal for Scotland which has not been allocated in full, the standard quota shall be reduced by the amount by which the milk quota allocated in pursuance of the award falls short of the amount awarded (or, in the case where only part of the milk quota allocated in pursuance of the award is included in the relevant quota, by the corresponding proportion of that shortfall).

(4) In sub-paragraph (3) above the references to milk quota allocated in pursuance of an award of quota include references to quota allocated by virtue of the amount awarded not originally having been allocated in full.

(5) for the purposes of this paragraph—

(a) "the relevant number of hectares" means the average number of hectares of the tenancy used

during the relevant period for the feeding of dairy cows kept on the tenancy, or if different, the average number of hectares of the tenancy which could reasonably be expected to have been so used (having regard to the number of grazing animals other than dairy cows kept on the tenancy during that period); and

(b) "the standard yield per hectare" means such number of litres as the Secretary of State may from time to time by order prescribe for the purposes of this sub-paragraph.

(6) In this and in paragraph 7 below—

(a) references to the area of a tenancy used for the feeding of dairy cows kept on the tenancy do not include references to land used for growing cereal crops for feeding to dairy cows in the form of loose grain; and

(b) "dairy cows" means milking cows and calved heifers.

(7) An order under this paragraph may make different provision for different cases.

(8) The powers to make an order under this paragraph shall be exercisable by statutory instrument and any statutory instrument containing such an order shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

Tenant's fraction

7.—(1) For the purposes of this Schedule "the tenant's fraction" means the fraction of which—

(a) the numerator is the annual rental value at the end of the relevant period of the tenant's dairy improvements and fixed equipment; and

(b) the denominator is the sum of that value and such part of the rent payable by the tenant in respect of the relevant period as is attributable to the land used in that period for the feeding, accommodation or milking of dairy cows kept on the tenancy.

(2) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1)*(a)* above, in the case of an agricultural holding within the meaning of the 1949 Act, the annual rental value of the tenant's dairy improvements and fixed equipment shall be taken to be the amount which would be disregarded, on a reference to arbitration made in respect of the tenancy under section 7 of the 1949 Act (variation of rent), as being—

(a) an increase in annual rental value due to dairy improvements at the tenant's expense (in terms of subsection (2)*(a)* of that section); or

(b) the value of tenant's fixed equipment and therefore not relevant to the fixing of rent under that section,

so far as that amount is attributable to tenant's dairy improvements and fixed equipment which are relevant to the feeding, accommodation or milking of dairy cows kept on the tenancy.

(3) Where—

(a) the relevant period is less than or greater than 12 months; or

(b) rent was payable by the tenant in respect of only part of the relevant period,

the average rent payable in respect of one month in the relevant period or, as the case may be, in that part shall be determined and the rent referred to in sub-paragraph (1)*(b)* above shall be taken to be the corresponding annual amount.

(4) For the purposes of this paragraph—

(a) "dairy improvement"—

(i) in the case of an agricultural holding or a statutory small tenancy, means a "new improvement" or an "old improvement" within the meaning of section 93 of the 1949 Act;

(ii) in the case of a croft, means a "permanent improvement" within the meaning of section 37 of the 1955 Act;

(iii) in the case of a holding under the 1911 Act to which the 1949 Act does not apply, means a "permanent improvement" within the meaning of section 34 of the 1886 Act.

so far as relevant to the feeding, accommodation or milking of dairy cows kept on the tenancy;

(b) "fixed equipment" means fixed equipment, within the meaning of section 93 of the 1949 Act, so far as relevant to the feeding, accommodation or milking of dairy cows kept on the tenancy.

(c) all dairy improvements and fixed equipment provided by the tenant shall be taken into account for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1)*(a)* above, except for such improvements and fixed equipment in respect of which he has, before the end of the relevant period, received full compensation directly related to their value.

(5) For the purposes of this paragraph—

(a) any allowance made or benefit given by the landlord after the end of the relevant period in consideration of the execution of dairy improvements or fixed equipment wholly or partly at the expense of the tenant shall be disregarded;

(b) any compensation received by the tenant after the end of the relevant period in respect of any dairy improvement or fixed equipment shall be disregarded; and

(c) where paragraph 3 above applies, dairy improvements or fixed equipment which would be regarded as tenant's dairy improvements or fixed equipment on the termination of a former tenant's lease (if he were entitled to a payment under this Schedule in respect of the land) shall be regarded as the new tenant's dairy improvements or fixed equipment.

Relevant period

8. In this Schedule "the relevant period" means—

(a) the period in relation to which the allocated quota was determined; or

(b) where it was determined in relation to more than one period, the period in relation to which the majority was determined or, if equal amounts were determined in relation to different periods, the later of those periods.

Valuation of milk quota

9. The value of milk quota to be taken into account for the purposes of paragraph 5 above is the value of the milk quota at the time of the termination of the lease and in determining that value there shall be taken into account such evidence as is available, including evidence as to the sums being paid for interests in land—

(a) in cases where milk quota is registered in relation to land; and

(b) in cases where no milk quota is so registered.

Determination of standard quota and tenant's fraction before end of lease

10.—(1) Where it appears that on the termination of a lease, the tenant may be entitled to a payment under paragraph 2 above, the landlord or tenant may at any time before the termination of the lease by notice in writing served on the other demand that the determination of the standard quota for the land or the tenant's fraction shall be referred —

(a) in the case of an agricultural holding within the meaning of the 1949 Act to arbitration under that Act or, under section 78 of that Act, to the Scottish Land Court;

(b) in any other case, to the Scottish Land Court, for determination by that court,

and where *(a)* above applies, section 75 (or, where the circumstances require, sections 77 and 87) of the 1949 Act shall apply, as if the matters mentioned in sub-paragraph (1) above were required by that Act to be determined by arbitration.

(2) On a reference under this paragraph the arbiter or, as the case my be, the Scottish Land Court shall determine the standard quota for the land or, as the case may be, the tenant's fraction (as nearly as is practicable at the end of the relevant period).

Settlement of tenant's claim on termination of lease

11.—(1) Subject to this paragraph, any claim arising under paragraph 2 above shall be determined—

(a) in the case of an agricultural holding within the meaning of the 1949 Act by arbitration under that Act or, under section 78, of that Act, by the Scottish Land Court;

(b) in any other case, by the Scottish Land Court,

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

and no such claim shall be enforceable unless before the expiry of the period of 2 months from the termination of the lease the tenant has served notice in writing on the landlord of his intention to make the claim, specifying the nature of the claim.

(2) The landlord and tenant may within the period of 8 months from the termination of the lease by agreement in writing settle the claim, but where the claim has not been settled during that period it shall be determined as provided in sub-paragraph (1) above.

(3) Where a tenant lawfully remains in occupation of part of the tenancy after the termination of the lease, the references in sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) above to the termination of the lease shall be construed as references to the termination of the occupation.

(4) In the case of an arbitration under this paragraph, section 75 (or, where the circumstances require, sections 77 and 87) of the 1949 Act (arbitrations) shall apply as if the requirements of this paragraph were requirements of that Act, but paragraph 13 of the Sixth Schedule to that Act (arbitration awards to fix day for payment not later than one month after award) shall have effect for the purposes of this paragraph with the substitution for the words "one month" of the words "three months".

(5) In the case of an arbitration under this paragraph, section 61 of the 1949 Act (determination of claims for compensation where landlord's interest is divided) shall apply, where the circumstances require, as if compensation payable under paragraph 2 above were compensation payable under that Act.

(6) Where—

(a) before the termination of the lease of any land the landlord and tenant have agreed in writing the amount of the standard quota for the land or the tenant's fraction or the value of milk quota which is to be used for the purpose of calculating the payment to which the tenant will be entitled under this Schedule on the termination of the lease; or

(b) the standard quota or the tenant's fraction has been determined by arbitration in pursuance of paragraph 10 above,

the arbiter or, as the case may be, the Scottish Land Court in determining the claim under this paragraph shall, subject to sub-paragraph (7) below, award payment in accordance with that agreement or determination.

(7) Where it appears to the arbiter or, as the case may be, the Scottish Land Court that any circumstances relevant to the agreement or determination mentioned in sub-paragraph (6) above were materially different at the time of the termination of the lease from those at the time the agreement or determination was made, he shall disregard so much of the agreement or determination as appears to him to be affected by the change in circumstances.

Enforcement

12. Section 69 of the 1949 Act (enforcement) and section 70 of that Act (power of tenant to obtain charge on holding) shall apply to any sum which becomes due to a tenant by virtue of this Schedule as they apply to the sums mentioned in those sections.

Powers of limited owners

13. Whatever his interest in the tenancy, the landlord may, for the purposes of this Schedule, do or have done to him anything which might be so done if he were absolute owner of the tenancy.

Notices

14.—(1) Any notice or other document required or authorised by this Schedule to be served on any person shall be duly served if it is delivered to him, or left at his proper address, or sent to him by post in a recorded delivery letter or a registered letter.

(2) In the case of an incorporated company or body, any such document shall be duly served if served on the secretary or clerk of the company or body.

(3) Any such document to be served by or on a landlord or tenant shall be duly served if served by or on any agent of the landlord or tenant.

(4) For the purposes of this paragraph and of section 7 of the Interpretation Act 1978, the proper address of a person is—

(a) in the case of a secretary or clerk to a company or body, that of the registered or principal office of the company or body;

(b) in any other case, the person's last known address.

(5) Unless and until the tenant receives notice of a change of landlord, any document served by him on the person previously known to him as landlord shall be deemed to be duly served on the landlord under the tenancy.

Crown land

15.—(1) This Schedule shall apply to land belonging to Her Majesty in right of the Crown, subject to such modifications as may be prescribed; and for the purposes of this Schedule the Crown Estates Commissioners or other proper officer or body having charge of the land for the time being or, if there is no such officer or body, such person as Her Majesty may appoint in writing under the Royal Sign Manual, shall represent Her Majesty and shall be deemed to be the landlord.

(2) Without prejudice to sub-paragraph (1) above, subject to such modifications as may be prescribed, section *(Scotland: Compensation to outgoing tenants for milk quota)* of this Act and this Schedule shall apply to land where the interest of the landlord or of the tenant belongs to a government department or is held on behalf of Her Majesty for the purposes of a government department"

Mr. MacKay: These amendments introduce a new clause and associated schedule to the Bill to provide in Scotland for compensation by landlords to tenants in respect of milk quotas on the termination of the tenant's lease. The clause and schedule are broadly comparable to the provisions for England and Wales at clause 11 and schedule 1, which were introduced as amendments to the Bill by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and agreed to by the House on Report on 17 April. I hope that the House will bear with me if I explain the position surrounding the Scottish amendments.

As was the case for England and Wales, the Scottish provisions represent the outcome of a great deal of discussion between the Government and the agriculture industry, in particular the bodies representing the interests of landlords and tenants. These discussions were difficult and protracted and conducted against a backdrop of highly charged public debate. We worked hard in Scotland to establish an acceptable agreement with the National Farmers Union and the Scottish Landowners Federation, and it is a matter of great disappointment to me that it was not possible to achieve a consensus view with these bodies as to how the matter should be resolved.

In these circumstances, and given the Government's commitment to provide waygoing dairy tenants with a measure of compensation in milk quota, we had to devise a statutory framework which balanced the interests concerned and which would allow the individual circumstances of each case to be taken into account. From our consultations it was clear that fairly detailed statutory guidelines were necessary to provide sufficient flexibility to take account of these individual circumstances and to ensure uniformity of approach at arbitration.

As the basic legislation governing milk quotas comprises European Community regulations, we had to be careful to avoid any undue discrimination between farmers in similar circumstances north and south of the border: a point mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) on Report when we

debated the provisions for England and Wales. This has led us to adopt the same general framework for Scotland as is contained in clause 11 and schedule 1.

Despite the similarities in approach, separate provision in the Bill for Scotland is required to cater for the different and more complex body of Scottish land tenure legislation and this accounts for the main differences from the provisions for England and Wales. I must apologise to the House for the fact that the complexity of Scottish land tenure legislation and the need to give due consideration to the specific circumstances of Scottish tenant dairy farmers prevented these Scottish provisions being tabled in the House concurrently with those for England and Wales.

As I said a few moments ago, the Scottish provisions are broadly comparable to those accepted for England and Wales, and as the House has already agreed to the Government's overall approach I shall spare hon. Members a detailed exposition of the Scottish provisions, but it might be helpful if I were to summarise the main elements before highlighting the differences with the provisions for England and Wales.

The majority of qualifying tenants will be those to whom the original milk quota allocations were made—producers who were occupying their holdings on 2 April 1984. These producers will normally have had primary quota allocated to them based on their production in the base year, which is "the relevant period". In most cases it is 1983. In the case of successions and assignments, compensation is not payable at the end of the original tenancy but the right is passed to the successor or assignee.

Despite the apparent complexity of the provisions the principle of the system for calculating compensation is a simply one. The actual circumstances on the tenancy at the relevant period are assessed and compared with a standard based on figures to be prescribed by the Secretary of State. If the quota allocated to the farm exceeds the "standard quota" the tenant receives the full value of the excess plus a share of the standard quota, the "tenant's fraction", based on the relative contributions made by the tenant and the landlord to the quota level achieved. Under the formula, even if the quota earned by the tenant is not greater than the standard, he will still qualify for some compensation via the tenant's fraction calculation.

2.15 am

As to the differences north and south of the border, the first and most significant is the need in Scotland to cater for four different land tenure systems and categories of tenant farmer—tenants of agricultural holdings, crofters, small landholders and statutory small tenants. Within those various systems there are differences in provision for arbitration, in certain circumstances involving the Scottish Land Court instead of, or as an alternative to, an agricultural arbiter, and in provision for succession.

The arbitration and succession provisions in the context of the amendment are also the main differences between the land tenure legislation north and south of the border. The succession provisions in particular are much more liberal in Scotland in their protection of the security of tenure enjoyed by the tenant farmer. The House may be interested to note that one result of that will be that we anticipate far fewer cases in Scotland than might be expected as a direct proportion of those likely to arise in England and Wales.

A further difference in paragraph 2(4) of the schedule is the inclusion of provision to override the schedule where a landlord and tenant agree in writing as to the amount of compensation to be paid. That reflects the situation which obtains for compensation available under existing legislation. In addition, we have made provision in paragraph 7(4)*(c)* of the schedule to ensure that certain private agreements between landlords and tenants in relation to waygoing compensation payable under existing legislation, which are a feature of the Scottish system, do not unfairly disadvantage the tenant in the calculation of the amount he is due in respect of quota compensation.

I refer now to the detailed operation of those arrangements in Scotland. Clearly, it is essential to ensure that recognition will be given to the particular circumstances of the Scottish dairy tenant where they differ from his counterpart south of the border. Those circumstances, such as a greater dependence on marginal land and bought-in feed, and the longer periods during which dairy cows must be kept indoors, are of greater significance in general terms in the case of dairy farmers in the original less favoured areas in Scotland and will be reflected in the standard yield per hectare figure, which will be prescribed by the Secretary of State by statutory instrument. The figure that we have in mind for the original LFAs in Scotland is 5,500 litres per hectare. That concession is particularly significant for Scottish dairy tenants since most are located in the original LFAs. The related average yield per hectare figure will be 6,200 litres. It is likely that the standard yield and average yield figures for the extended LFA and non-LFAs land in Scotland will be as for England and Wales. We also have it in mind to define different yield figures for different breeds—for example Ayrshire cows on average yield less than Friesians.

I associate myself with the remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food during the debate on the previous amendment, in response to the requests by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John).

All in all, I believe that the arrangements that we have devised for Scotland in the new clause and schedule provide a practical, balanced and fair solution to this difficult and emotive issue, which takes account not only of our complex body of existing legislation but of the practical circumstances, production patterns and farming practices of the Scottish dairy tenant.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister of State said that there had been previous consideration of compensation for waygoing dairy farm tenants in England and Wales, but that is not the case for Scotland. This is the first sight that the House of Commons has had of this fairly substantial piece of legislation. We have a new clause and a new schedule, which fill 12 pages of legislative small print, dealing with compensation to outgoing tenants of Scottish dairy farms for the value of their milk quota. Therefore, I am grateful to the Minister for going into more detail than might be normal at this time of night. Indeed, I suspect that most dairy farmers in Scotland are not thinking about getting up and milking their cows rather than finishing off the previous day's work.

Anyone who has been reading the Scottish farming press or talking to the National Farmers Union of Scotland recently will know that the matter is arousing pretty strong feelings. There is little support for the

[Mr. Home Robertson]

Government's proposals, although the concession that the Secretary of State appears to have obtained, affecting dairy farmers in the Scottish less-favoured areas, is welcome as far as it goes.

This debate, in these circumstances, at this hour, is a pretty sloppy way of legislating for an important group of people. The history of this affair goes back to the memorable day in the summer of 1984 when the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was forced to accept a milk quota scheme at about two weeks' notice. At that stage he did not give the matter very much consideration, as he did not have much time to do that. He failed to comprehend the fact that he had chosen to create a new form of capital asset.

We would have preferred to avoid that pitfall by providing for the re-allocation of quota on a fairer basis than is ever likely to be achieved by buying and selling quota in a free market. That opportunity has been missed and we will have to make the best of the scheme as it is at present. We do not like the fact that the quota is now a capital commodity, but now that it is a capital commodity we are determined that tenant farmers should receive the benefit of the value of that quota where that is appropriate.

The quota market began to evolve throughout the country back in 1984, and nothing was done to protect tenants' rights. The Bill was introduced in November 1985, but nothing was done for the tenants. Nothing was done for them during the Committee stage, but on Report a dog's breakfast in relation to England and Wales was produced and at the last gasp we have a modified dog's breakfast in relation to Scottish farm tenants.

The Lords completed consideration of the Bill last night, so the first official knowledge that we had of the new clause and the schedule came this morning. That presents us with certain difficulties. We do not like the package, and Scottish farmers are not very keen on it. On 11 June the Scottish National Farmers Union wrote to Members of the House of Lords urging them

"to reject the Government's recommendations and to call for their replacement by a simpler, more objective and commercial approach."

The difficulty that we face tonight is that that is all that there appears to be on offer. Any delay might prevent some tenants from receiving even this limited compensation for the three months of the summer recess.

The package is unbelievably complicated and there must obviously be simpler ways of achieving a fairer solution. We have standard quotas, tenant's fractions and relevant periods, all leading to evaluation and a settlement at the end of the lease provided that the tenant or his heir remembers to lodge his written notice within two months in order to beat a potentially very difficult time bar under paragraph 11. We have been advised by people who understand these matters that the formula is likely to mean that the most that any tenant can hope to obtain is about 70 per cent. of the value of his quota, unless we can get further guidance for arbiters and the Land Court on the lines suggested by the Minister of State.

We have been trying to encourage the Minister and the Government, by various means, to ensure that tenants can get the full value of their quota where such compensation is justified. I understood the Minister of State to say that he was giving the same undertaking as his right hon. Friend gave some moments ago. This is important. There are tenanted dairy farms in Scotland where the tenant has made more than the normal tenant's contribution towards the value of the dairy unit. In addition to his contribution towards the dairy herd, his husbandry, management and machinery, he may also have invested heavily in the buildings and fixed equipment in the dairy enterprise. He may indeed have been entirely responsible for establishing the dairy unit.

In these circumstances, there can be no justification for giving a landlord, who may have contributed nothing towards the value of the quota, a windfall of 30 per cent. of the value of that quota. Paragraph 6(2) refers to certain physical factors to be taken into account in calculating the standard quota—the land, the climate and the average yield.

The full proportion of the tenant's investment in the value of the quota should also be considered. If he has contributed 100 per cent., he should be eligible to receive 100 per cent. in compensation for his investment under such circumstances.

The Government have a bit of a nerve to ask the House to deal with a matter of this nature as a Lords amendment at 24 hours' notice. We will probably not be too keen on facilitating the passage of the Bill this week unless we are given an assurance that the Government will take the necessary steps to ensure that tenants can be compensated in full.

I ask the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland to confirm that it is his intention that to ensure that arbiters and the Scottish Land Court will take into account a tenant's investment and contributions, and that there need be no ceiling on the proportion of the value of quota that will be subject to compensation at a tenant's waygoing.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I agree with the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) that it is unfortunate that the consideration of the Scottish part of the Bill must start with this important passage at 2.30 am, but I agree with my right hon. and hon. Friends that the Bill must pass into law as soon as possible. Therefore, we must accept the position. The matter is highly contentious, and I appreciate that Ministers in England and in Scotlad have consulted in great depth the National Farmers Union and the Scottish Landowners Federation, but have not, sadly, brought both together in a common solution, much as we would have wished them to do so.

To put the matter in context, we must accept that only a remarkably small number of tenant dairy farmers give up their business each year — perhaps 10 a year in Scotland, only half of whom will be the special cases mentioned by the hon. Member for East Lothian. I am glad to note that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland managed to achieve less-favoured area weighting in Scotland, which will be of great benefit.

The issue started in April 1984, when there were no quotas and, therefore, no right to compensation for a tenant farmer giving up his lease. He would have had to depart under the normal outgoing settlement made by an arbiter. But quotas were created in April 1984, under the jurisdiction of the EEC, and at the same time we created a new asset and a windfall for tenant farmers, although I appreciate that they have gone through a difficult period in mastering the quota system.

We must put on record, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins), the

fact that whatever we do tonight will make it much more difficult for new entrants into dairy farming to obtain leases and to pay the large sum that will be necessary to gain occupation.

I agree with most farmers that it is difficult to understand why the legislation must be so complex. Why cannot we have a normal waygoing, with valuation by an arbiter, who is highly skilled and highly qualified? He would take into account everything that is covered by the lease, and the landlord and tenant would accept his decision. I realise that these are special cases, but they are not too far away from a parallel with the hill sheep farmer on waygoing, where the sheep stock is bound to the ground and must be taken over after arbitration. I do not understand why we do not have something similar for milk quotas.

If it is impossible to introduce such an amendment—at this stage it is impossible—I hope that my hon. Friend will be as flexible as possible when he drafts the statutory instruments. This is a highly complicated matter, which few farmers will be able to understand, and which has failed to satisfy the NFU and the Scottish Landowners Federation. The statutory instruments, which of course will be debated in due course, must be carefully drafted.

I was not too happy about the English amendment, but I am much more happy about the Scottish one, provided that we can introduce greater flexibility, especially in regard to paragraph 6(2) of the proposed schedule. We must consider the quality of the land. Part of the formula means multiplying hectares by the standard yield. The production from a hectare of less-favoured area land or of low-quality land will be much lower than from high-quality land.

We must also consider the possibility of the tenant putting in a great deal of equipment—perhaps all of it—but still being eligible for only 70 per cent. of the arbitration. In exceptional circumstances, the tenant should be able to obtain more than 70 per cent. I hope that the statutory instrument will allow that.

I agree with the hon. Member for East Lothian that the tenant's fraction is difficult. This will be new ground for the arbiter and the Scottish Land Court. There is no history of dealing with tenants' improvements relative to annual rental value, and guidance to all concerned will be very important.

2.30 am

The structure of land tenure in Scotland is important, and we must try to retain harmony between landlord and tenant if we are to develop the rural community as we want. I beg my hon. Friend the Minister to bear what I have said in mind when formulating the statutory instrument. We must make the legislation much more simple and understandable for the average farmer, and give good guidelines to the arbiters who are to implement it.

Mr. Maclennan: I must express my censure of the Government for bringing forward this new clause at this stage of the Bill's passage through Parliament. It is impossible to do justice to important legislation such as this while having to compress Second Reading, Committee stage, Report and Third Reading into this short debate. This issue is central to the prosperity of the tenanted and landowning sector.

I acknowledge that the Government had the perfectly worthy objective of trying to obtain the agreement of all those affected, but it became clear quite early on that such agreement would not be forthcoming. The Government are charged with the task of making decisions and recommending them to the House in such circumstances. The consequence of their delay is that the House has not been able to give its opinion of what would be the equitable solution. It is quite clear that the solution that the Government have advanced is not regarded as equitable by most of those who are principally engaged in dairy farming. It has been made quite clear by the National Farmers Union of Scotland, and it was repeated at a council meeting as recently as 9 July, that it regards the clause as most unsatisfactory and tilted in favour of the landowner, which is not entirely surprising.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): It would.

Mr. Maclennan: It would, naturally, because it is coming to realise that the Government are not all that interested in tenant farmers.

I do not propose to go over the ground that has been admirably covered by the hon. Members for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), but will the Minister take this opportunity to go further than the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food did earlier about what the Government mean by the statement that an arbiter may allow a tenant the full value of his improvements in making the decision on compensation?

The Minister of State seemed to set at naught the provisions of the schedule, which are certainly complicated and hard to understand. I do not pretend to have been able wholly to follow the precise mathematical calculations. Even the most cursory examination of them suggests that the arbiters must follow these formulae in reaching their decisions and that they do not have discretion in the matter. If the Minister is saying that arbiters have discretion, like the hon. Member for Dumfries, I cannot see why it is necessary to insert all these complicated formulae in the schedule. This seems to fetter the discretion of the arbiters, not to give them the capacity to make an award to a tenant of 100 per cent. if that is thought appropriate. It is almost inconceivable that 100 per cent. would be appropriate, but a percentage considerably higher than the 70 per cent., which the National Farmers Union of Scotland perceives to be the maximum likely under the schedule's provisions could be appropriate.

It will assist the comprehension of the Scottish farming industry if the Minister can say whether this complex, 12-page provision, setting out the formula which the arbiters must apply, can be modified by the exercise of their judgment and discretion. If so, there will be general relief. We shall remain puzzled by the mysteries of draftsmanship which require this complex provision, but comforted in the knowledge that arbiters may be guided, but not bound, by it. I hope that the Minister can explain that mystery.

This is exactly the sort of matter that we would wish to probe in Committee. It is most unsatisfactory that we can have only one bite of the cherry and cannot come back to probe if the Minister's explanation is unclear. I regret that, and it is a mistake that flows from the Government's initial error of being unprepared to introduce quotas and of having quotas thrust on them without any preliminary thinking about how they would be applied. The

[Mr. Maclennan]

Government had been warned by me on many occasions — the Minister knows that perfectly well — that this would be discussed and was an important possibility. The Government's answer throughout was that they were not thinking of and were not in favour of, quotas. Therefore, no preliminary work was done, which is why we are in this mess today. I hope that the Minister will answer that simple point which is troubling many farmers in Scotland.

Sir Paul Hawkins: Although I know nothing about the law of Scotland or the valuation of Scottish holdings, I ask a question and I hope that it will be answered. I believe that, in any valuation, discretion must be left to the valuer or arbiter. I hope that that will be the case. Sometimes we talk about the full value being paid in exceptional circumstances. If a tenant has put far too expensive and elaborate equipment on to a holding, he should not be paid the full cost of that. Those points should be made clear for the benefit of any future valuer or arbiter.

Mr. John MacKay: Arbiters are skilled in such matters. They take all the things that they see and that are put to them into account when they reach their conclusions and decisions. I am certain that the arbiter will be well able to make the kinds of judgments that my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins) mentioned.

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) rightly recognises that any delay could prevent some tenants from receiving compensation. I appreciate that he accepts that we must move on, so that a tenant moving out of his tenancy will be in a position to get some compensation for his quota.

We shall be giving guidance to the arbiters. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) that when we draw up the statutory instruments we shall take great care to do that in as simple a way as possible. However, I think that the definition of the word "simple" may vary from one person to another.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and others raised the perception — I think that the hon. Gentleman expressed it in that way — of the National Farmers Union. It was precisely because of that perception that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food made a statement earlier this evening. I echo what he said in conclusion. He said:

"I hope this will provide reassurance that the Bill leaves arbitrators free to give full credit to the tenant who has effectively done everything except provide the land."

Even in the best case of a tenant's investment, the landlord makes a contribution of the land. That must be reflected in the apportionment. A 100 per cent. share for the tenant would not be conceivable. I believe that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland conceded that point. With those few remarks, I hope that the House will agree to the Lords amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

RENT ARBITRATIONS: MILK QUOTAS, SCOTLAND

Lords amendment: No. 11, after clause 11, insert the following new clause—

". — (1) Paragraph 1 and the other provisions of Schedule *(Scotland: Tenant's compensation for milk quota)* to this Act referred to therein shall have effect for the interpretation of this section, as they do in relation to that Schedule.

(2) This section applies where an arbiter or the Scottish Land Court is dealing with a reference under—

(a) section 6 of the 1886 Act;

(b) section 32(7) of the 1911 Act;

(c) section 7 of the 1949 Act; or

(d) section 5(3) of the 1955 Act,

(determination of rent) and the tenant has milk quota, including transferred quota by virtue of a transaction the cost of which was borne wholly or partly by him, registered as his in relation to a holding consisting of or including the tenancy.

(3) Where this section applies, the arbiter or, as the case may be, the Land Court shall disregard any increase in the rental value of the tenancy which is due to—

(a) where the tenancy comprises the holding, the proportion of the transferred quota which reflects the proportion of the cost of the transaction borne by the tenant;

(b) where such transferred quota affects part only of the tenancy, that proportion of so much of the transferred quota as would fall to be apportioned to the tenancy under the 1986 Regulations on a change of occupation of the tenancy.

(4) For the purposes of determining whether transferred quota has been acquired by virtue of a transaction the cost of which was borne wholly or partly by the tenant any payment by a tenant when he was granted a lease, or when a lease was assigned to him, shall be disregarded.

(5) Paragraph 3 of Schedule *(Scotland: Tenant's compensation for milk quota)* to this Act (insofar as it relates to transferred quota) shall apply in relation to the operation of this section as it applies in relation to the operation of that Schedule.

(6) This section shall apply where paragraph 4 of Schedule *(Scotland: Tenant's compensation for milk quota)* to this Act applies, and in any question between the original landlord and the head tenant, this section shall apply as if any transferred quota acquired by the sub-tenant by virtue of any transaction during the subsistence of the sub-lease had been acquired by the head tenant by virtue of that transaction.

(7) Section 86 of the 1949 Act (Crown land) shall have effect in relation to this section as it does in relation to that Act."

Mr. John MacKay: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This amendment parallels for Scotland amendments Nos. 8 and 10 regarding England and Wales.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

Clause 13

DESIGNATION AND MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

Lords amendment: No. 13, in page 10, line 33, after "may" insert

"with the consent of the Treasury and after consulting the persons mentioned in subsection (3) below as to the inclusion of the area in the order and the features for which conservation, enhancement or protection is desirable".

Mr. Gummer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 14, in page 10, line 35, leave out subsection (2).

No. 15, in page 11, line 1, leave out "(2)" and insert "(1)".

No. 16, in page 11, line 35, leave out "are" and insert "is".

No. 17, in page 11, line 36, at end insert—

"(6A) The Minister shall not make an agreement with any person under subsection (4) above in respect of any land unless that person has certified to the Minister—

(a) that no person other than he is the owner of the land; or

(b) that he has notified any other person who is an owner of the land of his intention to make an agreement under subsection (4) above in respect of the land;

and in this subsection references to the owner of the land are to the estate owner in respect of the fee simple in the land or, in Scotland, the absolute owner of the land within the meaning of section 93 of the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Act 1949."

No. 18, in page 11, line 38, leave out "as respects any land" and insert

"with any person interested in any land in England or Wales"

No. 19, in page 11, line 39, leave out from "title" to "and" in line 40 and insert

"under or from that person"

No. 20, in page 11, line 41 at end insert—

"(7A) Where agreements have been made under subsection (4) above with persons having an interest in land in a designated area the Minister shall arrange for the effect on the area as a whole of the performance of the agreements to be kept under review and shall from time to time publish such information as he considers appropriate about those effects.".

No. 21, after clause 13, insert the following new clause—

Supplementary provisions regarding agreements under section 13(4) in Scotland

"—(1) Where a person having an interest of a kind described in section 13(4) above in land in Scotland, being an interest which enables him to bind the land, enters into an agreement under that subsection—

(a) where the land is registered in the Land Register of Scotland, the agreement may be registered in that Register;

(b) in any other case the agreement may be recorded in the appropriate Division of the General Register of Sasines.

(2) An agreement registered or recorded under subsection (1) above shall be enforceable at the instance of the Secretary of State against persons deriving title to the land (including any person acquiring right to a tenancy by assignation or succession) from the person who entered into the agreement; provided that such an agreement shall not be enforceable against a third party who shall have in good faith and for value acquired right (whether completed by infeftment or not) to the land prior to the agreement being registered or recorded as aforesaid, or against any person deriving title from such third party.

(3) Notwithstanding the terms of any agreement registered or recorded under subsection (1) above, the parties to the agreement or any persons deriving title from them may at any time agree to terminate it; and such an agreement to terminate it shall be registered or recorded in the same manner as was the original agreement.

(4) A grazings committee appointed under section 24 of the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1955 may, with the consent of a majority of the crofters ordinarily resident in the township, enter into an agreement under section 13(4) above in relation to any part of the common grazings and may agree to the revocation or variation of any such agreement, and such agreement, revocation or variation shall be binding upon all their successors.

(5) In the case of an agreement of a kind referred to in subsection (4) above, the payments by the Secretary of State shall be made to the grazings committee and shall be applied by them either—

(a) by division among the crofters who share in the common grazings in proportion to their respective rights therein; or

(b) subject to subsection (6) below, in carrying out works for the improvement of the common grazings or the fixed equipment required in connection therewith.

(6) A grazings committee to whom such a payment as is referred to in subsection (5) above has been made and who are proposing to apply the payment in carrying out works in accordance with paragraph *(b)* of that subsection shall give notice in writing to each crofter sharing in the common grazings of their proposals: and any such crofter may within one month of the date of such notice make representations in respect of the proposals to the Crofters Commission who may approve them with or without modifications or reject them.

(7) "Crofter" and other expressions used in any of subsections (4) to (6) above and in section 3 of the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1955 have the same meaning in this section as they have in that section as read with section 15(6) of the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1961.".

Mr. Gummer: Amendments Nos. 16, 18, 19 and 21 are technical in nature. During our earlier debate on environmentally sensitive areas, I gave various commitments to the House. Those commitments have been built into the clause. Amendments Nos. 13, 14 and 15 seek to allay fears that the Treasury would have a power of veto over the designation of ESAs. We had a merry debate about that. We heard a great deal of the abilities or, very often, the disabilities of Treasury Ministers to make such judgments. However I tried to explain that that was the phrase always used, it struck an evil note, and I was concerned that this series of propositions, which has been so widely welcomed, should not be soured in that way.

I must be perfectly frank and say that the amendments do not materially alter the arrangements for consultation with the Treasury. They more positively and accurately reflect the extent of the Treasury's role. It is clear that the Treasury is concerned with the financial provision, not with vetoing the environmental case for any particular area. I hope that this will set at rest minds which had been considerably stirred on this matter.

2.45 am

Amendment No. 17 places a duty on the Minister not to enter into an environmentally sensitive area agreement with someone other than the owner of the land, unless that owner has been notified. We agreed that we would do that, but it seemed sensible to have statutory backing.

I turn to amendment No. 20. It is important that the Government and the public know how ESAs are working. In the discussions on the Bill, I made a point of saying how important it was that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food should be involved in the direction of ESAs and that this should not be farmed out to anyone else. We wanted those concerned to learn from experience particular conservation needs because that would in some way counter the belief still held in some quarters that the Ministry did not have that kind of practical day-to-day experience. This emphasises the Government's commitment to effective implementation of ESAs. We have made provision for reports to be published on how the scheme operates. I am sure that they will be reviewed with great interest.

Once the Bill receives the Royal Assent, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will consult my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on a list of ESAs, as the Bill requires. That cannot be done until the Bill is passed. We plan to announce our decision on this as early as possible, but it will be obvious that that cannot be before the House rises. It is obviously important that the announcement should be made, and we shall try to make it relatively soon after the House rises.

In the circumstances, I hope that the alterations, all of which move in the direction of helping those hon. Members with fears about the presentation of the

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provisions, will enable this clause, of all clauses, to go forward with the united support of all who want greater concern shown for the environment.

Mr. John: I thank the Minister especially for the monitoring provision. It is a welcome advance. The right hon. Gentleman wants to set our minds at rest. I think we all want to do that at about a quarter to three in the morning. Although in presentation the Treasury's role is much diminished, in practice I fear that it will be as baneful as ever. I am not totally reassured on that point.

I thank the Minister for stating his intention to issue the list of ESAs. I should like to press him on some further points. We shall go into the programme of drawing up the detailed management scheme in consultation with the Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council. How long does the Minister expect the process to take? On 12 June, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, answering my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), said that he expected the first payments under the scheme to be made in 1987, with the date being somewhat imprecise. Can the right hon. Gentleman now announce a more specific time?

What sort of payments will be made? Will they be made on the single flat-rate basis, or will there be different grants for different environmental purposes? Will the Minister be more explicit than the Parliamentary Secretary, whose absence we regret, on 8 July when we were discussing agriculture structures? The hon. Lady was pressed by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) as to whether the additional £1·5 million available for ESAs, which was likely to come from the Commission, was going to be new money to be added to the £6 million already committed to ESAs in this country or whether it was going to be used by the same baneful Treasury as a sort of contribution towards reducing its net expenditure. We very much want the £1·5 million to be added to the £6 million already committed, which is little enough. I should be grateful if the Minister would confirm that.

Mr. Livsey: We welcome wholeheartedly the establishment of ESAs. The element of voluntary accession by farmers and the payments concerned are extremely helpful. However, I would like to back up what the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) has ssid. We would like more information about the type of payments to be made and whether they will follow the pattern that has occurred in Norfolk, for example, and what alternatives to them will be forthcoming.

We hope that there will be sufficient ADAS staff to administer the payments after what has happened in clause 1 of the Bill. It is all very well to say that they will be trained, but will they be there in sufficient numbers to carry out the job?

In part of the Bill referring to national parks — although it impinges on ESAs — we are concerned in Wales about the vetting of capital grants and whether there are implications for the expansion of farming enterprises with those grants. We fear that there will be a regression by those vetting the grants so that farmers will not have the opportunity to expand their businesses in the way that they might be able to do outside national parks. That is of considerable concern in some of the national park areas.

Mr. Maclennan: My questions arise on amendment No. 21 which relates to Scotland and deals with the entitlements of those who acquire land on which an agreement has been entered by the original owner. First, is it the Government's intention that all agreements should be registered with the Land Register, or the appropriate division of the General Register of Sasines, before they enter into a final commitment? Amendment No. 21 appears to provide that someone who has acquired title to land which is unregistered shall not be deemed to be bound by the agreement without notice. That might defeat the purpose of the agreement and of the Government's policy underlying it. I hope that the Minister may feel able to say something about whether it is felt appropriate, when entering into an agreement, to seek to obtain the assurance of the farmer that it will be registered. It would seem desirable to put subsequent tenants of the land on notice in that way.

My second point relates to crofting. There is a certain obscurity in the language. This is really a Committee point, but, unfortunately, we are not having a Committee stage on this amendment. Under the provisions of the proposed subsection (3) of the new clause contained in amendment No. 21.

"parties to the agreement . . . may at any time agree to terminate it".

That does not appear to be the case with respect to crofters who, according to the proposed subsection (4), are subject to the provision that

"such agreement . . . shall be binding upon all their successors."

That is, to the successors of the grazings committee.

I may have misunderstood this point. It looks as though it is an agreement that operates in perpetuity for crofters, but not in respect of other parties. This point may be difficult for the Minister to answer, and in any event the amendment is not capable of being changed. I should be satisfied if the Minister would prefer to write to me about it.

Mr. Gummer: With the leave of the House. I cannot claim to be expert enough about the crofters to give the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) exactly the answer that he would like, but my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland has said that he will write to the hon. Gentleman on that point.

Registration depends on the agreement, because some agreements, for example to build a wall, do not need to be registered. Others, of a longer-lasting kind, may be registered, as the Bill makes clear. I assure the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) that I am wary about talking about EEC funding only because we are discussing a proposal that has not yet got to a final state. I took part, as he will imagine, given the circumstances of the presidency, in detailed discussion on this, and I do not yet want to say anything about it.

I shall be looking at the matter carefully, because the EEC proposals sometimes mean that they cannot be used in the same way as the present structure of the ESAs. As we are taking the lead on this — my right hon. Friend the Minister first pressed it on the Commission — we have implemented it early. We shall want to watch this carefully, and I do not see that it has a direct bearing on what we propose to do.

I cannot continue to go into more detailed discussion on the type of payments, because we have sought in our discussions so far, although they are not complete, to look

at the various areas that we might choose for this in an effort to pick areas that offer a wide range of experience. We discussed this in Committee, and both sides were agreed. As that is the case, I can envisage that the types of payment would not always be the same. We see this as experimental, and that point has been generally accepted.

Consultations with the NCC and the Countryside Commission, and the consequential timing of introducing ESA arrangements have already taken place, and we hope that it may be possible to introduce the arrangements early in 1987. Our aim is to get this under way as rapidly as possible because that would be the wish of the House. I shall not give any particular month, but we are doing this as rapidly as possible.

We have sufficient ADAS staff. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) keeps suggesting that we do not. He is as wrong on this — this is an uncontroversial statement — as he is on so many other things. I confirm entirely the assurances given in another place on this. It is important that it is realised that we put high priority on what we are trying to do here, and I am sure that that is in accordance with what the House would like.

The only other point of consequence that should be answered is that in dealing with these environmentally sensitive areas, we have to ensure that everybody can learn what is going on. That is why the reporting arrangements are being put into the Bill, and why I am pleased about the welcome given by the hon. Member for Pontypridd. The more we know about the success or failure of particular parts of it, the more we shall be able to learn about the future. This is the beginning, rather than the end, of the process.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, some with Special Entry.

New Clause

FARM CAPITAL GRANTS: ANCILLARY BUSINESSES ETC.

Lords amendment: No. 23, after clause 14, insert the following new clause—

> (1) In section 28 of the Agriculture Act 1970 (interpretation of provisions relating to capital and other grants) at the end of the definition of "agricultural business" there shall be inserted the words "and includes any other business, of a kind for the time being specified by an order made by the appropriate authority, which is carried on by a person also carrying on a business consisting in or partly in the pursuit of agriculture and is carried on on the same or adjacent land".
>
> (2) The existing provisions of that section shall become subsection (1) of that section and after that subsection there shall be inserted—
>
> "(2) An order under subsection (1) above shall be made by statutory instrument and any statutory instrument containing such an order shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.".".

Mr. Gummer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment extends Minister's power over agriculture capital grants to cover ancillary farm-based businesses. We discussed this in Committee, and listened carefully to what was said. I gave an assurance that I would look to see whether there was a way in which we could put forward what was necessary. My hon. Friend who pressed this amendment on us was very concerned that we should be able to take account of the changing circumstances for agriculture and the urgent need to find alternatives for farmers whose products are in surplus. Farm diversification is one of the most promising of these avenues.

3 am

Therefore, the Government have listened very sympathetically to the proposition that the Agriculture Ministers should give financial aid to help farmers to develop other enterprises on their farms. The wide support that this idea has attracted in both Houses of Parliament has encouraged us in the belief that now is the appropriate time for the Ministry to take the necessary powers. Accordingly, this amendment would permit agriculture Ministers to make grants to ancillary businesses specified by order, provided that the person carrying on the business has a farm on the same or adjacent land.

I should, however, warn hon. Members that at this stage we are taking only an enabling power. Before any schemes could be introduced under it, they would need to be cleared with the European Commission as state aids. Also, we have still to resolve the question of how the new schemes might be funded. Nevertheless, to miss this opportunity of enabling the Ministry to take these measures would be quite wrong. This is a good opportunity to ensure that the Ministry's powers cover what is a much more appropriate definition of agriculture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have to inform the House that this amendment involves privilege.

Mr. John: I extend a welcome to the principle. In Committee many hon. Members felt that this would be a worthwhile extension of the Ministry's powers. I am glad that candidly, but in rather less lurid language than that used by the Ministry spokesman in *Big Farm Weekly*, the Minister has announced that, although the principle has been accepted, it does not mean that any cash will be forthcoming. The Ministry spokesman said that the Ministry had taken on board exciting new powers but that it was not saying that it would provide any new cash. It is the prospect of new cash and of translating the principle into actuality that interests us.

When, therefore, may we expect such grants to be introduced? When will an approach be made to the European Commission? And what sorts of grants will be on offer? If the Minister could provide a realistic assessment of what he believes will happen, it would add realism to what is regarded as a heady concept by the Ministry. However, without money it will remain a matter of principle.

Mr. Cash: I welcome this provision. I have sought in various ways to secure the creation of a provision of this kind, and I am delighted that it has been introduced. However, I hope that it will not be too restrictively construed and that it will not be confined to questions relating to agriculture and agricultural land. The object of the exercise is to enable farmers to sustain their incomes by going in for other small business activities — for example, bed and breakfast.

When these grants are made available, will people be able to use the land in the way for which the money is

[Mr. Cash]

provided? This question relates to the White Paper "Food from Our Own Resources" that was published in 1975 and the guidelines that followed from it.

I hope that some steps can be taken to ensure that maximum flexibility is built into the planning process so that when grants and/or advice under clause 1 are made available, it will be open to the farmers affected — in order to sustain their incomes at a time of over-production and when they are having considerable pressure put upon them — to go into other businesses. I hope that the planning process can be eased to that end.

Mr. Maclennan: The Government's decision to take the power to make farm capital grants available for ancillary businesses is entirely welcome. I was rather disappointed that the Minister hedged it round with caveats about having to go to the European Community to clear these proposals for state aid before he was prepared to state the Government's intention. It is clear that certain aids of this kind would conform completely to European Community legislation.

The integrated development programme for the Western Isles involves grants to non-agricultural enterprises and I understand that that is done on regional grounds. I recognise that this power goes beyond that and more towards the guidance part of the farm fund. Is it the Minister's intention to pursue this quickly with the Commission to make sure that there is no obstacle in the way of diversification out of normal farming activity and into other businesses that can be carried on from a farm? It would be acceptable if he could give us an idea of his sense of urgency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I take it that the Minister has the leave of the House to speak again.

Mr. Gummer: I want to be frank about the points that have been raised; to do that one has to look at the matter in the following sequence. First, the Bill gives us an opportunity to take powers. That opportunity will not arise again in the near future and for that reason it seemed necessary to make a clear decision in principle. Secondly, anybody who has been involved in Government will know perfectly well that such powers are not taken unless there is the intention to use them.

I think the word "baleful" was used in describing the eye of the Treasury, but naturally the Treasury would not wish powers with implied use to be taken when it would not allow them to be used. There is a stage before one goes to the European Commission and it is to look much more closely at the kind of scheme that might be available, and not only at schemes which would work and which would meet the requirements, but also at schemes that would be acceptable to the Commission and to the Community.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) was right to say that there ought to be nothing in this Bill contrary to the intentions of the Community. However, these things are often seen as national aids. They can be misused and the Community rightly keeps a close eye on them. We are keen that it should do so because, as the hon. Gentleman knows, one of the problems in the industry is the feeling by our farmers that farmers elsewhere are aided in ways that are not open to them. If we press other Governments to be as careful as we wish them to be, and if we demand that their proposals are properly scrutinised, we must do those things ourselves. These matters must be looked at carefully and after that we will go to the Commission when we decide that we have something that we ought to present. Then we will have to resolve how such schemes should be funded.

I hope that the House will accept that this Bill is an earnest of our intentions. First, we will look at agriculture in the wider sense presaged by the change in the definition of agriculture contained in the Bill. That is probably the most important thing in the Bill, because it says that agriculture is different to the very narrow view of it which was to be found in the Acts under which we worked in the past.

In future, people will look back at the Act and see it as beginning a new era in agriculture. The major difference will be the definition of agriculture. The House should be grateful, not only to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) but also to my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) who has fought the battle through and pushed it in Committee and explained it in a way that has enable us to take this step.

The planning aspect is overwhelmingly a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. However, there is every intention, as has been outlined particularly in the White Paper "Lifting the Burden", to be much more flexible in the way in which we deal with planning. But even then we have to accept that there is a real responsibility to ensure that the planning laws are so enforced that we get flexibility for new jobs and enterprises without destroying the very environment which makes those jobs and enterprises possible. It is a balance. It is not easy and it is one which we should take seriously, because the countryside is also a place of refreshment for those who live in the towns.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, some with Special Entry.

Schedule 1

Tenants' Compensation for Milk Quota

Lords amendment: No. 38, in page 19, line 2, leave out paragraph 6 and insert—

"6.—(1) Subject to the following provisions of this paragraph the standard quota for any land for the purposes of this Schedule shall be calculated by multiplying the relevant number of hectares by the prescribed quota per hectare; and for the purposes of this paragraph—

(a) "the relevant number of hectares" means the average number of hectares of the land in question used during the relevant period for the feeding of dairy cows kept on the land or, if different, the average number of hectares of the land which could reasonably be expected to have been so used (having regard to the number of grazing animals other than dairy cows kept on the land during that period; and

(b) "the prescribed quota per hectare" means such number of litres as the Minister may from time to time by order prescribe for the purposes of this sub-paragraph.

(2) Where by virtue of the quality of the land in question or climatic conditions in the area the amount of milk which could reasonably be expected to have been produced from one hectare of the land during the relevant period ("the reasonable amount") is greater or less than the prescribed average yield per hectare, then sub-paragraph (1) above shall not apply and the standard quota shall be calculated by multiplying the relevant number of hectares by such proportion of the prescribed quota per hectare as the reasonable amount bears to the prescribed average yield per hectare; and the Minister

shall by order prescribe the amount of milk to be taken as the average yield per hectare for the purposes of this sub-paragraph.

(3) Where the relevant quota of the land includes milk quota allocated in pursuance of an award of quota made by the Dairy Produce Quota Tribunal for England and Wales which has not been allocated in full, the standard quota for the land shall be reduced by the amount by which the milk quota allocated in pursuance of the award falls short of the amount awarded (or, in a case where only part of the milk quota allocated in pursuance of the award is included in the relevant quota, by the corresponding proportion of that shortfall).

(4) In sub-paragraph (3) above the references to milk quota allocated in pursuance of an award of quota include references to quota allocated by virtue of the amount awarded not originally having been allocated in full.

(5) In this paragraph—

(a) references to land used for the feeding of dairy cows kept on the land do not include land used for growing cereal crops for feeding to dairy cows in the form of loose grain; and

(b) references to dairy cows are to cows kept for milk production (other than uncalved heifers).

(6) An order under this paragraph may make different provision for different cases.

(7) The power to make an order under this paragraph shall be exercisable by statutory instrument and any instrument containing such an order shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.".

Mr. Gummer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 39, in page 20, line 9, leave out

"in connection with the production of cow's milk"

and insert

"for the feeding, accommodation or milking of dairy cows kept on the land".

No. 40, in page 20, line 17, leave out from "improvements" to end of line 18 and insert

"to, or tenant's fixed equipment on, land used for the feeding, accommodation or milking of dairy cows kept on the land in question".

No. 48, in page 25, line 47, at end insert—

"(1A) In this Schedule references to land used for the feeding of dairy cows kept on the land and to dairy cows have the same meaning as in paragraph 6 above.".

Mr. Gummer: The House will want to pay a little attention to this group of amendments. Hon. Members may recall from discussions on 17 April that the level of standard quota is at the heart of the calculation of compensation which may be payable.

There are those who have produced all sorts of ways of trying to make a fair arrangement between landlord and tenant, between outgoer and incomer, but we have tried to find the fairest method. In doing so we discussed a number of disadvantages and I assured the House that I would seek to meet some of the concerns which existed.

One of my hon. Friends was concerned to suggest that in marginal land, particularly in his county, the arrangements might not be satisfactory for tenant farmers. So we have tried to meet some of those considerations. Not least, we have removed the 20 per cent. restriction on variations in the standard quota about which so much concern was expressed, particularly by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), who is not here this evening only because of his illness. He would want me to say that he is pleased with the changes.

My hon. Friend has an eagle eye, so I know that the House will appreciate his view. He has pointed out that we have tried to meet the issues that he raised. For practical reasons, we have concluded that the area of land to be taken into account in the calculation of both the standard quota and the tenant's fraction will be limited to the land used by dairy cows alone, excluding the land used by followers. The calculation of the standard quota should therefore reflect the yield achievable on that basis.

3.15 am

Similarly, when it comes to the tenant's fraction calculation, the tenant's share would be assessed on the basis of the improvements that he has made that relate to the dairy cows. The landlord's share would be based on the rent paid for the land used by the dairy cows. Followers will be excluded from the calculations at all stages.

Hon. Members will note that there is a change to the definition of dairy cows. In case any hon. Member is worried about that, I had better make it clear that it is not merely that they are not bulls. The new definition is purely intended to improve the clarity of drafting. It takes account of the dictionary definition of a cow as any female bovine animal. We want to make it clear that uncalved heifers are not included. Although the reason for that involves a tiny detail, it means that the tenant is not disadvantaged, which might happen, by a distortion in the calculations.

As I have said, we have removed the 20 per cent. restriction on variations in standard quota. We have already announced that, in setting the figures in this subordinate legislation for the prescribed quota and the prescribed average yield per hectare, we intend to use 8,000 and 9,000 litres respectively. The difference between those two figures reflects the cut in production following the introduction of quotas. It means that the prescribed quota figure will normally be some 11 per cent. below the yield that would be reasonable for the holding, having regard to the quality of the land and the climatic conditions.

We have also announced that we intend to set lower figures for the less favoured areas. Here we intend to prescribe quota per hectare of 7,000 litres for disadvantaged land and 6,000 litres for severely disadvantaged land. Concern has also been expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House on two other points. First, it was argued that tenants who had received an award of development quota should not be penalised simply because that award had not been allocated in full. Secondly, there was concern that tenant's compensation should not be reduced as a result of any future general cuts in quota. Both those points are covered by the amendments.

Amendment No. 48 extends the definition of

"land used for the feeding of dairy cows kept on the land"

and the definition of "dairy cows" contained in the new paragraph 6, so that they apply to paragraph 7 of schedule 1 as well. As I have said, the intention is that in the calculation of the standard quota and the tenant's fraction, land used by followers should be excluded. The purpose of the amendments is to meet many of the concerns that have been expressed.

I hope that the House will accept that, even though we have been unable to go as far as some wanted us to go, we have corrected those things that people thought might create a distortion in the equity that we sought to achieve. I remind that House that every penny paid to the outgoer is in the end paid by the incomer. There is a balance to be struck between those two sides. Hon. Members have

[Mr. Gummer]

suggested that tenants are somehow being done down, but both incoming and outgoing tenants are affected by what happens to others. If we want young people coming into our dairy industry, we must not set the price of entry too high, as that would gravely damage the landlord-tenant system.

In sorting out some of the anomalies that might otherwise arise, I believe that it would have been wrong for us to go any further towards making it expensive to go into dairying. That would have done something that this Government have always set their face against. It would have increased the difficulties for those entering farming, thus making it a much more enclosed and separate part of the economy. None of us wants that.

Mr. John: There is a simple answer to the agonising of the Minister of State and the hon. Member for Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins). It is the creation, quite uncovenanted, of a capital asset out of a milk quota that is causing tension between the incoming and outgoing tenant, and I think that on reflection it will be acepted that that should never have been allowed to happen. I do not think that any of us anticipated the result.

As the milk quota is, in theory, a temporary phenomenon that is to be reviwed in 1989, a Labour Government would undertake to review whether the capital trading in milk quotas should continue. A surrender and redistribution of the quota to where it would be most needed, and where it would do most good, would be a far better concept for the incoming tenant as well as for the outgoing one. Compensation is called for by the initial mistake, and it is the Government who made the mistake. It is they who have created the capital asset.

Having made those comments in the same non-controversial manner as the Minister of State adopted, I accept that this is a series of amendments which slightly assist the tenant farmer, and for that reason we would not dream of opposing them, but it is not only the NFU and the Scottish NFU which have said that the Government take too rosy a picture of the tenant's share. The examples that have been given do not match some of the percentage predictions. On 27 June *Farming News* described Lord Belstead's conclusion and produced some figures which showed that his figure of £19,000 was only a quarter share of the total compensation payable in his example.

We are talking about an average share for tenant dairy farmers of 30 per cent. of the quota value, which I do not think is fair or just. As the Ministry's own research booklet observes, the stocking rate per hectare for cows means that if the grass is left without treatment—it is the tenant who treats the grass with nitrogen—the cows will not provide any milk and they will be only partly maintained. That is the real argument in favour of the tenant having a much larger share of the value of the quota, and the Opposition believe that that share should have been achieved.

Mr. Livsey: The guts of the compensation arrangement for tenant farmers in respect of milk quotas will come in the form of a statutory instrument, and the Minister of State has outlined some of the Ministry's thinking on the subject. We still do not know exactly what the stocking rate will be, but perhaps it will be 1·8 cows per hectare. It is clear that more information is to come. When the statutory instrument comes before us, we shall be able to judge precisely the deal that tenants and landlords will have on the standard quota.

I believe that insufficient will be left for the tenant. Although the Minister has said that the tenant's share may be higher than 30 per cent., my hon. Friends and I still need to be convinced on that score. The way to overcome the concerns of many hon. Members about the incoming milk producer and the cost of the quota is to create a pool of quotas, or to have a quota bank of the sort that exists in Canada, where special amounts of quota are put aside for the purposes of incomers. It has beeen said already that the Government created the value of the quota in 1984.

Arbitration on quotas should be much more open-ended. A more even start, with a 50:50 shareout, providing fair valuation should take place with regard to landlords and tenants, incorporating valuation methods that are accepted across the industry, this would be far more equitable. It can be argued that the energy requirements of cows for maintenance, growth and pregnancy can be produced from unfertilised grass. In applying fertiliser and feeding the cows properly, the tenant creates the additional milk production, which has additional value. That is the crux of the argument about why the tenant should have more of the quota value.

I regret very much not having been a member of the Committee, because that would have been an advantage and would have contributed to my input in the debate. I merely add that my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) wishes to protest by proxy, because he was here for two hours of the debate——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is very late, and I do not think that we should start, at this hour of the morning, referring to what other hon. Members might have said had they been here. I hope that we can stick to the matter before the House.

Mr. Livsey: I accept that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I say merely that this series of amendments could have gone further for tenant farmers.

Mr. Gummer *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the right hon. Gentleman have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Gummer: The quota has a value not because the Government created it but because the European Community argues that the quota cannot legally be taken away from the land: the land is tied to the quota and the quota to the land. Opposition Members are not right on that. What we know now—it is important—is that if there were a Labour Government, the tenants would get nothing, because it would all be taken away from them. Under the proposal, every tenant gets something that he would not have expected to get when he went into the tenancy. The intentions of Opposition Members, we have now discovered, have been wholly unacceptable. They complained that the tenants would not get enough, when they intended to give them nothing whatsoever. I hope that tenants are perfectly aware of that. Quotas would have no value, and they would not get that from a Labour Government.

Mr. John: Is the Minister of State rehearsing for the role of Mr. Facing Both Ways? He was crying over the plight of the incoming tenant a moment ago, and now he

is complaining that he will not have to pay more. If he says that the outgoing tenant will not have compensation, by his own argument that will help the incomer. As he is so concerned about newcomers to farming, he cannot argue the case both ways.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman has spent three or four months complaining that the outgoing tenant has not been getting enough. Now he tells us that if there is a Labour Government, the outgoing tenant will get nothing whatsoever. I hope that the National Farmers Union knows what the Labour party would do and will therefore again make sure that there is not a Labour Government to implement such a nonsensical scheme.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Dockyard Services Bill

Lords amendments considered

Clause 1

TRANSFER OF PERSONS ENGAGED IN DOCKYARD SERVICES TRANSFERRED TO PRIVATE SECTOR

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, leave out lines 3 to 12 and insert

"makes arrangements

(a) for a company to provide designated dockyard services at the dockyard under contract with him, and

(b) for that or another company

(i) to become the employer of such of the qualified dockyard service employees at the dockyard as are employees to whom the arrangements apply, and

(ii) to acquire from him rights in or over the dockyard or any part of it and any property used for the purposes of the dockyard undertaking,

with a view to their services and that property being made available for the provision of the designated dockyard services at the dockyard,"

3.30 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to consider the following Lords amendments: No. 4, in page 2, line 28, leave out "*(a)*" and insert "*(b)*"

No. 5, in line 33, leave "*(a)*" and insert "*(b)*"

No. 6 in page 3, line 14, after "provides" insert "services which are"

No. 7, in line 16, leave out from "by" to "enables" in line 17 and insert

"making the services of employees or property available,"

No. 8, in clause 2, page 3, line 41, leave out "by the Secretary of State".

Mr. Lee: This amendment and amendments Nos. 4 to 8 refer to the possible company structure at each dockyard.

As the House will recall, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will set up a Companies Act company at each dockyard into which the respective work force would transfer on vesting day in April 1987. Each of these two companies will then be transferred into the ownership of whichever company had successfully tendered to manage the particular dockyard. So far as the structure of the companies which my right hon. Friend sets up is concerned, the Bill allows him to decide which of a number of options is preferable.

Under one option, the company which my right hon. Friend forms would not only employ the work force but would be the company with which he would place the term contract, set initially for a period of seven years, and individual contracts for ship and other refit work. Under this option, there would be one company both contracting and employing at each dockyard. That has been called the concept of the operating company.

Under another option, the term contract and the individual work packages would be placed directly with the successful bidder. The services of the work force employed by the company set up by my right hon. Friend

[Mr. Lee]

would then be used by the contractor to perform the contract. There would, therefore, be one company contracting — the managing company — and another company — the dockyard or employing company — at each dockyard. On vesting day the dockyard or employing company would become a wholly owned subsidiary of the managing company formed by the successful bidder, at each dockyard. This has been described as the concept of the employing company.

We have always said that there was another option, that of a Government-owned plc — if there were insufficient interest from companies in managing the dockyards or if their responses to our invitation to tender were unacceptable for any reason. I am, however, glad to say that, with three companies, or consortia, interested in bidding for each dockyard, we expect a good competition, which should produce very satisfactory results.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East: Will the Minister explain when he expects vesting day to be? What will be the final date for the submission of tenders? Will he comment on the application by Brown and Root (UK) Ltd., which might lead to an extension of the date by which tenders must be submitted?

Mr. Lee: I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's points in due course. There has been no change from the position in Committee about vesting day. Vesting day will be 1 April 1987.

The third of the three companies which have been invited to bid for the contract to manage Devonport dockyard is Brown and Root (UK) Ltd. The company, which was formally invited to tender only last week, has requested an extension to the tender period. The Government welcome the interest which Brown and Root is showing and believe that the competition at Devonport will be significantly improved if an additional bid is made. I should tell the House that the Government have, therefore, agreed to a limited extension of the bid closing date for Devonport by four weeks, to 29 August. This extension will, of course, apply to all potential bidders for Devonport and will not delay the date for the introduction of commercial management to both dockyards of 6 April 1987. I must correct my previous statement that vesting day is to be 1 April 1987. That is incorrect. It is to be 6 April 1987. The date for responses to the invitation to tender for Rosyth remains 1 August.

Returning to the Bill, I was saying that it had always contained the three options for the corporate structure at each dockyard, as amended in another place, the Bill continues to retain all three options. The amendments which we are considering do not relate to the operating company or to the Government-owned plc with which, in relation to the provisions in the Bill, there was general satisfaction in another place. The amendments relate to the employing company concept — the two-company structure.

In another place concern was expressed about the separation of the dockyard work force, which would be in the employing company set up by my right hon. Friend, from the dockyard assets which would be used by the managing company under a licence granted to it by the Ministry of Defence. It was not, however, disputed that the assets should, as has always been our intention, remain in Government ownership.

Our view at one time was that the single company option represented the most attractive scheme for introducing commercial management into the dockyards. However, the principal difficulty with this option is associated with the termination, without renewal with the same contractor, of the term contract. The difficulty that I have in mind concerns the need in those circumstances to disentangle the liabilities of the company. No such difficulty would have to be faced under the two-company structure, where the employees are employed by a company which has attached to it none of the liabilities and obligations of a company which operates the dockyard under one contract.

I can tell the House that we have not ruled out the operating company concept if the difficulties that I have described can be overcome, but in our opinion the two-company structure offers more advantages for the employees and their representatives and for the Government. The companies which have been invited to tender for the contracts to manage the dockyards have been invited, when responding to that invitation, to state their views. In the meantime, however, the Government gave further consideration to ways in which the dislike expressed in another place for the two-company structure could be overcome. The amendments which we are considering were introduced by the Government in another place to address those concerns.

Effectively, the amendments ensure that, in the event of a two-company structure being adopted, the licence to use the assets would be an integral part, not of the managing company set up by the contractor, but of that set up by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and into which would be transferred the dockyard work force. The terms of the licence would, of course, have to be negotiated between the Ministry of Defence and the selected contractor, but on vesting day that licence would come into effect directly between the Department and the company containing the work force. Their Lordships believed that those amendments had met their concerns.

Although these are Government amendments, they were introduced in response to concerns expressed in another place, and I invite the House to accept them.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I am grateful to the Minister for writing to me on 14 July setting out the reasons for the Lords amendments, which he has reiterated. His comments demonstrate what a shambles the Bill is. It began as a shambles and, with the assistance of Lord Denning, it has become an even greater shambles. First, the Government said — and the Minister confirmed — that there would be one company. But we could not have one company, because there was a problem over the determination of the contract in relation to the employees if they were employed by the same company as held the contract and the licence to operate the assets.

In Committee, we were told that there would be two companies — a managing company and an employing company. The employing company was to be formed by the Secretary of State and the employees would be transferred to it. Presumably the shares in the employing company would be transferred to the managing company. The latter was to be owned by a consortium or by a company, if the contract went to only one company, and that management company was to hold the licence to operate the assets.

However, when the Bill went to the House of Lords, Lord Denning discovered the concept of the bees and the hive, and said that we cannot put the workers in one company and the licence to operate the assets—I see the Minister nodding—in another company. I do not know about that. I have read the debates in the other place. The Government were impressed by the arguments about the hive and the bees. Now it seems that the bees and the hive will be in one company—as the Under-Secretary of State said, in the employing company. The managing company will not have anything except shares in the hive and the bees. It will merely operate the dockyards under a managing contract. It will be a strange company, with no assets except, presumably, shares in the employing company.

I think that I preferred the original scheme, when the hive was in the hands of the managing company—I do not know whether the Minister would care to introduce a manuscript amendment to change it again—and the bees were with the employing company. The changes demonstrate the nonsense of the scheme. The nonsense is that the Government retain assets and transfer individuals, but nothing else. There is no transfer, except of employees.

The Government pretend that they are transferring a business, and they have redrafted the Bill to show it; but they are merely transferring people, who are being treated as chattels. The company gets only a licence to operate assets which are owned by the Government. It is a farcical system. Once the Government decided against complete privatisation—hiving everything off—they came out with this hybrid scheme, which is neither private nor public ownership. The problem is that the Bill does not make sense in terms of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employees) Regulations 1981 or the framework of privatisation.

We do not oppose the amendments, because we think that they are nonsense. If the Government are prepared to carry on with this nonsense, that is a matter for them. Nothing is really affected. Will there be one or two companies? Where will the assets be? Presumably they will be with the employing company. Have the Government decided to have two companies? No. They still do not know, although the Minister has said that, if there was one company, there would be great problems with the termination of contracts at the end of seven years or, although it is extremely unlikely, earlier.

There will be the problems of the company's liabilities and debts, of employees being in the company and of the Government's licence to operate the assets. The problems are horrendous. It would have been better if the Government had dropped the Bill rather than grafted one nonsense on to another, which is what the Minister is doing.

No doubt the Minister will tell us more about the company that he has found at the last minute to bid for Devonport—to the relief, no doubt, of the Ministry of Defence. I understand that it is an American company. We will not oppose the amendments. We believe that they are nonsense and that they highlight the nonsense of the Bill.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): This miserable Bill is before us again. The fact that it is 3.30 in the morning and the two other, Conservative, Members of Parliament for Plymouth are not present is a marked criticism of how we conduct our business.

I understand that the Bill was thought to be illegal in European Community law. Lord Denning drew attention to European Commission directive 77 in so far as the assets were being separated from the contractor. I understand that it is because of the threat of a challenge to the Bill that the Government have changed it.

It is extraordinary that we are still talking about three options. It is high time that the Government told the House straight what they intend to do. The company's structure is still utterly unclear. The fundamental flaw in the Bill is its separation of the work force from the assets.

The Minister is a sensible man. He has heard all these arguments and they must drive him towards the logic of a Government-owned public limited company. That is by far the most sensible way out of this largely self-created mess. Now that the former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), has flown the coop, we can all agree to drop this nonsense. The agency management proposal has been adjusted and adapted, and it must have taken hours of Civil Service and parliamentary time, to no avail. The Minister now tells us that, because the tenders for the contract in Devonport are wholly inadequate, he as had to extend the contract period by one months and has introduced a new company.

We used to hear about the management option which would solve all our problems. I understand that there have been financial difficulties, but it would have been a great deal better if management had spent its time persuading the Government to opt for a Government-owned plc. If the trade unions were taken into discussions, they would co-operate to make a Government-owned plc the least unsuccessful of all the options. I hope that the Government will consider that in the coming weeks.

3.45 am

The co-operation of the trade unions and the city of Plymouth would be much greater if the Government-owned plc option is chosen and if it was made abundantly clear that the enterprise would stay permamently in Government control and that this was not a stepping stone to later privatisation. The only purpose of keeping open the later privatisation option is to save the Government's face. If that option is kept open, it will undermine the morale of the work force and will not make for a successful Government-owned plc. Ministers know perfectly well that no nationalised company with these expensive assets can possibly be floated. That is why the dockyards cannot be privatised normally.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) that these amendments do not make a hap'orth of difference, except to expose the absurdity of the legislation. We accept them, but hope that the Government will stop proceeding on three options, will opt clearly for a Government-owned plc and will stop the farce of introducing Brown and Root as a new tenderer at this late stage.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): This is an early hour of the morning to debate these amendments.

I must go back to 27 November 1985 and the second report on this matter by the Defence Select Committee. One would think that the Government had suddenly discovered something new in the concept of operating companies. Page 49 of that report contains all the

[Mr. Dick Douglas]

arguments, now suddenly discovered by the Under-Secretary, which were then submitted by the Ministry of Defence to the Select Committee. We must ask ourselves what is new, apart from what happened in the other place?

We are dealing with a small enabling Bill of about 119 lines and we have debated it on Second Reading and in a long Committee stage. It has now returned from the other place. We are sorry that the new Secretary of State does not see fit to grace us with his presence, but I think he wants to distance himself as much as possible from the Bill. The right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) has more sense than the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) in pursuing this stupid proposal.

The idea of operating companies was canvassed by the Ministry of Defence. Hon. Members can read the report and see the criticisms made by potential bidders. The report states:

"The companies interested in the commercial management proposals have seen the concept as an unnecessary complication, since it divorces the company responsible for employing the workforce from the one operating the Dockyard and managing the programme of work."

The balance canvassed at that time was to have the company doing the two things. The Minister, having examined what took place in the House of Lords, has introduced a variation on that theme. He tried to con the House—my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) made, as usual, a succinct intervention — into believing that, notwithstanding, the sacred vesting day of 6 April 1987 will still be met. We do not believe that. We shall turn to the reasons we do not believe that when we consider the further amendments.

The Minister should come clean in parading, at such an early hour of the morning, that he has three consortia bidding for Devonport and, I believe, three consortia bidding for Rosyth. He has not told us anything about the quality of those consortia. He has not told us anything about the balance of expertise they have. I do not think that he will be embarrassed if I refer to a meeting that my hon. Friend and I had with the Secretary of State yesterday. The Minister was present. He introduced the amazing concept that Appledore International had persuaded him that offshore oil work would go to Rosyth. I do not know whether he has been studying the offshore oil industry, but it is difficult to get any sort of contract from the North sea. If the Minister has been persuaded on that, he could be persuaded on almost anything.

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): Surely my hon. Friend cannot be surprised at Appledore's suggestion when at one stage Touche Ross suggested that the Argentine Navy might be a possible client.

Mr. Douglas: My hon. Friend is perfectly right. Appledore made many suggestions. Knowing your trade union background, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I share it—I am sure that you would quickly call me to order were I to develop those. The Government are desperate to concoct any consortia that will look favourably at bidding for the dockyard contract. We must be careful of accepting what even this pleasant Under-Secretary of State puts forward. I do not think that the exercise will be to the benefit of the Navy, Devonport or Rosyth. I do not think that the Under-Secretary, in his better judment, believes that. We would do better to scrap the whole procedure.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East is quite right. I do not think that we can oppose the amendments. However, the Under-Secretary has not given the House a proper justification for how the Government propose to proceed and meet their timetable. He has not given us the necessary information so that hon. Members, trade unions and communities can evalute the consortia that are likely to bid—whatever concept of operating and employing companies is brought into being.

My hon. Friend mentioned Brown and Root. My understanding is that Brown and Root is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Halliburton. As far as I know—I may be wrong—Brown and Root has no experience in operating dockyards but lots of experience in building production platforms for the North sea and elsewhere, in managing construction sites and playing its part in oil refineries and chemical plants.

I should like to probe into what is happening with the management consortium of Devonport plc. I ask the Under-Secretary of State to tell us what is happening at Devonport and Rosyth. The dock's managing directors are simultaneously embarking on what might loosely be called a "management buy-out" and trying to manage the complicated workings of dockyards such as Rosyth and Devonport. How can that be done? What assurances will be given?

When the Select Committee on Defence probed this matter, we were given some vague assurances. We received a letter stating that certain cut-offs and restrictions were imposed on the management preventing them from using the dockyards' facilities. It cannot be true that people of such calibre and expertise in the dockyards can do their job of servicing the Navy while being in cahoots with the Brown and Roots and Foster-Wheelers of this world so that they can collectively make a bid for the operation of the dockyards come vesting day.

At the risk of repeating myself, I must say that, if Conservative Members are concerned about managing the nation, even in the early hours of the morning, they will say, "Take this measure away. It is too daft for words."

Mr. Lee: By leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker I should like to take up some of the main points raised out of courtesy and, I hope, to add to my earlier explanation. I confirm that there are still three options—the single company concept, the two-company concept and the Government-owned plc.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us exactly when a decision will be made on the option to be favoured by the Ministry of Defence? Can he give us some idea of the Government's timetable?

Mr. Lee: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to speak a little later. I shall come to the timetable later in these overall comments.

As the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said, Brown and Root is a wholly owned subsidiary of Halliburton Holdings, which was formed in December 1984 as a holding company for the United Kingdom interests of its American parent company, Halliburton Holdings Inc.

There are three contenders for the Devonport dockyard —*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members asked me questions, and I am endeavouring to answer them. There is the

consortium of Foster-Wheeler, A and P Appledore and VSEL; the Devonport Dockyard Ltd management involvement; and Brown and Root.

I confirm that vesting day has not changed. We are talking about 6 April 1987. As the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East will know, the management at Rosyth has not formed itself into a company and is not one of the bidders.

I should like to explain the timetable. Tenders were issued on 3 April 1986. We expect receipt of tenders for Rosyth on 1 August and for Devonport on 29 August, which is the adjusted day to which I referred earlier. Broadly in the period August to November, there will be an evaluation of tenders and consideration by the Navy Board and Ministers. By late November, we hope that the contract award will be announced. By early December we hope that the contractors will enter what we term their phasing in period, with a view to commercial management commencing, as I have said, on 6 April 1987.

Question put and agreed to

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 2, line 19, leave out subsection (4) and insert—

"(4) The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 shall apply to the transfer of the dockyard undertaking or any part of it whether or not, apart from this provision, the undertaking would be treated as an undertaking in the nature of a commercial venture for the purposes of those Regulations, and, for those purposes, the services of the qualified dockyard service employees together with the rights in or over th dockyard and property used for the purposes of the undertaking shall be treated as a part of that undertaking capable of being transferred as a business whether or not the company which is to become their employer also provides designated dockyard services."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Lee: I beg to move, as an amendment to the proposed amendment, in line 2, after 'shall', insert 'subject to subsection (4A) below.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to considering the following: Lords amendment No. 3, in page 2, line 26, at end insert—

"(4A) Before any employee in a Royal Dockyard is transferred compulsorily without his consent from the service of the Crown to the service of any other employer the following provisions of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 shall be fulfilled.

(4B) Long enough before the transfer to enable consultations to take place between the Secretary of State and the representatives of the trade unions, the Secretary of State shall inform those representatives of—

(a) the fact that the transfer is to take place, when approximately it is to take place, and the reasons for it;

(b) the legal, economic and social implications of the transfer for the effected employees;

(c) the measures which he envisages he (the Secretary of State) will, in connection with the transfer, take in relation to those employees; and

(d) the measures which the transferee envisages he (the transferee) will, in connection with the transfer, take in relation to such of those employees as become employees of the transferee after the transfer.

(4C) The Secretary of State shall enter into consultations with the representatives of the trade unions and in the course of those consultations shall—

(a) consider any representations made by the trade union representatives, and

(b) reply to those representations, and, if he rejects any of those representations, give his reasons."

Government amendments to the proposed amendment: (a), leave out lines 1 to 5 and insert—

'(4A) The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment Regulations 1981, in their application to the transfer of the dockyard undertaking or any part of it, shall have effect as if, for regulation 10 (duty to inform and consult trade union representatives), there were substituted the provisions of subsections (4B) to (4D) below, and (unless the remedy provided by section *(Failure to inform or consult trade unions: High Court and Court of Session remedies)* is invoked) the remedies by way of complaint to a industrial tribunal provided for by, and the other provisions of, regulation 11 shall be available and shall apply in relation to those subsections as they would in relation to regulation 10 or any corresponding provision of it.'.

(b), in line 8, leave out 'trade unions' and insert 'independent trade unions recognised by him in respect of the employees'.

(c), in line 9, after 'shall', insert 'in accordance with subsection (8) below,'.

(d), in line 14, leave out 'effected'.

(e), in line 15, leave out '(the Secretary of State)'.

(f), in line 17, after 'employees', insert 'or, if he envisages that no measures will be so taken, that fact'.

(g), in line 18, leave out 'transferee envisages he (the transferee)' and insert 'company which is to become their employer envisages that it'.

(h), in line 20, leave out from 'to' to end of line 21 and insert 'those employees or, if the company envisages that no measures will be so taken, that fact.

(4BB) The company which is to become their employer shall give to the Secretary of State such information at such a time as will enable him to perform the duty imposed on him by virtue of subsection (4B)*(d)* above.'.

(i), in line 22, after 'State', insert ', where he envisages that he will, in connection with the transfer, be taking measures in relation to employees in respect of whom an independent trade union is recognised by him,'.

(j), in line 28, at end insert—

'(4D) If in any case there are special circumstances which render it not reasonably practicable for the Secretary of State to perform a duty imposed on him by subsection (4B) or (4C) above, he shall take all such steps towards performing that duty as are reasonably practicable in the circumstances.'.

Consequential amendments to the Bill: (k), in page 2, line 13, leave out 'each employee' and insert 'the employees'.

(l), in page 3, line 19, at end insert—

'"trade union" and "independent trade union" have the same meaning as in the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974 and "recognised", in relation to an independent trade union, means recognised to any extent for the purpose of collective bargaining (within the meaning of the Employment Protection Act 1975);

and any information which is to be given to the representatives of a trade union shall be delivered to them, or sent by post to an address notified by them to the employer, or sent by post to the union at the address of its head or main office.'.

(m), new clause *Failure to inform or consult trade unions: High Court and Court of Session remedies*—

'(1) A trade union as respects which the Secretary of State has a duty under section 1(4B) or (4C) above to give information or enter into consultations may, where it alleges that the Secretary of State has failed to fulfil that duty, bring an action in the High Court for a declaration as to whether or not he has failed to fulfil that duty, and the Court may make a declaration accordingly.

(2) In Scotland, a trade union as respects which the Secretary of State has a duty under section 1(4B) or (4C) above to give information or enter into consultations may, where it alleges that the Secretary of State has failed to fulfil

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

that duty, raise an action in the Court of Session for a declarator as to whether or not he has failed to fulfil that duty, and the Court may make a declarator accordingly.

(3) No proceedings may be brought under this section if a complaint to an industrial tribunal has been made under the provisions applied by section 1(4A) above.'.

4 am

Mr. Lee: You have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are to consider together Lords amendments Nos. 2 and 3 and all the Government amendments and consequential amendments to those two amendments. Since they all concern the same regulations it may be for the convenience of the House—particularly at this rather late hour—if I speak about all of them now.

Amendments Nos. 2 and 3 concern the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. As the House will recall, these regulations are the implementation in domestic law of the European Community's acquired rights directive, and their main aim is to safeguard employees' rights when an undertaking is transferred from one employer to another. The sort of rights which are protected include continuity of employment, terms and conditions of service generally, collective agreements and trade union representation.

I should explain that the word "undertaking" is not itself defined in the acquired rights directive, but the 1981 regulations define it so as to exclude any undertaking which is not

"in the nature of a commercial venture".

In Committee the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) expressed doubts about whether, given that definition, the regulations would apply to the transfer of the dockyard employees. The Government's view has always been — and remains — that the dockyard undertaking is indeed an undertaking within the meaning of the regulations. The only doubt, in our view, was whether the transfer of the work force alone would be considered a transfer of part of an undertaking within the regulations. Clause 1(4) of this Bill was originally drafted to remove that one doubt.

When the Bill was considered in another place, doubt was again cast on the applicability of the 1981 regulations to the transfer of the dockyards. Although the Government's position on this had not changed, we took the view that the dockyard work force, which had been led by others to believe—wrongly in our view—that their conditions of service might not be protected, should be left in no doubt that the regulations would apply. The Government therefore decided to include in the Bill itself the statement that the regulations

"shall apply to the transfer of the dockyard undertaking or any part of it whether or not, apart from this provision, the undertaking would be treated as an undertaking in the nature of a commercial venture for the purposes of those regulations."

As the Bill has passed through its various stages in this House and in another place it has become clear that all sides wish to ensure that the 1981 regulations will apply in this case. Amendment No. 2 puts it beyond argument that, as the Government have always maintained, the 1981 regulations will apply in the case of the transfer of the royal dockyards. I hope that the Opposition will welcome the amendment.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The hon. Gentleman said that there were doubts originally as to whether a transfer of the workers alone would come within TUPE '81, whether that was because of the commercial point or because there was no undertaking. Now the amendments are tabled to try to put that right. Will the Under-Secretary tell the House what extra is being transferred — the workers are still being transferred — in order to meet TUPE '81? Is anything else being transferred?

Mr. Lee: In a two-company situation, the managing company would hold the term contract for the provision of services and project contracts. The dockyard or employing company, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would set up with a capital of £50,000, would have the work force and the licence to use the assets. On vesting day the dockyard company becomes the subsidiary company of the managing company. As we have said, our intention is to retain the ownership of the fixed assets without change. Nothing additional is passing in that sense.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The hon. Gentleman has now answered the question. Nothing additional is being passed. The transfer is still a transfer of the workers alone. How can we then say that TUPE '81 applies? Presumably, it is because, by a form of words, we have deemed it to apply, but nothing more is being transferred. I still think that the Minister has considerable problems.

Mr. Lee: If the right hon. Gentleman will let me finish covering Lords amendments Nos. 2 and 3, I shall refer to those points. I acknowledge that, as far as I am aware, nothing extra is being transferred.

The Government did not support Lords amendment No. 3 in another place. The amendment seeks to set out in the Bill particular provisions in the 1981 regulations. As it is clear that the regulations will apply in their entirety, there is no need to spell out in the Bill any individual regulation or any part of a regulation. These regulations are not there to be followed or ignored by the Government as they see fit. They are the law of the land and there is no question of our not complying with them.

It was not, however, only on a point of principle that the Government opposed the amendment, but also because it did not achieve its main aim of clarifying the Bill. The courts do not read the *Official Report* when interpreting legislation, and the Government have the duty to ask what a court would make of an Act which provides in one clause that the 1981 regulations will apply but then singles out one particular clause for special mention and provides specifically that that particular regulation is to be fulfilled. The provisions in the Bill, when enacted could well override the similar provisions in the regulations. That would give rise to problems with other parts of the regulations which refer to those provisions which might have been overridden by the Act. In short, there would be a statutory muddle.

Amendment No. 3 cannot, therefore, remain in the Bill in its present form, and to overcome the drafting problems, my noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has had a number of discussions with representatives of both sides in another place. I am glad to say that they have said that they are content with the amendments that stand in my name—(a) to (m). These remove any doubts caused by the original wording and ensure that the amendments accurately reflect the wishes expressed in another place that the particular

sections of the 1981 regulations relating to the duty imposed on an employer to inform and consult trade union representatives should be repeated in the Bill itself.

In the particular circumstances of the dockyards, it was argued in another place that the trade unions should be able to approach the High Court if, in the opinion of the unions, the Secretary of State had failed in his duty to inform or consult them, as necessary. The new clause which I have tabled, and which has been discussed with those concerned in another place, for consideration as a consequential amendment to the Bill, gives the relevant unions the right to bring an action in the High Court or, in Scotland, the Court of Session, for a declaration or a declarator respectively to that effect. Alternatively, the unions could make a complaint to an industrial tribunal, as provided for under regulation 11 of the 1981 regulations.

It is not, of course, for me, or indeed for this House, to anticipate the reactions of another place if these amendments have to be considered there again, but it is my hope that another place will not insist on its amendments and will accept the amendments which the Government now propose.

I should make clear that the need for compliance with the regulations in this and in all other respects has always been recognised in our plans for introducing commercial management to the royal dockyards by April 1987. No new obligations are imposed on the Ministry of Defence as a result of repeating in the Bill itself some of the provisions of the 1981 regulations, and our time scale remains unchanged.

What the amendment does—this was, I believe, the main intention of another place—is to highlight the need for consultation. The Government continue to hope for realistic discussions with the trade unions representing the work force at the dockyards. If the inclusion of this part of the regulations helps to bring this about, this amendment will have served some purpose. So that no one should be in any doubt, however, the amendment also refers, in words which echo the 1981 regulations, to the fact that if it is not reasonably practicable for the Secretary of State to consult—for example, because of a refusal on the part of the unions to take part in such consultations—it will be sufficient that he shall have taken all such steps to consult

"as are reasonably practicable in the circumstances."

I hope that when the Bill has completed its parliamentary stages, the trade unions will start in earnest the process of consultations.

Mr. O'Neill: This group of amendments, which are primarily concerned with implementing TUPE '81 and seek to ensure that proper consultations take place, are long overdue. The consultation process relating to the contractorisation of the dockyards has had a chequered history. In paragraph 19 of its report dated 10 July 1985 the Select Committee on Defence said:

"The Committee accepts the view of a majority of witnesses that the time allowed for consultation was much too short. We further consider that the MOD's handling of the consultation process has been inept and insensitive."

Tribute must be paid to Lord Denning for taking the relevant phrases and words out of TUPE '81 and enshrining them explicitly in this proposal.

We are still implacably opposed to the contractorisation concept, but we are not blind to the fact that the Government have a large majority and that they may have the legislation in the bag by the end of this week. Therefore, it is essential to establish appropriate means whereby the trade union movement can be consulted and, I hope, conciliated.

We are talking about a relatively short consultation period. The Select Committee on Defence appropriately condemned the Government for their failures on the last occasion. Therefore we hope that they will reconsider the timetable and the proposed date of 6 April 1987. TUPE '81 referred to the consultation period being long enough. Amendment (l) says that the information should be provided in writing. Adequate time should be given to enable the trade unions to respond in writing, and that might take a considerable time.

One notes the recent record of the Ministry of Defence on the amount of time and notice that it has given the trade unions over the manpower target consultation procedures. The manpower target for 1985 should have been notified to the trade unions in April 1984, but it was not notified to the unions until January 1985. The manpower target for 1986 should have been available in April 1985, but it was not available until August 1985. Despite the strictures of the Select Committee on Defence, the Ministry of Defence has a deplorable record over providing information and making it available to the trade unions in a form that they can handle and deal with quickly and effectively.

I am sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you will remember from your previous incarnation as a Minister with responsibility for employment that consultation procedures on redundancy were made available to the unions. When there would have been redundancies involving more than 100 people, 90 days were allowed for consultations and discussions. In a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) reference was made to the likelihood of even more redundancies because of the introduction of new work practices in the dockyards.

Perhaps the proposed consultative process is not new, but we are certainly led to believe that there has to be enough time and that adequate information has to be provided to discuss the legal, economic and social impact on employees. That makes it perfectly clear that at any stage the trade unions will be able to question the selection of a company. They can raise the matter of the legal status of the company and whether or not it has a sufficiency of British interest.

During the debate two firms with substantial American shareholdings were mentioned, and the trade unions could ask whether or not those shareholdings are consistent with undertakings already given. One might say that that is the first fence at which the Government could fall. By that I mean that the unions could if they wished apply to the High Court. In the case of the Court of Session I have been advised that a declarator ab ante could be applied for, and that would stop the Government in their tracks. It would not simply be a matter of the Government having to make a response, because it would enable the objectors to prevent the Government from carrying on with any of the other aspects of giving effect to the contract.

If that is the case, this could be a legal minefield for the Government. If it is not the case, the Under-Secretary's noble Friend in another place will have rather a difficult job convincing the noble Lords that the exercise they have gone through was worth while. In the words of the Government, substantial concessions have been made to the representations in another place. Is the Minister telling

[Mr. O'Neill]

us that those substantial concessions will enable the whole consultative process to be carried through in three or four weeks? It seems that in the case of Devonport the period is getting shorter because we have already taken a month out of the process.

If the Minister intends that the result of this wretched Bill will be a consultative process lasting perhaps three or four weeks, he has another think coming, because he will find that difficult. If the trade unions are to fulfil their responsibilities to their members, they will need to take far longer than that. The record of the Ministry of Defence on consultations is not a good one. If the trade unions are not given sufficient time, we will see long legal wrangles on legality and on the economic and social impacts on the communities in Devonport and Rosyth.

These things are matters of interpretation and the courts will have to decide. We can only indicate what we consider to be the substance of this group of amendments. As I said earlier, Lord Denning has spelt that out in detail in his amendment and the Minister's amendment clearly shows that the unions will have a means of raising their misgivings.

As I understand it — perhaps the Minister can confirm my understanding—they will be able to do that only when the Government have finally chosen a contractor for each of the two yards. The process of consultation cannot start until the Government have chosen the contracting company.

Mr. Lee *indicated dissent.*

Mr. O'Neill: The Minister is shaking his head and others will have to advise us what the outcome may be. But, as we understand it, the words are drawn in such a way that it will be only when the contractors have been selected that the process of consultation can start. If the Minister does not think that that is the case I can only say that trade unions will not waste their time entering into consultations about hypothetical firms which may or may not have plans for the contractual process. If he believes that the contractual process can somehow start as soon as the Bill receives the Royal Assent, he is living in a fool's paradise.

Labour Members know that that is a fool's paradise which he and his hon. Friends have constructed over the years and months that have preceded this evening. We do not wish the legislation well. We recognise that this is an improvement, in the sense that it affords workers clearer and more explicit rights than they have enjoyed before and remedies which we suspect they will have to exercise sooner rather than later on the whole question of consultation. We get the impression that, despite the negotiations and discussions that have taken place with another place, the Government, like the Bourbons, have learned nothing and forgotten nothing.

Dr. Owen: This is a much more important amendment. Indeed, like the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), I think that it is important to congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Denning. It is important, too, to remember that Lord Denning was a Recorder of the city of Plymouth and that he has great affection for the city. Indeed, when he began to examine the legislation he started his memorandum by saying that he was on the side of the dockyard matey. I must say that I am, too. It is apparent that the Government have taken no notice whatever of the interests of the dockyard matey.

I do not want to embarrass the Minister, but on 16 July he wrote to the hon. Member for Clackmannan saying:

"I really do think that the amendment"—

effectively the one that we have now—

"would be unwise from all our points of view."

He went on to say:

"We could not go as far as adding Lord Denning's new point on the High Court"—

but now on 24 July we suddenly have it.

The reason is that the Bill is under serious threat of not being able to meet its timetables. The Government fear that in another place they would not be able to sustain the Bill. The importance of this is that one would no longer be able to go through the industrial tribunal, but would have to go too the High Court.

First, let us be clear, that there is no doubt whatever that the consultations must be with the contracting party. There is no way that they can be with the Government. Take the case of Devonport and Mr. Johnston, the general manager of the dockyard there. Mr. Johnston, as general manager of the dockyard, cannot have a consultation wearing one hat, while in another hat he is putting his application in to be the contractor who will be the commercial organisation who will employ those people. There is no way that the High Court will accept that Mr. Johnston is capable of conducting negotiations under two hats. There is no question that the wording of the amendment means that the consultations will have to come after the tenders have been taken and the contracts awarded.

The Government may think that they will now have a generalised consultation with the dear old Ministry of Defence, that that will meet the book and that there will be no other questions, but that will be challenged in the High Court. They have not got a prayer. The whole purpose of the consultations is that the contracting parties are in effect making arrangements under the terms of this new legislation. The importance of that is that the Government cannot possibly meet any of the deadlines. I do not know whether the Minister in accepting the amendment knows that. I suspect that he does, and that he is getting his legislation and saving the face of the former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). The latter has landed us all in the cart with this ludicrous legislation. The Minister will then, I hope, announce shortly that he is going for a Government plc. I hope that he also does the same for Rosyth. There is no possibility of going ahead in Devonport, unless the Minister wants to face an action in the High Court. I understand that there is every intention to take the matter to the High Court.

There was one marvellous moment in the Minister's speech when he implied that there was a great tradition of Ministry of Defence consultation. That is just a joke. There has been no consultation on this legislation. The lack of consultation has been criticised by the all-party Select Committees, all of which have looked at the matter. During the process of this legislation great damage has been done to the word consultation. No one in the dockyard believes that the Minister has ever been consulted seriously. The Minister should be under no illusion. As a result of the new clause, proper consultation on the Bill will be forced. It will be consultation with the

contracting party,. and things are likely to go to the High Court. There is no way that this legislation can now be squeezed in without the contractor facing the certainty of legal action, with all the costs and delay that that will involve. The amendment is, therefore, important, and I congratulate Lord Denning, former Master of the Rolls, on being so effective.

Mr. Gordon Brown: There are good reasons why the House should not be detained to consider these amendments, but, like other hon. Members, I do not believe that the Minister appreciates the seriousness or importance of the amendments passed in the other place.

The Minister does not seem to appreciate the full extent of the duty that is placed on him and his Department in respect of consultation. The amendments passed in the other place, which have been refined before being brought before us, call for a process of consultation. They call, not just for a meeting here and there, but for a process of continuous consultation. They also state that that consultation must take place long before the transfer of the dockyards to private contractors. The amendments also make it clear that that consultation must involve the transfer of information in a written form and that the Government must await the response of the trade unions and the workers' representatives to their information.

Above all, the amendments make it clear that the consultation is about the biggest questions as they affect employees—the legal, economic and social implications of any transfer of the dockyard management to the private sector. The legal, social and economic consequences involve everything affecting the individual employees and the collective group of them at Rosyth and Devonport. The Government will have to be honest about the likely job losses as a result of the transfer, and about the threat to apprenticeships. They must explain what is likely to happen to the local economies in those dockyard areas, and they must also explain in detail what is likely to happen to the rights of individual employees, and of employees as trade union members.

Having read the reports of the debates in another place, I cannot understand how the Minister can say that his timetable remains entirely unchanged. It is worse than that, because he has told us that his timetable has slipped for tenders coming into his office. That means that there will be less time for consultation on the tenders and on what any preferred contractor is to do. The Minister insists, however, that he will transfer the dockyards to the private sector in April 1987.

4.30 pm

The position is even worse than that, because the Minister has told us bluntly that he intends that the private contractors shall be in the dockyards in December. In 1985, when the Ministry of Defence announced its first timetable for the transfer to the private sector, it hinted that there would be a period of parallel running with a private contractor and the Ministry of Defence from the spring of 1987. However, the Minister has confirmed that it is intended that the period of parallel running will begin in December.

In one sense, the transfer will take place in December, although the formal vesting day will be April 1987. The Minister leaves us with the possibility that he will make a decision about a private contractor, the preferred contractor, in November, and that the contractor will be in each yard in December.

The Ministry's record on consultation over this entire business is pathetic and shabby. That has been said by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), and my hon. Friend drew attention to what the Select Committee on Defence had said about previous consultations. Having issued a consultative document, the Ministry tried to complete the consultation within 13 weeks. The Select Committee took the view that it was not serious about consultation and claimed that through their handling of the consultation process the Government had forfeited much of the good will that might have been forthcoming for any attempt to secure a long-term future for the yard. Having received a severe and serious rebuke from the Select Committee, I would have thought the Minister would learn from the mistakes that had been made and construct a timetable, with or without the amendment that has been introduced by Lord Denning, that would allow for proper consultation.

I shall give the Minister one example of the problem that he faces, and I hope that he will explain how he will overcome it. Amendment No. 3 says that the Secretary of State must inform the representatives of the trade unions long enough before the transfer about the measures which the transferee

"envisages he . . . will, in connection with the transfer, take in relation to such of those employees as become employees of the transferee after the transfer."

That is a detailed requirement that is placed on the Secretary of State. It is a period of consultation within which information must be exchanged between the trade unions and the Government, and they must be given time to respond.

For that period of consultation to begin, there must be a transferee and a nominated contractor. There must be someone who has been nominated as the contractor to take over Devonport, and someone else who has likewise been nominated to take over Rosyth. The Minister tells us, however, that he will not be in a position to make an announcement until the middle, or towards the end, of November. That period of consultation cannot begin until the announcement is made, and I hope that if he is going ahead with the transfer the announcement will be made at the first instance.

Towards the end of November the Minister will announce the contractor who will take over the dockyard, and he proposes that the contractor will be inside the yard and working at the beginning of December. The period of consultation on the implications of the transfer will probably be about three or four days, and the maximum of 10 days. Does the Minister ask us seriously to accept that that is a long enough period for consultation to allow all the legal, social and economic implications of what he is doing to be understood? There is no doubt in my mind, and the minds of all Opposition Members, I think, that the Minister plans to effect part of the transfer by the beginning of December. It is an unacceptable timetable, and quite the worst possible circumstances in which to expect reasonable consultation. I can hardly believe that letters could be delivered and exchanged within the time, far less that serious consultation can take place.

There is one other problem that the Minister has to resolve. The Secretry of State for Scotland wrote me a letter on 16 July, in which there was a new announcement of Government policy affecting the Ministry of Defence, but announced by the Secretary of State for Scotland. He

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

said that there were potential reductions in the numbers of people required in Rosyth and Devonport dockyards, and that it had been known for some time that the defence work load available to Rosyth and Devonport would decline. Although some of the unallocated programme may go to Devonport and Rosyth as a result of the changes, and perhaps also some additional commercial work, the implication of the letter is that that could do nothing more than offset some of the job losses that have for some time been a possibility.

The Ministry of Defence talks about how serious it is about consultation. A policy has been announced in a letter from the Secretary of State for Scotland that the defence work load at Rosyth will decline. The Minister has never consulted the trade unions on that nor previously informed Members of Parliament during 70 hours of Committee work on the Bill. An assumption that there will be job losses is written into the letter. There was a lack of consultation with the trades unions before the Secretary of State for Scotland — not the Ministry of Defence — announced that to me in a letter. It seems that the Minister has learnt nothing from the period of discussion and debate, which has been fraught with so many difficulties and criticisms from such a wideranging group of people about the Minister's failure to consult.

If the Minister does not change his timetable, he faces not only one court action in either the Court of Session in Scotland or courts in England, but a series of court actions on a range of different issues, which will make the life of the Ministry of Defence intolerable and mean that the fate of the dockyards will be decided in the courts of law instead of where it should properly be decided, in the House, after proper consultation with the trade unions.

We have said all along that the Bill and its proposals are bad for the taxpayer because they will cost more; that they are bad for the work force because they will mean redundancies and deteriorating conditions of service; and that they are bad for the proper defences of the country. Under the Minister's new announcement, the running of the dockyards may be put in the hands of yet another foreign company. It is equally bad that the Minister is prepared to accept Lord Denning's amendment — I praise his work in another place — in theory, but in practice will do nothing to make a reality of the consultation that he promises. He is therefore treating the work force and the trades unions with contempt. If he does not change his mind over the next few weeks, he will face a series of legal actions in the courts that will force him to climb down. I wish that he would be honest with the House and say that his timetable has to change and that his Bill has no chance of being implemented before a general election, which should properly decide the issue in the constituency that I represent.

4.38 am

Sitting suspended.

4.50 am

On resuming—

Mr. Douglas: I shall be brief, but not because the amendment is not important.

Others have paid tribute to Lord Denning. He has drawn attention to consultation and revealed what we did not previously know about the Government in that regard. They have laid on a veneer of consultation, but tried to drive through their views, which have been essentially those of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). They have tried to convince the work force that the option that they always had in mind was the realistic one.

The Select Committee on Defence drew attention to the farce of consultation in two unanimous reports, the Government's responses to which were pretty pithy. Nobody could have had any faith that the Government's consultation process was meaningful. We know that the Government intend to attack fairly severely the load on dockyards, and to reduce the naval load from 80 per cent. to 70 per cent. Unless there is some other work about which we know nothing, that represents an attack on and an undermining of the work force.

The Government acknowledge — my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) mentioned the Secretary of State for Scotland's letter — that the naval ships that are being developed and built will require less manpower than earlier ones. That also will entail a reduction in the work force. The Government tell the Select Committee and the Public Accounts Committee that they will achieve a saving. They will quantify the saving in money terms, but not in employment terms.

Perhaps the Minister will tell us how there will be a reduction in the load factor, a change of quality, a saving and, more important, what will happen to the labour force. The Minister has an obligation to the communities that will be affected to come clean. Communities can make adjustments to employment changes in time. In Fife, we have had to make enormous adjustments to the decline in the mining labour force. Unfortunately, that process continues, but communities can adjust if they are given time and proper Government support.

All those factors are missing in the legislation. I shall not plead that we should employ people in the dockyards because it is a socially worthy thing to do, but the dockyards are in the public domain and the Government employ those people, so there is an overwhelming obligation on the House to ensure that the Government discharge their duties responsibly.

The Defence Select Committee unanimously criticised the Government for a lack of consultation and unanimously cast doubts on the measure. Government expect the Opposition to oppose and criticise legislation, but legislation with any merit will gather friends and support during its passage. At each stage, this paltry four-clause Bill has had fewer friends. There is no supporter from any dockyard community on the Government Benches. I know that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) has difficulties because she is a member of the Chairman's Panel.

I plead with the Minister, if he cannot scrap the proposals, at least to declare that the Government's intention is to opt for a Government-owned plc — I would prefer no change—and to see that the timetable for consultation is adhered to meaningfully and discussed with an extremely loyal labour force which has brought benefit to the nation.

Mr. Lee: No one would welcome a lengthy reply, but I must make some brief points.

We are and have been ready to consult since April 1985. Contractor selection will be completed by late November and consultation will continue through to vesting day. As

I said in relation to the timetable which I set out earlier, we are talking about a full four months between the selection of the contractor for the particular yards and the date of 6 April when commercial management begins.

We have provided alternative procedures by which a union may allege that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has failed in his obligation to inform or consult. My Department will continue to spare no effort to comply with what will be its statutory obligations. For that reason, we are confident that proceedings alleging a failure to inform or consult will be bound to fail, whether they are commenced in an industrial tribunal, the High Court or the Court of Session. At an industrial tribunal, a union may seek a declaration under regulation 11 of the 1981 regulations that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has failed to inform or consult. If that allegation is well founded, the tribunal will make a declaration to that effect, and if appropriate, order the payment of compensation to affected employees of up to two weeks' pay. A tribunal's declaration would not vitiate the effectiveness in law of a transfer. An appeal from an industrial tribunal would lie on a point of law to an employment appeal tribunal and thereafter, with leave, an appeal would be taken to the Court of Appeal or, in Scotland, to the Court of Session.

The Bill will now also provide for an alternative procedure for establishing a failure to fulfil statutory obligations. A union will have to choose. It could not begin in the High Court and then decide to go to an industrial tribunal; the procedures are mutually exclusive. The High Court can make a declaration as to whether or not the Secretary of State has failed to fulfil his duty to inform or consult. In Scotland the Court of Session may make a declarator to the same effect. The alternative procedure would not allow the High Court or Court of Session to set aside the transfer of the dockyard undertaking at either dockyard authorised by the Secretary of State.

Mr. O'Neill: The courts cannot stop the process of transfer, but they can freeze it until such time as the consultations are properly conducted. That could seriously delay the programme that we consider to be far too short. That is the significant change from Lord Denning's suggestion.

Mr. Lee: That is the hon. Gentleman's judgment. It is not mine, the Government's or Ministers'. We have every intention of bringing in commercial management by 6 April 1987.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 2, as amended, agreed to.

Government amendments (a) to (j) to Lords amendment No. 3 agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 3, as amended, agreed to.

Consequential Government amendments (k) to (m) agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Consumer Protection

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Firewords (Safety) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 30th June, be approved.— *[Mr. Mather.]*

Question agreed to.

New Towns

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Development Board for Rural Wales (Extinguishment of Liabilities) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved. — *[Mr. Mather.]*

Question agreed to.

£2 Note

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Mather.]*

5.2 am

Sir Marcus Fox (Shipley): I thought that it was a stroke of luck when I heard that I had succeeded in getting an Adjournment debate. At 5 o'clock in the morning, I am reviewing that rather rapidly. I assure my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury that I shall not keep him any longer than necessary to put across the points I wish to make. I thought that today was going to be a memorable day, which it was. It was memorable because of the royal wedding, especially as we now have a Duke and Duchess of York, which gives me particular gratification. The memorable day has extended into a memorable morning. I hope the good news will not stop there. Perhaps my hon. Friend will say a few kind words about my subject for debate and suggest that we should introduce a £2 note.

I do not ask my hon. Friend to go back to the debate we had on 20 December 1983. It only seems like yesterday when we debated the introduction of a plastic pound. That was thrown out of court, for a number of reasons, one of which was the ease of counterfeiting, the difficulties of watermarks, and so on. The Minister accepted that the policy of introducing a £1 coin was too well advanced.

A number of things have happened since then. One is that we have virtually conquered inflation. Only in the past few days, a Bank of England spokesman said that there were no plans to introduce a £2 note. He said:

"the spending power of a £2 note today would be less than that of the old 10 shilling note before its withdrawal 17 years ago."

That would be a dangerous argument for the Treasury to accept. It would be to assume that inflation would not be held at its present level, or go lower, as we expect, but that it might go back to the level of the old days when it was in the teens or, dare I suggest, the 26 per cent. under another Government. The argument of inflation as mentioned in our last debate has, I think, receded.

The acceptance of the pound coin is a fact. I do not argue that there should be a change in that direction. The general public feel that there are far too many coins in our purses and pockets, and there are constant complaints. My proposal will go a considerable way towards readjusting the balance.

In the earlier debate on the £1 coin, the Minister said that he would reconsider if there were a more durable substance. I am happy to tell my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary that perhaps the largest company making banknote paper has confirmed that paper is now available which has twice the life of the old £1 note. If such paper had been available a couple of years ago, the £1 coin might not have been introduced.

The company to which I refer exports to about 120 companies around the world which use this high-durability paper to produce banknotes; yet in the United Kingdom, where one would expect this use to be encouraged, it is used only for higher denomination notes. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary told me that it would cost £3 million a year to keep the old £1 note in circulation. In the case of a higher denomination note of more lasting quality, presumably the cost would be nothing like £3 million a year. If private banks in Scotland can produce their own £1 notes, and bear the cost, is it beyond the Treasury's capability to introduce such notes?

Another reason why I thought that I should raise this subject is that there seems to be a plot to introduce the £2 coin. Indeed, I saw my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary pull one out of his pocket a few minutes ago. To my horror, today's newspaper contains an advertisement by the Royal Mint which tells us that a new £2 coin is available from post office now. Such coins have been available for several weeks from the parliamentary post office. They have been passed around. One member of the Whips Office — that certainly gives substance to the story — has been regularly passing the new £2 coin to taxi drivers whenever he can. He enjoys it.

The advertisement says that the £2 coin has been struck for a special reason, but, like the £1 coin, it is legal tender. I believe that we should therefore have a full debate on it. As I was outmanoeuvred last time, because the £1 coin had been produced before I could debate the matter, I hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will confirm that at the moment there are no plans to introduce a £2 coin. We can argue a great deal about whether there should be a £2 note or coin.

Seven coins are in circulation—too many. If another coin is introduced, the time will rapidly approach when our coinage system has to be reorganised. Coin size bears no resemblance to value. The cost to the Treasury of that reorganisation will be considerable. The introduction of a £2 note would lessen the need to embark upon such costs.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary accepts that there is a gap in our currency. In the chemistry laboratory, the weights one, two, and five are important. The same proportions apply to some of our coins, with the 10p, 20p and 50p, but there has always been a gap between £1 and £5. There is nothing in the middle. However, we have £10 notes, £20 notes and £50 notes. It would have helped us a considerable time ago if there had been a £2 note. It was never obvious when change was being given in pound notes. However, now if one changes a fiver for a small purchase and gets four £1 coins, it is obvious to many people that there is a need for something in the middle range. I could give numerous examples. Canada, for example, only needs four coins—one cent, five cent, 10 cent and 25 cent pieces—and they manage extremely well with the rest in bank notes. The United States has been quoted regularly.

These are early days in this debate. However, I have had support from people in all walks of life and from retailers and traders. Let us have our £1 coin but look to the future. I believe that a £2 note would make the Treasury a little more popular than at present—I am trying to be kind. Perhaps the time is approaching when popularity may be acceptable, even in that important Department.

5.10 am

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): I was going to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) on obtaining this debate. However, my compliments and congratulations would have been in better order a few hours ago, and perhaps this is not the ideal time to discuss such important matters as possible £2 notes and the structure of the currency. Nevertheless, I would like to thank my hon. Friend for the courtesy with which he has put forward his ideas and also for their relative brevity. I shall try to respond in kind.

I should like to add one or two footnotes to the debate we had two and a half years ago. It is interesting that one of the advantages of the £1 coin, which I then mentioned, was that it would be useful for slot machines and vending machines. I am glad to say that in gas and electricity meters, telephones, ticket machines, food and cigarette dispensing machines and so on there has now been a substantial measure of conversion and the coin is useful for that purpose.

I was much criticised at the time by the charities, which said that people would never slip a £1 coin into an envelope and send it and that they would lose out. What has happened is that some people now send fivers. Of course, we need only one person to send a fiver and we get as much as five people sending a pound note each. Charities also found that whereas nobody would fold up notes to put in collection tins, people have now been putting £1 coins into the tins. Therefore, the pattern has changed a little differently from what was expected at the time and I am glad that the ideas we had have been borne out in practice.

We are not replaying that debate. My hon. Friend fairly accepts that the £1 coin is now established. I think that the point he raised about the gap between the £5 note and the £1 coin is interesting. However, historically it is not very different from the gap when I was a schoolboy, between the 10-shilling note and the half crown. Indeed, going back a few years before that, when the pattern of currency was the same, the purchasing power of the 10-shilling note and the half crown was relatively greater.

The problem with a £2 note is that there is not much to lead us to believe that it would be treated by the public in a manner different from the £1 note. Double denomination notes have not proved very satisfactory in the few countries where they have been tried. For example, in France the 20-franc note has obtained only about 4 per cent. of the note circulation. In the United States, the $2 note has achieved less than that—only about 3 per cent. of the note circulation. If there ever were a case for a £2 note, it has probably passed. The difficulty, which I explained to my hon. Friend and to many others when we introduced the £1 coin, was not just the cost of replacing notes rapidly but the difficulty of keeping notes in circulation in good enough condition.

My hon. Friend referred to the better quality paper that can be used. I can identify from what he said the company to which he was referring, and I have discussed the matter with it. However, it is not just the paper, but the treatment of it, and the way in which the note is used. The pound note was circulating like a coin, by being folded up into a small size and stuffed into pockets and purses. No note will last long in those conditions. I remain to be convinced that the same sort of thing would not happen to a £2 note.

One of the things that leads me to say that is that there has been a shift in the public's use of notes in the past few years towards the higher denominations. This is not part of Government policy in the management of the currency; it is the choice of the public. In 1982, the number of £5 notes in circulation formed 27·6 per cent.—well over a quarter—of the notes in circulation, by value. Today, it is below 20 per cent., as the proportion taken by £10 and £20 notes rises. That suggests that the £2 note would be more likely to be treated like the old £1 than like a £5 note, which is becoming less used.

On that basis, I am not convinced that there is a powerful case for a £2 note. At one time there might have been a useful slot for it. I accept my hon. Friend's explanation of £1, £2 and £5, and also that we have rather a lot of coins. This is inevitably what happens after a period of rapid inflation, such as we had in the 1970s. One has to reorganise the coinage, because in the coins of the old sizes, the lower denominations are much too large for their purchasing power.

We have taken a number of steps. First, decimalisation gave us an opportunity to change the size of the penny, and subsequently there have been other changes—for example, the introduction of the 20p coin, which does service for two large 10p coins. That has served to reduce the weight of the currency. I agree that so many different coins make a certain untidiness, and I have no doubt that there will be changes to make a better balance without too much weight.

Although many people have said that the £1 coin contributes a great deal extra to the weight of the coinage, it is substantially lighter than the 10p coin. The 10p and 5p, and to some extent the 50p, coins cause the main weight in the purse or pocket. I am sure that my hon. Friend is conscious of that, and of the fact that we are considering what changes might be needed. None is immediately planned, but we consider the subject, and research is being done on it.

My hon. Friend pointed out that Scottish banks can maintain a circulation of pound notes at their own expense. That is true, but they do not have a national responsibility for keeping that type of currency in good condition. The Bank of England, on behalf of the Government, would be bound to keep it in good condition. Although Scottish pound notes are still quite plentiful, I am afraid that they are beginning to show signs of rapid deterioration just as English pound notes did a few years ago. Even in America I understand that much more serious consideration is now being given to replacing the dollar bill by a dollar coin. I am told that what will swing it will be when the dollar is a minimum basic amount for subway fares. As soon as slot machine requirements reach a certain point, a coin will be needed.

My hon. Friend also asked me about the £2 coin. I assure him absolutely that at present there are no plans to introduce a £2 coin for general circulation. The reason for the £2 denomination of the Commonwealth Games coin is partly because the tradition of having a crown, which is only 25p, has made it rather expensive to produce suitable commemorative coins with so low a face value. It costs quite a lot to produce a special coin for such an occasion. In many respects, 25p does not now meet the costs of production and distribution. It was felt that the new denomination, which was not already in circulation, might be suitable. For that purpose, the £2 coin was chosen.

That amount has been represented by a coin in the past. It was a gold coin then. In modern times, however, a £2 coin is an innovation. For practical reasons, we could not have a £2 coin of the kind that we have struck for the Commonwealth Games this week in general circulation alongside the 10p coin, which is of almost identical diameter. It would be much too confusing. This is not an attempt to upstage my hon. Friend's idea. We wanted merely to have a convenient denomination for a commemorative coin. I am glad that it has received a good welcome, and it will serve very well its purpose as a commemorative coin.

My hon. Friend said that it is legal tender, and he is quite right. Technically, all commemorative coins are legal

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

tender. We could go into a sweet shop with one of the old commemorative crowns and use it to buy a bar of chocolate, just as we could use the £2 Commonwealth Games coin. However, that does not mean that we plan to introduce it as a general currency coin. If ever that time came, it would have to be considered in the light of the circumstances.

I apologise for having been unable to give a more enthusiastic welcome to my hon. Friend's idea. A £2 note might have been convenient at one time, but it would not be convenient now. My hon. Friend referred to the most telling statistic: that £2 buys less now than a 10-shilling note would have bought when it was withdrawn from circulation. In 1969 it was felt that that amount of purchasing power would no longer sensibly be represented by a note. The same reasons led us to issue the £1 coin and phase out the £1 note. The arguments since 1969 over the lowest note denomination and what should be represented by a coin have changed very little.

I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that we have given careful thought to his idea. As he may know, I have a personal interest in coinage and currency. I have studied the subject for many years, and for that reason I always look at ideas of the kind put forward by my hon. Friend with an open mind to see whether they might be worth following up. I have looked at his idea, but I am not convinced that it would be right to introduce a £2 note. However, I thank him for the way in which he has put forward the suggestion.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes past Five o'clock am.

House of Commons

Thursday 24 July 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL

PONTYPRIDD MARKETS FAIRS AND TOWN HALL BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

MILFORD HAVEN PORT AUTHORITY BILL
As amended, considered.
Ordered,
That Standing Order 205 (Notice of third reading) be suspended, and that the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*
Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

MERSEY DOCKS AND HARBOUR BILL *[Lords]*
Read a Second time, and committed.

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*
Order for further consideration, as amended, read.
To be further considered upon Tuesday 21 October.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered upon Tuesday 21 October.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]* *(By Order)*

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Tuesday 21 October.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Criminal Damage

1. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to seek to reduce the incidence of criminal damage.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The Home Office crime prevention unit has issued guidance to local authority chief executives and chief officers of police on local crime prevention practice, including environmental improvements and anti-vandalism campaigns. The Department of the Environment is taking a number of initiatives to reduce the incidence of crime on estates; community programme resources are being used for cleaning up graffiti and criminal damage; and the Department of Education and Science has commissioned research on the nature and extent of wilful damage to educational buildings and property and on cost-effective and practical solutions.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Home Secretary confirm that since 1979 and 1983, when enormous promises were made, crime rates have soared and the incidence of criminal damage offences has risen dreadfully so that today, in Conservative Britain, one such offence is committed, on average, every minute? Will he at least ensure that local authorities are given adequate capacity to respond to and clear up after such offences without delay?

Mr. Hurd: In the hon. Gentleman's area of South Yorkshire there has been a reduction in such incidents over the past six months, so the pattern varies. The hon. Gentleman is too fair a debater to fall into the trap of trying to argue that these evils were invented in 1979. Of course they were not. I agree that we need the multi-agency approach which I outlined in my reply, and which certainly involves the local authorities in putting things right.

Mr. Colvin: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the damage, admittedly not all of it criminal, done by hippie convoys? What action will his Department take following the Prime Minister's initiative in the working group of Ministers to liaise with the Department of the Environment about providing additional powers for both police and planning authorities so that they can take immediate action on trespass, thereby preventing what could result in considerable damage to property?

Mr. Hurd: We have been in close concert, not only with the Department of the Environment, but with hon. Members and their constituents. This morning my hon. Friend the Minister of State met a delegation which included my hon. Friend's constituents. As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State said in another place, we are close to being able to reveal the proposal which we intend to add to the Public Order Bill and which will come to the House for consideration.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the incidence of criminal damage is only part of a greater pattern of lawlessness? Does he also agree that protestations from Opposition Members about such

matters would carry a great deal more weight if prospective Labour parliamentary candidates and councillors did not use every opportunity to attack the police?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. In practice they ran down the police when they were in office, and many of the Labour party's candidates and local government leaders run down the police at every opportunity even now.

Mr. Kaufman: How does the Home Secretary reconcile the statement in the 1983 Conservative election manifesto, that already street crime was being reduced and public confidence improved in some of the worst inner city areas, with the 73 per cent. increase in criminal damage since this Government came to office?

Mr Hurd: There is no doubt about the continued increase in crime, including criminal damage, which has now been going on for 30 years. The distinction between the two main parties is that we have a coherent policy for dealing with all aspects of this problem, whereas some, though not all, members of the Labour party, which is far from having a coherent policy, do their best to undermine what is being achieved.

"Black Widow" Catapults.

2. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representation he has received concerning the unrestricted sale of "Black Widow" catapults.

The Minister of State, Home Department (Mr. Giles Shaw): A few hon. Members, the Association of County Councils and one police authority have recently expressed concern about "Black Widow" catapults.

Mr. Shepherd: Is my hon. Friend aware that other organisations, as well as the public, are deeply perturbed about this particular variant of the old-fashioned catapult, not least the RSPCA, which considers it to be potentially foully lethal to animals? Does he agree that any implement that advertises the capability of being able to heave a 5/16 in steel ball 225 yards with accuracy is not an inoffensive weapon? Will he take a very much more stringent attitude to this question than he has shown in recent answers to parliamentary questions, and advise carefully on how this instrument should be sold?

Mr. Shaw: I am very concerned at the sale of a wide range of implements that can be misused in public. My hon. Friend will know that the law on using at item as an offensive weapon is sufficiently tight to catch this kind of offence, should it be committed in public. As my hon. Friend draws attention to the fact that these items are widespread and that there is public concern on the issue, I shall monitor the situation extremely carefully.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the Minister make representations to W. H. Smith to try to stop it selling the magazine "Survival Weaponry Techniques", which glorifies weapons such as these "Black Widow" catapults and offers a huge range of wicked weapons for sale by post to teenagers and others without any real restraint whatsoever? Will he recognise that this is an urgent matter about which something should be done, instead of merely talking about it?

Mr. Shaw: I fully recognise that point, and in relation to a range of issues I am considering whether we can provide for the kind of voluntary guidance that was given in the case of martial arts equipment. A number of issues are involved that may require to be handled in that way, and I shall consider the hon. and learned Gentleman's point.

Mr. Dickens: Is my hon. Friend aware that the "Black Widow" is only the junior model and that the "Diablo" model, which is advertised in this week's "Shooting Times and Country" magazine, which is in the Library, is a killer which has a sight, an arm rest and pistol grip? The unrestricted sale of these weapons must be stopped or we shall present the police and ourselves with an enormous problem if we do not tackle this matter completely.

Mr. Shaw: I understand my hon. Friend's anxiety. He will know that a large range of similar devices are on sale which can be used safely under certain controlled conditions. What concerns my hon. Friend and the House is the wide availability of such items to those who will not use them under trained and careful conditions. It is that problem that I shall endeavour to deal with.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Minister aware that the "Black Widow" and the other catapult are made by Barnett International, which also manufactures crossbows, about which this House has expressed concern? For some strange reason the firm received the 1985 Queen's award for export and technology. Is there any innocent use to which these lethal catapults can be put? If not, ought there not to be some quick action by the Home Office on their sale?

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. The company did indeed win the Queen's award for export, because 85 per cent. of its entire production goes overseas. In relation to domestic sale, the hon. Gentleman is equally correct that widespread abuse could occur from the use of these weapons. Equally, there are a number of clubs which make legitimate use of these weapons on private premises. What we have to do is to strike a balance of where we can take discriminate action as opposed to merely taking the view that everything which can be abused must be the subject of legislation preventing its sale. Otherwise, knives and scissors would be in the latter category.

Sunday Trading

3. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions for breaches of the Sunday trading laws have taken place since 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): I regret that, as yet, the information is not centrally available. Responsibility for the enforcement of the law governing Sunday trading is a matter for the local authorities.

Mrs. Roe: The figures which have been presented to me are considerable and they highlight the fact that there is a need for reform. Would my hon. and learned Friend welcome an initiative to introduce partial deregulation for leisure retailing, especially for garden centres?

Mr. Tony Banks: He would rather be shot at with a "Black Widow".

Mr. Waddington: The Auld Committee thought that there was no sensible alternative to complete deregulation

of shop hours. That remains the Government's view, but obviously we would have to form a view on any private Member's Bill which was introduced in the next Session.

Mr. Ashton: Why is it that when trade unionists break the law the Government crack down on them with a very heavy hand, but when employers break it and compel their workers to work on Sundays, without any extra pay and even advertise that they are opening on Sundays — for example do-it-yourself shops — the Government and local authorities take no notice?

Mr. Waddington: We are talking about the Shops Act 1950, and section 71 of that Act says that it is the duty of every local authority to enforce, within its district, the provisions of the Act. Enforcement is a matter for the local authorities; it is not a matter for the Government.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that if the Government are in difficulties over the Sunday trading laws they need only to adopt the Shops (No. 2) Bill, which is listed on today's Order Paper? The Bill would iron out all the anomalies as well as preserving Sunday as a special day. It would also command majority support in the House.

Mr. Waddington: I read my hon. Friend's Bill. It covers small shops with fewer than four employees and also, for four hours only, do-it-yourself shops, if a local authority makes an appropriate order. I cannot see how it possibly can be right to buy goods from a small shop but offensive, wrong and immoral to buy from a large shop. After what happened in the House not long ago, I am far from sure that there is anything like a consensus for the introduction of the sort of measures which my hon. Friend has in mind.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Does my hon. and learned Friend accept that, although his and the Government's attempt to reform the law failed because there was not general agreement on total deregulation, the Government are, none the less, under some obligation to see whether we rally round an ad hoc, piecemeal policy of reform?

Mr. Waddington: My hon. Friend knows the history of this matter. On Second Reading of the Bill my right hon. Friend made it absolutely plain that the Government were prepared, during the Committee stage, to listen to any proposals for deregulation short of total deregulation. In spite of that, the majority of this House voted against the Bill on Second Reading. In those circumstances, it is unrealistic to expect the Government to introduce a Bill until there is clear evidence that a consensus for reform has emerged.

News International Dispute

4. **Mr. Leighton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the maximum number of police officers deployed at any one time on duties in connection with the News International industrial dispute, and the relationship which this number bears to the local number of Metropolitan police officers available for duty at the time in question.

Mr. Hurd: There were 1,870 officers deployed outside the News International plant at Wapping on 6 April. An additional 590 officers were involved in policing a march to Wapping. Information about the total number of officers available for duty that day could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Leighton: Is the Secretary of State aware that the effort of turning Wapping into a no-go area is denuding our hard-pressed constituencies of a police service? Will he explain why we cannot have an up-to-date estimate of the total cost of the Wapping operation? What is the result of the internal inquiry into police behaviour on 3 May, and what disciplinary action has been taken?

Mr. Hurd: Any complaints about the actions of the police on 3 May or on any other occasion at Wapping or elsewhere should be examined through the procedures which the House has laid down. I am not sure what the hon. Gentleman is aiming at. If he is saying that the police should not police events at Wapping, he is saying, in effect, that the plant there should be left open to attack and that people who want to work there should be prevented from doing so. I cannot think that he is really arguing that. The number of police officers who should be deployed at Wapping must be a matter for the judgment of the commissioner. Any hon. Member who believes in the operational independence of chief officers must support that.

Mr. Wheeler: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, whatever the merits of the argument about the industrial dispute at Wapping, there would be no need for such a massive police presence if the Opposition would call off their supporters and associates? Peace would be restored, and that would be in the interests of Londoners and crime prevention as a whole.

Mr. Hurd: I agree. The number of police officers now engaged at Wapping is lower than that which I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), because the hon. Gentleman asked for the maximum number deployed at any one time. The number is still high, and tactics have changed. Instead of having demonstrations on Wednesday and Saturday nights, several hundred people now arrive and start an operation at differing times of the day and week with no notice. This makes it difficult for the police to handle the situation and it weakens the policing effort in the rest of London. If those who are engaged in the dispute feel that they have to pursue it, I wish that they would discuss with the police ways of doing so, ways in which they could exercise their rights without weakening the police and, therefore, the effort that is being made to combat crime in the rest of London.

Mr. Mikardo: Is the Secretary of State aware that a couple of weeks ago in the same borough a half-mile march by about 200 women and 100 children was invigilated by a force of more than 40 police, most of whom inviligated it by sitting motionless in a coach, which proceeded to follow the tail of the procession very slowly, to the jeers of many onlookers? Is that an economic use of police manpower?

Mr. Hurd: I think that criticisms of the police are about evenly divided between those who say that they do too much and those who say they do too little. These are difficult operational decisions. In my view, and that of the occupants of the Opposition Front Bench, they can, because they are operational questions, be left only to the operational decision of the chief officer of police.

Dr. Michael Clark: Is my right hon. Friend aware that at 5.15 yesterday afternoon the East India Dock road was blocked by a mass of pickets using crowd barriers to form their obstruction? I was driving the first car to appear on

the scene and I was able to escape by going over the pavement and down a side road, but all the cars behind me had to turn round and go back. When the Queen's highway is blocked in this way, is it not essential that police remain in the area to ensure free passage?

Mr. Hurd: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The police are acting to prevent breaches of the peace and obstruction of the highway. It is in the interests of citizens as a whole that they should maintain that activity. At Wapping, 346 police officers have been injured so far and there have been 1,098 arrests. I cannot think that the way in which the dispute is being conducted on the union side helps the unions' case or the cause of printers in any way. It certainly makes it more difficult for the Metropolitan police to fight crime in the rest of London.

Mr. Corbett: How can the Home Secretary acquiesce in the withdrawal of a substantial number of Metropolitan police officers from fighting and preventing crime on the streets of the capital without trying to exert pressure on Mr. Murdoch to open proper negotiations?

Mr. Hurd: I wish that the dispute could be settled. I have said so many times. If the Labour Front Bench is saying that the commissioner should let the situation at Wapping go unpoliced so that the plant can be attacked and the electricians and others working there can be prevented from entering, it should say so openly instead of making such guarded remarks.

Airborne Radiation

5. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation holds radiac equipment capable of measuring levels of radiation in the air; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes, Sir. The United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation holds fixed and portable radiation survey meters capable of measuring radiation doses in air.

Mr. Bowden: I thank my hon. Friend for his answer and the reassurance that he has given. Can he give us a further assurance that the equipment held by the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation is capable of properly measuring the levels of radiation after Chernobyl?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend will be aware that there is a thorough examination of all aspects of that accident. As to the capacity of such meters to measure radiation dosage from Chernobyl, the answer is no, because the rated radiation was so low that it could not be measured by the meters that are used.

Mr. Stephen Ross: Are steps being taken to assist county civil defence officers in measuring emissions of radiation? Reports to my authority in the Isle of Wight depicted a scene whereby the local officer did not know how to answer questions by the general public.

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. A number of details, both of communication and the type of radiation measurement that would be suitable for such an incident, are to be worked out in the post-Chernobyl examination.

Mr. Neil Thorne: In view of the natural public concern over unseen dangerous rays, will my hon. Frend consider following the lead taken by the Japanese in showing graphically precisely what levels are likely to occur by way of X-rays, from sun, from travelling by air, and from the kind of accident that took place in Chernobyl?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is quite right. There is a real difficulty in transmitting to the public the information in a form that would enable them to understand it. It is not easy, for example, that the scientific measurement of radiation rays has just changed from the basis of rems and rads to the basis of grays and centigrays. I shall consider the point that my hon. Friend has made as part of the review of all these issues in relation to the Chernobyl incident.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Banks.

Mr. Tony Banks: No. 5, Sir.

Hon. Members: No. 6.

Long Lartin Prison

6. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many members of the Provisional Irish Republican Army are currently held in Her Majesty's prison Long Lartin; and how many are allowed private visits.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): The hon. Gentleman is more right than usual, Mr. Speaker.

There are 11 prisoners at Long Lartin who are regarded as members of the IRA. Private visits are not normally permitted for any prisoner.

Mr. Banks: I should be grateful if the Minister could answer this queston seriously without cheap and snide comments.

Will he confirm, or deny, that John Walker, who was one of those convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings, and who was described at his trial as a brigadier in the IRA, receives visits at Long Lartin alongside ordinary criminal prisoners? Is it not a fact that he does so, as do others convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings, because the Government and the prison authorities know that a great miscarriage of justice has taken place? When does the Minister intend to announce an inquiry into that trial and the convictions?

Mr. Mellor: What the hon. Gentleman says about visiting arrangements is right. The assumption that he seeks to draw from it is wrong. My right hon. Friend is considering whether there should be any reference to the Court of Appeal of the convictions in those cases, having regard to further submissions which have been made and which are under active consideration.

Mr. Benn: Is the Minister aware that in the book "Error of Judgment" recently written by Mr. Chris Mullin, there is incontrovertible evidence that undermines, quite clinically, the prosecution evidence against the six men, undoubted evidence of maltreatment of the prisoners before they went to court, and a clear indication as to who else committed that bombing? There is a widespread view among people who have no interest, other than that justice should be done, that the matter should be properly examined. There is a widespread belief that six innocent people have been imprisoned for 10 years for an offence they did not commit.

Mr. Mellor: I note the right hon. Gentleman's confident assertion, and I know that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will give it such weight as he thinks appropriate in making his difficult decision.

Mr. Duffy: It is nearly a year since the Home Secretary ordered a Home Office investigation, following the Granada programme on the Birmingham six, and since the Taoiseach, Dr. FitzGerald, said that the case was being dealt with "very urgently". What evidence do we have that the Home Secretary has demonstrated any urgency in recent months on this case?

Mr. Mellor: The case is being thoroughly investigated. The hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) should get together to be clear about what they are saying before they start putting different questions to us. The book upon which the right hon. Member for Chesterfield relies was published only three weeks ago, and that matter is being looked at. These are difficult decisions with which not only this Home Secretary but previous Home Secretaries have had to grapple. I see that the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) confirms that. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) would do the subject a little more credit if he recognised how difficult these matters are and how carefully they need to be explored.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: The Under-Secretary of State is correct to say that they are difficult decisions to take. Whatever else, doubts are cast on the decisions taken in that case. Given those doubts—I say no more than that—what procedures must now be followed? I think that if those procedures were understood some of the concern would be quietened.

Mr. Mellor: As ever the right hon. Gentleman is most helpful and I will tell him. The matters under investigation relate to a wide range of pieces of evidence canvassed at the trial. Much of that work is at an advanced stage. The publication of the book by Chris Mullin raised fresh points, especially the contention that certain individuals — allegedly known to Mullin, although not named, thereby making our position rather difficult — have committed these offences. As a result, the West Midlands police were asked to carry out further investigations. When the results are to hand, they will be consolidated with the other material. When the examination is completed, an announcement will be made. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has no interest in prolonging these matters, nor does he believe that pressure of the type which one or two hon. Members — not the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South — are seeking to exert is at all helpful in arriving at the objective quasi-judicial decision which my right hon. Friend much reach before deciding whether the matter should be referred to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Soley: Does the Minister accept that the House faces an extremely difficult decision? There is considerable anxiety on both sides of the House, in the House of Lords and in the country generally, that the convictions in the Birmingham pub bombing case, and in the Guildford and Maguire cases may be wrongful convictions. If so, not only are innocent people in prison, but guilty people are still free, with all that that implies for offences of this type. In view of that, and of the fact that no hon. Member or person outside the House can have any interest in seeing innocent people in prison and guilty people going free, will the hon. Gentleman consider ordering a retrial in all three cases?

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is charged with the responsibility of deciding whether there are matters capable of being regarded as fresh evidence of a kind which, under examination by the Court of Appeal, might cast doubt on a jury's findings in this or any other case. That is always a difficult issue, especially in a case such as the Birmingham bombing case, which has been considered frequently by appellate courts in the context of civil and criminal proceedings. My right hon. Friend will discharge his duties in this respect with as much care as possible. That is the proper basis on which it will be done.

I assure the House that no one has any interest in prolonging these matters. We recognise that there is a double public interest in this — in ensuring that people are not wrongly convicted and, equally, in ensuring that, if people are rightly convicted, orchestrated campaigns should not undermine the integrity of those convictions.

Civil Protection (Local Authorities)

8. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take to ensure that local authorities implement their all hazards responsibilities in relation to civil protection.

10. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to bring to the attention of local authorities the all hazards aspect of civil protection.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As I announced on 22 July in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki), new guidance on the preparation of plans and on the all hazards approach has been sent to local authority associations with our proposals for a planned programme for implementation of the 1983 civil defence regulations.

Mr. Rathbone: I welcomed my hon. Friend's answer on that day. It is indicative of the humanitarian desire and social obligations of national Government and most local governments to meet those ends. However, could he reassure the House that at borough council, district council and town council level those plans will be carried through?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend will be aware that the prime responsibility rests with those authorities which carry civil defence responsibility, mainly the county councils, but also the joint boards for fire and civil defence. I can assure him that it will be a requirement upon the counties that the plans they produce to conform with the 1983 regulations must show that they have a countywide network of communications and monitoring. That will include districts as well.

Mr. Leigh: Does my hon. Friend agree that, whatever one's views on the desirability or otherwise of the possession of nuclear weapons, any country must have plans for adequate protection for the civil population against disaster, whether natural or man-made, native or imported? In that respect, opposition to civil defence on narrow unilateralist grounds puts at risk the wider concept of civil protection against all hazards.

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is correct. Civil defence is a form of humanitarian protection for the civil population

and it is essential that local authorities should realise that that is what they are denying their electorate in many cases. The widespread response we had on the review undertaken last year shows that many local authorities have failed to provide adequate plans for protection. We are determined to correct that.

Mr. Evans: Will the Minister confirm that he is aware that on Saturday 28 June an oleum tank at a chemical company in St. Helens split and released a cloud of sulphur trioxide over St. Helens and the police had to put into effect Operation Cloudburst? Is he aware that the local authority had no input into Operation Cloudburst? Does that not make nonsense of the statement he made the other day?

Mr. Shaw: If the local authority had an effective civil protection system under its emergency planning officers, there would be consultation between the police and the civil protection authority on that matter. As for Operation Cloudburst, it was quick action by the police that prevented any real disturbance as a result of that incident.

Mr. Skinner: How on earth can the Minister argue that local authorities can provide civil protection in case of a nuclear attack when, only a few months ago, as a result of one nuclear reactor going up in Chernobyl, there was enormous emission of radioactivity affecting not only this country but the Western world, and resulting in hysteria, not only on the continent, but in Britain? In view of that hysteria and the hundred times greater damage that could result from a nuclear attack, how can civil protection be provided?

Mr. Shaw: I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman had now totally destroyed the concept of a nuclear-free zone. It is absurd to think that any local authority or population can protect itself against the possibility of radiation unless it has a fully worked out plan for civil protection.

Mr. John Browne: Will my hon. Friend accept that the county of Hampshire has a greatly increasing population and, therefore, a greatly increasing civil defence problem? Will he further accept that the chief constable and the chairman of the police council, Councillor Michael Boyle, are extremely prudent men? Is he aware that both those men are applying for a significant increase in the establishment of the police in Hampshire, which does not seem to be coming through his Department? Will he look into that question urgently and meet the legitimate demands of those police authorities?

Mr. Shaw: I am well aware of the application, which was originally for 33 posts and now is for 28 posts for Hampshire. It will be given urgent consideration in the light of my right hon. Friend's decision to ensure that all police authorities should have any proposed increases analysed for proven need. We hope to arrive at a decision shortly.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Bearing in mind that civil defence in respect of hostile attack is subject to statutory control, does the Minister agree that it would be much better to put the all hazards approach on a statutory basis? Does he further agree that we shall never have an even-handed approach to civil defence unless we have statutory control on an all hazards basis and requirements laid down by central Government?

Mr. Shaw: The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that we have made some progress with the small amending Bill to the Civil Defence Act 1948 which was piloted through the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminister (Sir N. Bonsor). In addition, the 1983 regulations are statutory. If the plans which we now require are brought under those regulations, they will have all the statutory force required to provide the civil protection cover that the hon. and learned Gentleman seeks.

Peacock Report

9. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received since publication of the Peacock Report.

11. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the Peacock report.

Mr. Hurd: We have received a small number of letters from hon. Members and from the public about specific matters raised in the report.

Mr. Thompson: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Bearing in mind the increasing burden of the licence fee on many ordinary people, does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be wrong to tie the BBC licence fee to the retail prices index, as suggested by the Peacock committee? Should it not be tied to some RPI minus X formula, leading, I hope, to a reduction in the licence fee and a concentration of the BBC's mind on priorities, efficiency and quality?

Mr. Hurd: That is an interesting variation on the recommendation in the Peacock report. We are considering, and must consider, if we are to live with the licence fee as a system for some time, how we can ensure that citizens are protected from excessive increases and that the BBC has the same sort of pressures on it for efficiency as are common throughout the public sector.

Mr. McKay: Does the Home Secretary accept that the Peacock report has endorsed the view of Parliament regarding concessionary television licences for old people? Will he now take the opportunity of the next Queen's Speech to announce that concessionary television licences will be adopted? This is probably his last chance before an incoming Labour Government will do so.

Mr. Hurd: I recommend as holiday reading to the hon. Gentleman the Peacock report, which went out of its way to demolish the Labour party's proposition.

Mr. Soames: Has my right hon. Friend seen the representations from my constituents on the Peacock report, particularly those connected with the disgraceful reporting by the BBC of the position in South Africa? What steps will he take to ensure that a political balance is restored to the BBC?

Mr. Hurd: The responsibility for ensuring that the BBC treats controversial subjects with due impartiality rests with the board of governors of the BBC and is enshrined in its resolution of 8 January 1981, which is an annex to the BBC's licence and agreement. Parliament has given the board of governors of the BBC, not the Home Secretary or any Minister, this extremely important responsibility and it is up to the board to make arrangements to ensure that that responsibility is discharged.

Civil Defence

12. **Mrs. Shields** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated expenditure by district councils on civil defence in 1986; what proportion will be provided by central Government resources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: District councils' civil defence expenditure is incorporated in county councils' estimates and the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The total of local authority estimates for civil defence expenditure in the current financial year is £19,494 million. Civil defence grant is paid on approved expenditure at the rates of 75 per cent. or 100 per cent., depending on the nature of the activity.

Mrs. Shields: Will the Minister make available a 100 per cent. grant for the provision of control centres?

Mr. Shaw: As the hon. Lady will know, that is at present the case for the construction of control centres. We are considering whether the 100 per cent. grant should be available for a wider range of expenditure, including staff costs.

BBC News Broadcasts

13. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to monitor political balance in BBC news broadcasts.

Mr. Hurd: No, Sir. It is for the board of governors of the corporation, as I have just said, to ensure that BBC programmes are presented with due impartiality.

Mr. Chope: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied with the performance of the governors of the BBC in carrying out their responsibilities? Why can we not have the same straightforward newspaper reporting on BBC television as we enjoy when we listen to the BBC World Service?

Mr. Hurd: That is the responsibility of the board of governors. I think it is entirely legitimate and, indeed, desirable, that citizens or organisations who feel themselves aggrieved or feel, as my hon. Friend evidently does, that standards have slipped in this regard should take every opportunity to make their views known direct to the governors. It is part of the responsibility of the governors to pay attention to that.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

14. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why it has not yet been possible to conclude the review of the convictions of six men for the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Hurd: I have been concerned to examine thoroughly the material submitted to me following the World in Action television programme. In addition, as my hon. Friend said a few minutes ago, I am now considering points raised in the recently published book on the case.

Ms. Short: It does not make anyone in Birmingham feel any better about the Birmingham bombings to know that six innocent men have now been locked up for 12 years. Can the Home Secretary tell us when he is likely to reach a conclusion? Can he also tell us whether it is true that the Home Office repeated the forensic tests and found that the tests that were used were totally unreliable?

Mr. Hurd: I am not going to deal bit by bit with the particular aspects of this complicated matter. The hon. Lady would not seriously expect me to do that. When suggestions are made that there is new evidence, as has happened recently with Mr. Mullin's book, it must be right, if I am to make a serious judgment, a serious decision, in the matter, that I should take those new arguments into consideration. That is what is now happening. I have no desire or interest in delaying a decision on that. It is a very difficult decision now, as it has always been. The criteria have been well established under the different holders of my office, and I shall seek to apply those criteria to the best of my ability.

PRIME MINISTER

EC (Agricultural Spending)

Q1. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she will raise, at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers, the issues raised by the monthly reports submitted to the Council by the Commission on trends in agricultural spending in accordance with the 4 December 1984 agreement.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): The Commission has produced these reports partly in response to my hon. Friend's persistent questioning. The issues raised by these reports have been considered by the Budget Council in its discussions on the 1986 budget.

Mr. Taylor: As the 1·4 VAT rate, which was meant to last for several years, has now been fully budgeted this year, and as the Council has clearly abandoned any attempt to control agricultural spending, can the Prime Minister now give some indication to British farmers, to the Third world countries that are savaged by Common Market dumping, and to the Soviet Union, which benefits hugely from Common Market dumping, as to what will happen when, almost inevitably later this year, the Common Market is bankrupt once again and runs out of funds?

The Prime Minister: The revised Community budget for 1986 has now been adopted and this replaces the budget ruled illegal by the European Court of Justice. We believe that the new, revised budget makes adequate provision to meet all the Community's agricultural obligations. We do not expect any significant overrun into 1987. I must say that I agree with some of my hon. Friend's strictures on the effect of dumping surpluses on other countries.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Prime Minister aware that at Whitwell in my constituency the Coal Board has just closed a pit even though it has made a profit — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about the EEC.

Mr. Skinner: Yes—even though it made a profit for the greater part of the 100 years that it was open. The Common Market has been bankrupt for about five years out of the last 10——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about agricultural spending, in the EEC.

Mr. Skinner: Yes. The Common Market has been bankrupt for about five years out of the last 10 and, if it

had been a coal mine, this Prime Minister would have shut it. Why does she not get on with it and save the British taxpayer some money for a change?

The Prime Minister: May I remind the hon. Gentleman that the taxpayer this year, in spite of the closing of a number of pits, will still pay something like £1·5 billion for the coal industry. With regard to the common agricultural policy, this year's price fixing was estimated to reduce spending by 320 million ecu in 1986 and 457 million ecu in 1987. Community financing of intervention was also cut, saving the budget 350 million ecu a year, so we are in fact steadily dealing with the problems of the common agricultural policy, in the same way as we are dealing steadily with the coal industry.

Several Hon. Members *rose*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a definitive question, a rare occasion for Prime Minister's Questions. We must stick to the subject.

Mr. Ralph Howell: May I refer to the approach that has been made to my right hon. Friend by Sir Henry Plumb, the leader of the European Conservative parliamentary group, asking her to call a world food conference on the twin problems of embarrassing food surpluses in the Western world and starvation in the less developed countries? Will she give the House an assurance that she will take the lead and call urgently a food conference in London at the earliest possible moment?

The Prime Minister: The question of surpluses between the major producing countries was, as my hon. Friend knows, discussed at the Tokyo summit. We are in touch and in close consultation with the United States about those matters. We also agreed there that the proper forum for it to be discussed was in the new GATT round, which we are hoping will began in September. That should, and indeed must, include the whole question of agricultural surpluses and how to deal with them.

Engagements

Q2. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 24 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Does the Prime Minister agree that today's Westland report does not live up to the juicy leaks and well-trailed publicity? Will my right hon. Friend not spend too much time on it on this busy day?

The Prime Minister: The Government will, of course, respond to these reports in due course, but I should like to make two things clear straight away. First, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I have total confidence in our officials referred to in the report. As the House will be aware, those responsible for decisions and disciplinary action have already concluded that there is no case for such action. Secondly, I do not accept the Committee's comments on the role of the head of the Home Civil Service. He continues to enjoy the Government's total confidence. He is a very distinguished public servant, who has performed great service to Governments of both parties.

Mr. Kinnock: The members of the Select Committee on Defence, of all parties, have been fastidious in their report on Westland plc. In that report, published today, they raise the most profound questions about the conduct of senior officials serving the Government, describing their conduct as "improper" and "disreputable". As head of that Government, does the Prime Minister accept ministerial responsibility for those officials, particularly as some of those named are directly accountable only to her and are personally associated very closely with her?

The Prime Minister: I have already answered the right hon. Gentleman's question before he asked it. The Government will, of course, respond beyond that to those reports in due course. At present I have nothing to add to what I have already said.

Mr. Kinnock: This is not a usual Select Committee. All of us obviously understand that the Government will require time to compile their full response in the normal fashion, but there is one question to which the Prime Minister can and I believe the country also thinks this must given an answer now in a direct fashion. It is: will she accept the direct ministerial responsibility for officials that everyone understands goes with the office of Minister at every level, or will she be part of a cover-up?

The Prime Minister: I have already answered the right hon. Gentleman. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I have total confidence in our officials referred to in the report. Secondly, I do not accept the Committee's comments on the role of the head of the Home Civil Service. He continues to enjoy the Government's total confidence. He is a very distinguished public servant who has performed great service to Governments of both parties.

Mr. Kinnock: By her repetitive replies and her failure to respond to the one issue upon which she can definitely respond today, it is difficult to escape the feeling that the Prime Minister is seeking to hide behind officials. If that is the case, is the Prime Minister aware that she is in great danger of herself attracting the reputation of being disreputable and improper?

The Prime Minister: No, but clearly the right hon. Gentleman asked that question because that was what he wanted to say at the end. The fact was that I volunteered the two points properly that we have total confidence in our officials, and we are proud to be able to stand up for them at this Dispatch Box.

Mr. Lyell: With the approach of the holidays, will my right hon. Friend congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on expelling another minor official from the Labour party, but will she agree with me——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with the Prime Minister's responsibilities.

Q3. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 24 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Litherland: I refer the Prime Minister to paragraph 160 of the report of the Select Committee on Defence. It says:

"Since the information was passed by telephone to Westland in any event, the reason given by the Prime Minister for releasing the information to the Press Association begins to look flimsy, to say the least."

Will she now say what will happen to those five senior officials, because the buck stops here?

The Prime Minister: I have already answered the hon. Gentleman's question before he asked it. Beyond that, as I said earlier, the Government will of course respond to these reports in due course. I have nothing further to add this afternoon.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Does my right hon. Friend agree with the statement that the Commonwealth is more important than the issues that temporarily divide it?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I believe firmly in the Commonwealth and I am sure that it is strong enough to withstand any differences between us in the future, as it has withstood them in the past.

Mr. Cartwright: Will the Prime Minister tell the House clearly whether she accepts or rejects the unanimous finding of the Select Committee on Defence that two key officials in her Department, Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell, were deeply involved in the planned leaking of the Solicitor-General's letter, yet apparently failed to tell her what was going on? If that is so, how can the Prime Minister continue to express confidence in the officials concerned?

The Prime Minister: I have answered the points about my officials, but let me answer them again. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I have total confidence in our officials referred to in the report. As the House will be aware, those responsible for decisions on disciplinary action have already concluded that there is no case for such action. Secondly, I do not accept the Committee's comments on the role of the head of the Home Civil Service. He continues to enjoy the Government's total confidence, and I am glad to express our confidence in his distinguished service.

Sir Anthony Grant: Does my right hon. Friend recall that the appalling Soweto uprising in South Africa occurred when there was a Labour Government here and that, at that time, apartheid was in its full, rigorous force, but, nevertheless, under the Labour Government, no fewer than 75 trade missions were sent to South Africa to encourage trade, at a cost to the taxpayer of more than £410,000? Have we not heard enough humbug from the Opposition on South Africa?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend.

Q4. **Mr. Snape** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 24 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Snape: Does the Prime Minister agree that Mr. Bernard Ingham is normally very good at telling the rest of the world what is going on, and yet we are expected to believe that on this occasion he did not even tell the Prime Minister what was going on? Will she now answer the question, because it is her reputation that is directly under threat?

The Prime Minister: I have already indicated that the Government will be replying in due course. I have nothing further to add this afternoon. I am delighted that on this occasion, the last day when I am answering questions, the Opposition appear to be satisfied with health, education, social security, the welfare state—*[Interruption.]*—and between them they cannot muster a single question. My goodness, they are ready to go away!

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take it after the private notice question.

India (Drug Liaison Officers)

3.33 pm

Sir Edward Gardner (Fylde): I beg to ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to answer the question of which I have given him private notice.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): As I told the House on 22 July —

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take the point of order after the private notice question.

Mr. Gow *rose* —

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have said that I shall take points of order after the private notice question. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Mr. Gow: My hon. and learned Friend has not read out the question.

Mr. Speaker: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. Will the hon. and learned Member for Fylde read his question?

Sir Edward Gardner: Perhaps I may acquaint the House of the question of which I have given private notice: what action is being taken to deal with the refusal by the Government of India to allow the posting of two British drug liaison officers to New Delhi and Bombay?

Mr. Tim Eggar: As I told the House on 22 July, the Government of India have told us that the posting of drug liaison officers should not proceed without their written consent despite their earlier agreement in principle. We have taken this up with the Government of India at the highest level. Most recently, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister sent a message to Mr. Gandhi. We hope that he will reply in terms which give the Government of India's agreement that the postings should go ahead.

Sir Edward Gardner: Is my hon. Friend aware that large supplies of hard drugs are now passing through India on their way to Britain, and that, without adequate intelligence, which British drug liaison officers could provide, our attempts to stem the flow of this terrible traffic are bound to be seriously impeded? Is it not scandalous and wholly irresponsible of the Indian Government to aid and abet drug traffickers by denying us the means of identifying them and their activities? Last month the Indian Government said that they would allow those officers to be posted. Now they are refusing that posting. What on earth is going on?

Mr. Eggar: I share my hon. and learned Friend's concern about the recent developments, which we regard with great seriousness, not least because we estimate that in the first few months of this year 80 per cent. of heroin that has come into the United Kingdom has come from India. Last year the total amounts of heroin seized that had come via India had a street value of some £53 million. The only people who can possibly benefit from the latest development are the drug traffickers and the only people who will suffer are the drug addicts, both here and in India.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The Minister has our wholehearted support in his attempt to put drug enforcement officers in place in India. What reasons have the Indian Government given for their refusal, and are there any precedents for this action?

Mr. Eggar: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks. As he knows, we have seven drug liaison officers in different countries throughout the world and in no other country have we had anything like the same difficulties or complications in posting them.

The situation in India perplexes us. The Indian Government gave us a written undertaking which enabled my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary to tell the Select Committee on Home Affairs that the drug liaison officers were to be posted, subject to certain details. We are not clear about the exact reason for the further delays.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): Are we not constantly getting lectures on moral matters from the Indian Government and are not the Indian Government the biggest humbugs that we know about? I shall excuse my hon. Friend from answering that question.

Mr. Eggar: I note the point that my hon. Friend makes.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will the Minister first repudiate the obnoxious, unnecessary and contemptible attack on India's Government that has just been made? Knowing, as he well does, that I have been concerned that drug liaison officers should be installed in India, will he please answer the question that he has already been asked as to why India is refusing, and, in particular, whether it is because, on the basis of reciprocity, they are asking for information and help regarding smuggling which Her Majesty's Government are refusing to give?

Mr. Eggar: I recognise the part that the hon. and learned Gentleman, with others in the House, has played in trying to persuade the Indian Government to agree to the posting of British DLOs in India.

On 24 June the Indians asked us not to send our officers until agreement was reached on unrelated issues about co-operation between the United Kingdom and the Indian revenue authorities. That point was raised by the Indian Government. We responded immediately and said that we would give our full co-operation within our powers under the law. In other words, we would do everything that we could legally do to assist the Indian Government. That assurance appears not to have been accepted so far.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Despite the South African matter, is not the world drugs menace something to which the Commonwealth Heads of Government might turn their attention? Without attacking the Government of India at this moment, should not this be brought before other partner Governments and perhaps Sir "Sonny" Ramphal could do something about it?

Mr. Eggar: I shall ensure that my hon. Friend's points are drawn to the attention of the Commonwealth Secretary-General. The fight against drugs is worldwide. Every country has a major part to play in that fight and that is why we are so distressed at the stance taken by the Government of India.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Does the Minister appreciate that the excellent resolution passed by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Ottawa last

year received the assent of all Commonwealth countries and instructed Governments to improve their position? Is he aware that, although heroin is a terrible drug, the greatest growth in imports is in cocaine? Rather than trying to give off-the-cuff answers to the House, he should have much closer relations with Dr. Alexander, the High Commissioner at India house, in Aldwych.

Mr. Eggar: I recognise the role that the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members played in the fight against drugs and we are all grateful for that. He spoke about cocaine. The largest threat at present is from heroin and, as I have said, we believe that some 80 per cent. of heroin comes through from India. The hon. Gentleman also spoke about contacts with His Excellency the Indian High Commissioner. I saw His Excellency on Saturday 28 June and on Friday 11 July to discuss this issue. In the past year there have been 30 or more contacts at either ministerial or senior official level on the question of sending drugs liaison officers to India.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Does my hon. Friend appreciate that the House will be extremely disturbed by the news about the lack of co-operation by the Indian Government in this small effort to control the international trade in drugs? Can he reassure the House that he has had talks with the Indian High Commissioner in London since the decision by the Indian Government was taken and that the Prime Minister has been in contact with the Prime Minister of India since that time? Can he also reassure the House, as my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) has suggested, that the subject will feature on the agenda for discussion by the Commonwealth leaders when they next meet?

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister sent a message to Mr. Gandhi and we are still waiting for a response to it. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary felt it right to inform the Select Committee on Home Affairs before the House rose about the difficulties we are encountering. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and others will take the opportunity on Mr. Gandhi's visit to London in August to raise this question with him.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): We all hope that the Indian Government will co-operate in these matters, but does the Minister accept that his own Government's record might have been more impressive if they had not considerably reduced the number of customs officers since 1979? Can the Minister explain the deterioration in relations not just with the Government of India but with almost every Commonwealth country, especially in recent weeks?

Mr. Eggar: In reply to the implied point made by the hon. Gentleman, I have to tell him that there is no indication from the Indian Government that there is any connection between developments in the Commonwealth and this issue. We certainly do not see any such connection. There are two officers from the Indian customs service in London, and they receive different forms of co-operation from the Government.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Does my hon. Friend recall that some members of the Select Committee on Home Affairs visited the Indian sub-continent last November, and that alone among the three countries the Government of India declined to receive them? The Governments of Pakistan and Bangladesh co-operate fully with the United Kingdom to suppress this odious drug trafficking trade. Will he again urge upon the Government of India the necessity to rejoin the humanitarian members of the Commonwealth and other countries in doing something about this problem?

Mr. Eggar: Because we believe that this is a worldwide fight, during the past year we have often been in close touch with the Indian Government. We shall certainly draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of the Indian High Commissioner.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Will the Minister dare to repudiate some of the interventions from senior Back Benchers who should know better and whose remarks seemed designed to sour a delicate situation? Is he aware of the helpful visit to India by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition in May this year when there was every sign that the matter would be resolved speedily? Is he further aware that we share my right hon. Friend's puzzlement and his desire to get things moving?

What in the Minister's view is the new factor which has intervened since May? Is it the sikhs in Khalistan, although that problem was apparent in May? Is it something to do with sanctions and South Africa? What is the key factor? Will the Minister seek to clarify with the Indian Government the precise reason why they are now delaying? Will he make it clear to them that hon. Members on both sides of the House want progress to be made in ending this vile drug trade and that the only people who can benefit from further delays are the drug barons?

Mr. Eggar: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and I particularly welcome the support that he and the Leader of the Opposition have given to our efforts to post drugs liaison officers in India. Of course, I cannot speak for my right hon. and hon. Friends or for their views, but we seek to ensure that our relations with India are good and excellent. Obviously, one must take into account the fact that right hon. and hon. Members and people outside the House feel very strongly about the drugs liaison officers issue. It is bound to have an effect on the way in which Her Majesty's Government's relations with India are viewed.

Points of Order

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a House of Commons point, not a party point. During Prime Minister's Question Time the Prime Minister used the words "in due course" four times. Why cannot "in due course" be tomorrow morning between 10.15 am and 11 am during an Adjournment debate? Why should some hapless junior Minister be sent along to defend the Cabinet Secretary and Mr. Ingham? Is there not a unique case for the Prime Minister herself to come to the House and not to let the matter fester? Surely she should come to the House and answer the questions which have been properly put.

Mr. Speaker: Whoever speaks for the Front Bench on either side is not a matter for the Chair.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There are three statements and business questions this afternoon, followed by private

[Mr. Speaker]

Members' debates. I shall take another point of order, although if it is on the same point it is a matter not of order but of argument.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I am seeking not to argue with you, Mr. Speaker, but to raise a point of order. Only the Chair can answer the point of order. Surely it is unfair if, after promising to co-operate with the inquiry, the Prime Minister forbids civil servants to give evidence to it, and if a junior Minister is asked to shuffle off excuses and to take the blame for what the Prime Minister said — *[Interruption.]* The democrats on the Government Benches want the issue to be quietened down, but they will not quieten me in a hurry. There has been an attempt at a cover up. We have nowhere else to go but to you, Mr. Speaker, to ask that the matter be debated properly. The right place for that debate is in the House, and the right time is tomorrow morning.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot help. Hon. Members know that who speaks from the Front Bench is not a matter for me. By great good fortune, the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) drew a place in the ballot for the Adjournment debates tomorrow. The whole House will be interested to hear him, and some hon. Members might even be able to take part in the debate.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise out of questions?

Mr. Madden: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take no further points of order on the matter raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

Mr. Madden: This is a matter that could directly affect you, Mr. Speaker, and all other Members of Parliament during the recess. I have received information today that immigration officers at Heathrow are balloting to take action as from August bank holiday, the effect of which would be to bring Heathrow to a standstill. Thousands upon thousands of people arriving in this country would be subjected to very long delays in order to receive permission to enter the country. The immigration officers are balloting because of their anger and exasperation at the conditions in which they are working, which is a direct result of understaffing.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman can best raise that matter on the motion for the summer Adjournment. If what he says is correct, clearly we should not adjourn tomorrow and, indeed, should sit until this matter has been resolved.

Business of the House

3.50 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May we have the business for the week beginning 21 August — [HON. MEMBERS: "October."]

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I think that the right hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm exceeds his expectations. The business for the first week after the summer Adjournment will be as follows:

TUESDAY 21 OCTOBER—Conclusion of the remaining stages of the Education Bill *[Lords]*.

WEDNESDAY 22 OCTOBER—Progress on remaining stages of the Sex Discrimination Bill *[Lords]*.

THURSDAY 23 OCTOBER — Until seven o'clock completion of remaining stages of the Sex Discrimination Bill *[Lords]*.

Remaining stages of the Salmon Bill *[Lords]*.

FRIDAY 24 OCTOBER—Remaining stages of the Public Trustee and Administration of Funds Bill *[Lords]*.

Proceedings on the Family Law Bill *[Lords]* and the Parliamentary Constituencies Bill *[Lords]* which is a consolidation measure.

Motions on Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) Orders.

Motion on the Second International Fund for Agricultural Development (Second Replenishment) Order.

The House may also be asked to consider any other Lords amendments and messages which may be received. It may be for the convenience of the House if I indicate that Government business will also be taken in the two following weeks. It is expected that the new Session will be opened on Wednesday 12 November.

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman.

Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether, in view of the impending recess, he is now able to make an immediate statement on the investigations into the Deputy Chief Constable of Manchester, Mr. Stalker, as it would be in our universal interest to have a clear indication of the Government's view on this matter?

Today the Government are rushing through the statements on the royal ordnance factories and on Unipart and Leyland Bus. We have asked for statements on those subjects for the last month, but now there will be no time for a proper debate in Government time on these critical issues before Parliament rises. Is that satisfactory for the thousands of people who are anxious about the future of both the ROFs and the Leyland enterprise?

The report of the Select Committee on Defence on the Westland affair is obviously a matter of considerable importance. Last week the Leader of the House responded to my request for a debate on the report in this Session by saying that it was a "reasonable request". Is he now satisfied with the arrangements for the first week back, which plainly exclude any debate on that Select Committee report? Will he even now reflect on the matter and change the business for the first week back so that we may discuss the report.

I also note that in the first week back no time has been allocated for a debate on southern Africa. That is peculiar,

especially when in the intervening period during August and September there will have been at least one meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government and at least one meeting of the European Council specifically to discuss that matter and the initiatives arising from their previous deliberations. Can the right hon. Gentleman give us an assurance that this is another matter which he will reconsider so that we may debate the issue of South and southern Africa in the early days when we return after the Adjournment of the House?

Mr. Biffen: I will take those points in the order in which they were presented by the right hon. Gentleman.

I quite understand why there is anxiety that the so-called Stalker report should be made available. The right hon. Gentleman will understand that it would be inappropriate for the Government to do that until inquiries are concluded. I am sure that he will join with many others in the House and with the early-day motion which wishes a speedy conclusion to the inquiries which will then permit the publication of the report. I will, of course, refer his specific request to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

I think that the whole House will acknowledge that it is helpful for the employees concerned that statements should be made today in respect of the royal ordnance factories and British Leyland. I believe that that would have the general consent of the House.

With regard to a debate upon the Westland report, the right hon. Gentleman referred to our exchange on this topic last week. Of course, I take note of his request that the matter should be debated fairly early in the overspill, but I believe that the timing of such a debate would properly be a matter for the usual channels and perhaps it could be proceeded with in that manner.

Similarly, I take note of the right hon. Gentleman's concern about southern Africa, but I am sure that its topicality will not have diminished during our absence. Again, this is something which can be looked at through the usual channels.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Has my right hon. Friend noticed early-day motion 1067 relating to advice on technology to parliamentarians which has already been signed by 93 hon. Members?

[That this House, while recognising the support and assistance granted to the United States Congress and Senate during the past thirteen years by the Office of Technology Assessment, acknowledging that a similar approach is currently being considered for establishment in France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and Australia to obtain well-informed and objective assessment, and in considering the rapid growth of technology in the past decade and its impact on economic development, health, environment and so forth, feels that where the need arises that there should be a body at Westminster to advise Parliamentarians of both Houses upon the implications and impact of scientific innovation, the identification of commercially exploitable areas of science, the correct evaluation of conflicting technical data, the collation of information secured from abroad, and the rational use of national resources; and urges the House of Commons Commission or relevant authority to establish a body within the precincts of Westminster to research, prepare reports and advise Parliamentarians on scientific matters independently of the executive, while at all times subscribing to three crucial elements, namely, that it will accord with British Parliamentary traditions, be funded in part by the House of Commons Commission, and evolve out of the existing structure of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee.]

I wonder whether my right hon. Friend can provide an early date to discuss this matter, as it is vital to the House.

Mr. Biffen: I have taken note of the early-day motion to which my hon. Friend has referred. It might be a suitable matter to be raised through an Adjournment debate rather than in Government time.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Does the right hon. Gentleman think it is proper that the House should depart for the summer recess without having the opportunity to debate the Westland report? Does he not think it is extremely serious that the House should not discuss such major charges against the head of the Civil Service? Does he not consider that, if he does not provide time for a debate, he will be a party to the collusion between the Prime Minister and the head of the Civil Service—and collusion means guilty association?

Mr. Biffen: No. The right hon. Gentleman has a long and distinguished career in the House and he should not mar it by becoming a rather low-grade McCarthyite by implying collusion in this matter. The report, which came out today, deserves proper and measured consideration. As I suggested to the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition, I believe that that can take place in the overspill. If the right hon. Gentleman takes a contrary view, he can, of course, vote against the recess motion.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Regarding the innocence of the late Giuseppe Conlon and the Maguires, will my right hon. Friend invite the Home Secretary to take counsel with his advisers during the recess and, instead of leaving it to Back Benchers, find a way whereby either there can be a new trial or a Queen's pardon can be recommended?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure what status or authority I would have in this matter, but I shall take account of what my hon. Friend says and refer his remarks to those of my right hon. Friends who are approached.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): Is the Leader of the House aware that another report which concerns many Members with constituency interests in Plessey is that of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which is presently on the desk of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry? It happens to relate especially to the Plessey work force in my constituency. If a statement cannot be made in the House this week, may a statement be made in the other place next week?

Mr. Biffen: Clearly my responsibilities do not run up the road. No statement can be made until the report has been made available and is ready for publication. I shall consider the matter, especially in respect of the facilities that might be offered by the other place.

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): Will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House tell my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the strong feelings held in all quarters that war service should count for the pension calculation of civil servants, as is evidenced by early-day motion 254, which has been signed, following the lead of my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), by well over 250 Members?

[Sir Edward du Cann]

[That this House believes that overseas Civil Service pensioners should be allowed to count war service towards their pension entitlement in the same way as every other branch of the public service; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to do justice towards a small number of mostly elderly people whose working lives were spent abroad in the service of the Crown.]

Is my right hon. Friend aware that a mere 4,600 people are affected? Every year there are fewer. This House surely should give them justice.

Mr. Biffen: My right hon. Friend puts with great eloquence the point which hitherto has been argued forcefully by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook). I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): The Leader of the House will no doubt recall that two weeks ago, after the welcome vindication of Mrs. Wendy Savage, I asked the Prime Minister whether she would take on board the matter and discuss it with the Secretary of State for Social Services with a view to having an inquiry into the competence of those who were her major accusers, especially as one of those gentlemen does virtually no National Health Service work with NHS patients, although he is working in an NHS hospital. Most of his time is spent dealing with private patients at £400 a time. Does not the right hon. Gentleman think that it is about time that we had an inquiry?

Mr. Biffen: The judgment whether we should have an inquiry more properly belongs to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mrs. Short: The Prime Minister said that she would speak to the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Biffen: I shall refer the request to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. Friend read early-day motion 1120, which is headed "Compensation for Whistleblowers". It has been signed by 250 Members on both sides of the House.

[That this House positively supports paragraphs 36, 37, 38, 39 and 40 of the Twenty-third Report of the Public Accounts Committee entitled Production Costs of Defence Equipment, on the subject of Post Costing of Contracts with Aish and Company; supports in particular paragraphs (x) and (xi) in the Report's recommendations which state:

'(x) We note that MoD officials responsible for contracts with Aish and Company did not begin to appreciate the possible extent of excess profits until the meeting with the company in March 1982. We conclude that the information provided to MoD by the two former employees probably did have a material effect on the MoD's post costing activities at this firm (paragraph 39).

(xi) We note that Treasury and MoD do not rule out the possibility of compensation to individuals who have helped MoD to identify possible excess profits but that the value and propriety of any compensation proposals would need to be considered very carefully (paragraph 40)'; and believes that compensation should be paid for loss of income and professional opportunity arising from whistleblowing in the case of Aish and Company.]

As the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee have been rejected in the Treasury minute, will my right hon. Friend ensure that a Minister explains the decision in the first week after the recess?

Mr. Biffen: The normal processes whereby PAC recommendations are considered by the Treasury mean that eventually the recommendations come before the House. I shall examine the matter that my hon. Friend has raised to ascertain the prospects for an early debate.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Arising from points of order yesterday, and having been encouraged by the response of the Leader of the House, I ask the right hon. Gentleman what arrangements he proposes to make to advise the House about the use of the Member's Dining Room when we return from the summer recess. What arrangement is it proposed to make for the House to debate the use of all these facilities, which is giving cause for widespread concern in all parts of the House?

Mr. Biffen: I have a statement that says that no action will be taken to bring into operation the proposed Dining Room experiment until there have been further discussions by the Catering Sub-Committee in the autumn. I know that one cannot win them all. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising the matter. As for these matters being debated, the activities of the Service Committee give rise to debates on the Floor of the House. I am sure that such opportunities will arise in future as they have in the past.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): May I remind my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House of the exchange that we had a fortnight ago on 10 July when I put it to him that the proposal to use Fulbeck airfield as a possible nuclear dump was a breach of the statement made by Sir Thomas Dugdale on 20 July 1954, which is reported in *Hansard* at column 1190? My right hon. Friend told me a fortnight ago that he would do his best to arrange for an early statement on whether this policy was a breach of existing policy. So far as I know, he has not done so. Will he tell me what he has done to obtain an early answer, or what he proposes to do?

Mr. Biffen: I shall inquire to see whether the July lethargy is on account of myself or the Department concerned. When that has been done, I shall be in touch with my hon. Friend.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): May I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1105 in the names of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) and 24 right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House?

[That this House condemns the oppressive enforced corralling into artificial villages of country people in Ethiopia by the Government of Ethiopia, thus driving them from their land at a great cost in human lives and provoking among the survivors a new wave of emigration of refugees into neighbouring countries like Somalia which have economic problems enough already; and therefore calls upon the Government of Ethiopia to terminate this inhuman practice forthwith, since failure to do so should be construed by Her Majesty's Government as an unco-operative action bordering on genocide which merits the curtailment of British development and food aid to Ethiopia.]

The motion remonstrates against the enforced corralling into artificial villages by the Marxist Government of Ethiopia of the hapless people of their country. This has precipitated a mass exodus of refugees into neighbouring countries, which are poor enough already. If there is no time available for a statement on this matter to the effect that representations will be made by Her Majesty's Government against this inhumane treatment, will he ensure that the matter will be accorded the priority that we attach to inhumane behaviour in southern Africa?

Mr. Biffen: There is no time for a statement. The Government have made their concern clear to the Ethiopian authorities. That was reported to the House on 23 May.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): As the Prime Minister is responsible primarily for the sad state of affairs of the Commonwealth games that are to start in Edinburgh tonight, will the Leader of the House advise the Prime Minister not to go to Edinburgh because she would not be welcomed by more than a dozen Scotsmen?

Mr. Biffen: Despite all his many years in the House, the hon. Gentleman has not grasped the constitutional relationship between the Prime Minister and myself. I cannot undertake the task that he requests. The views of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister much more robustly coincide with the views of the British public than do those of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on recent developments in local government so that we can take account of the fact that the Ealing Labour-controlled council has recently sacked the town clerk because he insisted——

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman will next be sacked.

Mr. Greenway: —on being politically impartial? The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) will be sacked before anyone else. The same council is intimidating all its employees politically. The people of Ealing are worried that the Labour council now seeks to install a stooge town clerk to do its political bidding. Something must be done.

Mr. Biffen: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making a pertinent point which should have very much wider circulation. I hope, therefore, that he will treat his question as a trailer to the contribution that he will make in the debate on whether we should adjourn for the summer recess.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that many of us believe that before the House goes into recess we should have a statement on the Foreign Secretary's trip to South Africa, which has turned out to be as worthless as we predicted it would be?

As for the report of the Select Committee on Defence on Westland, how does the Leader of the House take it that, while the debate takes place in the country, in the media and elsewhere, the House will be denied the opportunity of being able to contribute to the debate? No provision has been made for us to debate the issue during the week after our return from the summer recess. Is this not a disgraceful abuse and typical of the way in which this Administration run matters?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman could well reconcile himself to the fact that life goes on whether the House is in session or not. Many active political debates take place irrespective of whether the House is in session. I am not sure that necessarily the nation is that much the poorer. I take account of what the hon. Gentleman says about the importance of the debate. I have already shown a willingness to consider the matter further in my response to the Leader of the Opposition. There is no intransigence on my part.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): I regret having to pursue the Stalker affair with my right hon. Friend once again. I am sure that by the time the House resumes in the autumn the matter will have been resolved and, therefore, will no longer be sub judice. I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 1153, which is indicative of the concern that is felt on both sides of the House about the Stalker affair.

[That this House is concerned about the damage being caused by the continuing uncertainty arising from the investigation of a complaint made against the Deputy Chief Constable of the Greater Manchester Police; notes that this matter has been under investigation since 28th May 1986, if not earlier; notes further that the House will rise on Friday 25th July 1986 and not return until the Autumn; and urges the Police Complaints Authority to bring the case to an early conclusion and to report before the House rises so as to enable hon. Members to have the opportunity of raising the wider issues involved.]

If the matter is dealt with by the appropriate authorities before the House returns in the autumn, will sympathetic consideration be given at some time during the early weeks of the new Session to the matter being discussed by the House?

Mr. Biffen: I understand entirely the point made by my hon. Friend. He may have noted that in my reply to the Leader of the Opposition I referred to the early-day motion. I think that we should see how the matter stands when we return towards the end of October. I shall be prepared to consider any requests from my hon. Friend at that time.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Will the Leader of the House ask the Foreign Secretary to have words, during the summer recess, with the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments on the proposed construction of a nuclear power plant near Hong Kong? Early-day motion 1157 expresses widespread concern and fear.

[That this House, noting the grave concern of the general public of Hong Kong at the building of the proposed nuclear power plant at Daya Bay in the Guangdong Province of China, notes the opposition by a coalition of more than 100 trade unions, professional groups, community and local organisations and the petition signed by 700,000 citizens in two weeks which supports the anti-nuclear opposition backed by civic and church leaders, academics and scientists; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to make urgent representations to the Chinese Government for the re-siting of this plant from close proximity to the Crown Colony, the most densely populated region on earth.]

Do any contingency plans exist for evacuation in the event of a serious accident at the proposed plant?

Mr. Biffen: Probably the best thing that I can do to assist the hon. Gentleman is to refer the early-day motion

[Mr. Biffen]

to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, and ask my right hon. and learned Friend to get in touch with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): My right hon. Friend knows that those enthusiasts on the Select Committee on the Channel Tunnel Bill are doing their best to get things moving by holding hearings during the summer recess. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Committee has gone a step further in its efforts to help Eurotunnel by refusing to hear evidence from the ferry companies and others on the financial viability of the tunnel and the safety considerations of the tunnel? In view of the unprecedented and bizarre——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Member disclosing what is going on in the Select Committee?

Mr. Aitken: No; I am disclosing what has not gone on in the Select Committee. I am about to ask for a debate. In view of the bizarre and unprecedented suppression of evidence, which, incidentally——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Member should ask for a debate and then sit down.

Mr. Aitken: I ask my right hon. Friend to ensure that as soon as the House resumes we shall have an early debate so that the House and the country may hear the evidence that has been censored.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has such an enviable innocence in the way he presents his propositions. I should like to examine carefully what he has said before deciding whether we should have a debate.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I fear that the Leader of the House is becoming rather bored with our regular exchanges about the treatment of visitors at Heathrow. What are the Government doing to stop Heathrow being thrown into chaos as from the middle of next month by action taken by immigration officers concerned about the treatment of visitors and angry about their conditions? I see that the Minister of State is giving some information to his bag carrier. I think that the Secretary of State for Transport should be concerned. What are the Government doing to stop the chaos arising at Heathrow?

Mr. Biffen: I think that, with a perceptive judgment, the hon. Gentleman has referred to me as a bag carrier of the Treasury Bench.

Mr. Madden: I did not mean the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Biffen: I see. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that this is a tentative, sort of headline answer to the points that he raised. To assist in solving the difficult position that he has described, there has been a redeployment of staff and the provision of extra accommodation. There have been discussions with the Nigerian Government and Nigeria Airways, as the position largely derives from the influx of Nigerians. I shall ask the Home Secretary to get in touch with the hon. Gentleman further.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the insidious document published recently by the Civil Aviation Authority, calling for more night flights at Heathrow and Gatwick airports? Is he further aware of the grave disquiet in my constituency about that possibility among people whose lives have been thrown into turmoil by aircraft noise? Will my right hon. Friend make arrangements for the House to debate this important matter that touches on people's lives in a most profound way?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend perfectly describes a phenomenon that is immensely irritating in environmental terms in selected areas of the United Kingdom. I suggest that, in the first instance, my hon. Friend raises the matter in an Adjournment debate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall endeavour to call those hon. Members who have been rising. That may give more scope to others seeking to speak in the debates or the Adjournment motion.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is the Leader of the House aware that the Fees Office has confirmed that a letter is to be sent out this weekend regarding the vote on Members' allowances? As the House is not sitting for the next three months, and as it is rumoured that the letter contains a shock or a surprise, can he tell us what it is?

Mr. Biffen: There is no shock or a surprise. It is merely a commonsense observation that the vote that took place was on the proposals for the current year. They were not intended to be retrospective.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I refer to the Education Bill and the Division on the caning amendment that was lost on Tuesday. Can my right hon. Friend arrange for a statement to be made when the House resumes—prior to the further debate on the Education Bill—so that inquiries can be carried out? A number of Conservative Members, both for and against caning, were prevented from getting to the Division Lobby in time because of celebrations prior to the royal wedding. Although I am not asking for a rerun, it would be helpful if the Sessional Order could be brought to the attention of the Commissioner of the Metropolitan police and all police surrounding Parliament square to ensure that hon. Members can get here to vote.

Mr. Biffen: I am satisfied that the police authorities did their best to ensure passage. There were quite unprecedented crowds. If they had been moved on to enable a gaggle of parliamentarians to cast a vote, it would have soured the atmosphere of the evening's celebrations.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): On a much lighter and harmonious note, in view of the end of term, I ask the Leader of the House whether he has studied my early-day motion 1146.

[That this House recognises the superb artistry of the Bolshoi Ballet; is grateful for the happiness and pleasure given to our citizens throughout the medium of television and by the performance at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and elsewhere; and urges Presidents, Prime Ministers and government, both East and West, to pursue actions which maximise those things which make for common accord and minimise those matters which are divisive.]

I know that the right hon. Gentleman will be busy in the next three months trying to maintain his majority in his constituency. He will not have the responsibility of thinking up answers to business questions at 2 o'clock in the morning, so he will be ready for Thursdays. As we shall

not have time for a debate, and in spite of the fact that he once told me that he was the greatest philistine in the House, will he find time to go to see the Bolshoi Ballet and give it some encouragement?

Mr. Biffen: I think that the lobbyists for the Bolshoi Ballet should provide me with a free ticket.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Is my right hon. Friend aware, if the Labour party is not, that if there were an early debate on the Westland inquiry, the House's attention would have to be drawn to paragraph 183 of the Committee's report where part of the Committee unanimously absolved the Prime Minister from any blame or responsibility in the matter? Is it not nonsense on the part of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) to talk about collusion when he has not read the report?

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says. When we have a debate that can take account of the Government's response and the reflective consideration of the report, I hope that my hon. Friend will be lucky enough to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, and take part in the debate.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 842.

[That this House expresses regret at Her Majesty's Government's refusal to recognise the plight of sufferers from abnormality of the feet; noting that this condition is mainly a result of spina bifida, polio, osteomyelitis and hydrocephalus, the Chancellor of the Exchequer is urged to understand and appreciate the seriousness of the problem and to reconsider the appeals emanating from the Stockport Odd Feet Association for special concessions regarding the relief from value-added tax on the purchase of the second pair of shoes required for this particular disability.]

The motion expresses regret at the Government's refusal to recognise the plight of sufferers from abnormality of the feet, mainly from polio and spina bifida. We ask for concessions on a second pair of shoes that disabled people must purchase.

Mr. Biffen: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing my attention to the early-day motion. At this stage of the Session, the most helpful thing that I could do would be to draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to its content.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I ask my right hon. Friend whether, at an early stage when we return in October, we can have a debate on the future of the British Steel Corporation, especially in the light of its profits announced for the last financial year and its productivity compared with some years ago. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be opportune to review the success of the corporation and where it goes here?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend will appreciate that there are a great many demands on time, even in the overspill, but I shall certainly take account of his request, not least because the steel industry remains not only an important industry but an increasingly successful one.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Tony Banks.

Mr. Tony Banks: That cost me 50p, Mr. Speaker. Will the Leader of the House explain to me, as a relatively new and inexperienced Member——

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Hear, hear.

Mr. Banks: Coming from the hon. Gentleman, that is rather rich. Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why we need so long a period for the summer recess? A considerable amount of business on which hon. Members are pressing for a debate has yet to be considered. The other place will be sitting a week longer and returning two weeks earlier than the House of Commons. I realise that all right hon. and hon. Members have lots to do, but we shall be deprived of a valuable platform which we can use as Members of Parliament.

Will the right hon. Gentleman explain these points? What are the procedures? How is the length of the recess decided? I am sure that I am not the only person who is interested in knowing the answers; the rest of the country must be interested as well.

Mr. Biffen: The recess is just a touch longer than the average recess at this time of the year, but there is not much in it. I think that most hon. Members find it valuable to have a reasonably lengthy break. I know that the hon. Gentleman would be deeply saddened if he could not attend the Labour party conference. Such considerations stretch the days. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I did not expect to hear such hostility on the Labour Benches at the prospect of a Labour party conference. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition needs even more time off to train Labour Members.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): On the question of the recess, does my right hon. Friend agree that, in the time in which we have both been Members, July has always been a month with a mixture of high drama and boredom and that some of the high drama is real and some is simulated? Does he know that at the beginning of 1988—my right hon. Friend has to look ahead—there will be a change in school terms? Because of the examination changes, all the schools will break up for the holidays at the beginning of July. This will create problems for hon. Members who have children. This will apply to Government maintained and independent schools through the new examination changes. What will my right hon. Friend do? Will we have an extra month's holiday, or should I say working recess? My right hon. Friend will have to plan next year for the Commons' programme the year after.

Mr. Biffen: I wish devoutly that July had more boredom and less high drama. Voices around me have told me that my hon. Friend was totally misconceived in suggesting that revolutionary changes in school holidays were ahead. I suspect that, if revolutionary changes in school holidays occur, this place in due course will change, and then there will be a chorus of complaints that we no longer have the 90-day recesses which we used to have which gave us a chance to travel overseas, to go round our constituencies, to be with our families and to put matters in better perspective. One cannot win.

Mr. Tom Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Tom Clarke. I am sorry about the bet.

Mr. Clarke: I am sure that you will accept, Mr. Speaker, that no Scotsman ever regretted going home with

[Mr. Clarke]

an extra 50p in his pocket. This is no exception. In view of the astonishing reply by the Leader of the House to my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), has the right hon. Gentleman borne in mind that my right hon. Friend was merely reflecting the tone of the report? Does he accept that the last sentence in the report gives witnesses who feel that they have been unfairly treated the chance to put matters right? What practical steps will the Government take within the next few days to make that possible?

Mr. Biffen: If the hon. Gentleman's point is valid—I do not have the advantage of having read the report—it is a great argument for having the debate later rather than earlier.

Severn Crossing

4.24 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about a second Severn crossing.

In February 1984 my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Transport announced the Government's decision to proceed with a programme of strengthening and repair for the Severn crossing. That programme is well under way and is proceeding well. At the same time my right hon. Friend announced that he intended to initiate a study into the way in which a second crossing might be provided in the same general corridor as the existing crossing. Consultants were appointed later in the year and asked to report by August this year. I am glad to say that the consultants have completed their work ahead of time and copies of the report have today been placed in the Library of the House.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I have considered the consultants' findings and recommendations and have decided that a second Severn crossing should be provided. We propose that this new crossing should be a bridge sited at the English Stones, about three miles downstream of the existing crossing with connections to the M4 on both banks and with an additional southerly link to the M5. The new bridge would carry a dual two-lane motorway with hard shoulders. The consultants advise us that it will be possible to provide windshielding on the bridge.

We are proceeding with the next stage of planning immediately. This is a major project and much work remains to be done and consultations set in hand. I am sure that the House will welcome this commitment to build a second crossing of the Severn on the main route into south Wales. I know that this decision will also be very widely welcomed in Wales. The Government have always recognised the vital importance of the Severn crossing to the economy of Severnside and south Wales. Our action in strengthening the existing crossing, and the commissioning of this report, its completion by the consultants within the timetable set and the decisions that I have announced today confirm our determination to ensure that the crossings are adequate for future traffic needs and underline our commitment to the future economic development of the Principality.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I welcome the statement. It is welcome news and an important proposal in the history of the south Wales economy. The report's conclusions brutally spell out the delays and their economic consequences for the 1990s at the existing bridge. There was no alternative but to build. The Wales Trades Union Congress, the Confederation of British Industry and Gwent county council have long sought such a statement.

Will the Secretary of State join me in acknowledging the persistent campaign over a decade of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), who fights so hard for his constituency and the county of Gwent?

I wish to put a series of questions to the right hon. Gentleman. How many jobs will the project create? How much will it cost? How could the right hon. Gentleman telescope the planning procedures to ensure the earliest

possible start? Will the new bridge be tolled? There will be implications for the existing bridge either way and for the M4 and M5.

Will the Welsh Office budget bear the cost of the new bridge? Which Department — the Welsh Office or the Department of Transport — will sponsor the bridge? Which Department is in charge in terms prosecuting the building of the bridge? Will the cost of the bridge affect the other budgets of the Secretary of State for Wales? We know that he has many other important economic and social programmes, and we want none to fall aside because the bridge is to be built. What is the right hon. Gentleman's estimate of the construction time? Does he agree that the steel, cement, construction and transport industries will gain greatly from the project? Because windshields for the bridge are mentioned in the report, will be comment on the safety factors?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the second crossing will give the south Wales economy a major boost and avoid expensive and damaging hold-ups at the existing bridge? Does he agree that south Wales will become an even more attractive location for modern job prospects and especially for the location of manufacturing projects from Japan, Europe and the United States?

This is an exciting development for the 133,000 unemployed citizens of the five south Wales counties, where male unemployment is one in four. It is an immense psychological boost to the economy. It will restore confidence from Cardiff to Brussels and it will create many jobs and buttress others. I urge the right hon. Gentleman to press on with all speed. The Opposition believe in the urgent need for this project and a Labour Government would build a second crossing with ruthless speed. It is the key to a better industrial future for Wales.

Mr. Edwards: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the tone and warmth of his welcome and for the support he has given to the decision. I agree that it will be widely welcomed by many and I acknowledge that many have compaigned for a long time.

The cost of the actual construction is given in the consultants' report, at 1986 prices, as £183 million. However, when we come to the total cost involved, including land acquisition and other matters, it will be over £200 million. I would not wish to be more specific than that at the moment.

The hon. Gentleman asked about telescoping the planning arrangements. I hope that when he talked about proceeding at ruthless speed he was not suggesting that there should not be proper consultation with those that will be affected. I can confirm that we are as anxious as he is to waste no time in getting on with the necessary procedures. We are getting on to the next stage at once with a sense of urgency on the basis that a bridge must be provided as soon as it is needed and Parliament so decides. We wish to be in a position to provide the crossing by the mid-1990s but, of course, the decisions at each stage will have to have regard to the way in which the traffic develops.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the process we will follow. As I said, we are going ahead without pause on the planning arrangements. Our intention is to proceed by way of legislation to avoid planning procedures being unduly prolonged. However, as I have emphasised, there will have to be proper consultation with those affected. In order to get the maximum possible speed when we are ready to go ahead and the greatest economic advantage, if the outcome of the present tendering exercise for Dartford tunnel proves successful — there is every sign that it will — we shall consider using similar procedures.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the Welsh Office budget and which Department will be responsible for the bridge. Both the Department of Transport and the Welsh Office have worked in the closest possible collaboration on this matter. I should like to pay a tribute to the former Secretary of State for Transport, now the Secretary of State for the Environment, for the considerable effort that he put in to getting this matter going in the fastest possible time. I would also like to express my appreciation for the way in which the present Secretary of State for Transport has thought it right, in view of the importance of the announcement for south Wales, that I should make this statement. I must emphasise that this is a project for which both Departments are responsible. However, the actual construction of the bridge will be the responsibility of the Department of Transport. My Department will clearly be involved in the approach roads on the Welsh side and the Department of Transport will be involved in the approach roads on the English side. The Department of Transport has the technical expertise, which clearly makes it appropriate for it to be the responsible Department.

The hon. Gentleman asked about windshields. One of the reasons for going so carefully into the question of the tunnel alternative was because of our concern about the wind. One of the benefits of having undertaken this important and essential study is that it has come to the conclusion that windshields can be provided effectively so that traffic will not be delayed and interrupted as it has been in the past.

The hon. Gentleman emphasised the enormous importance of this decision for the economy of south Wales. May I also point out that it is an important decision for the economy of Avon as well? It is a fact that 60 per cent. of the traffic crossing the present bridge goes from south Wales to the Bristol area and that the proposed plan will shorten the journey by about 14 km. We are talking about a project of importance for the whole of Severnside and south Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I welcome the statement and the fact that it is being made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. I say that with no disrespect to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I feel that it further underlines the Government's commitment to the economy of south Wales and the importance of the Severn bridge as a prime feature there. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that this statement fulfils a promise previously given that the Government would ensure that a second crossing of the Severn would be in place as soon as it was needed? May we hope that we need have no more unnecessary scare stories about the present Severn bridge, which have certainly done nothing to help the economy of south Wales?

Mr. Edwards: It is our intention to provide the bridge as soon as it is needed, taking account of the build-up of traffic. That must be the right way to proceed. We have gone ahead to ensure the absolute security of the present crossing. The limitation of the present crossing is in terms of capacity. There is now clear evidence that we shall face an increasing capacity problem into the mid-1990s.

[Mr. Edwards]

Therefore, we are going ahead with the planning for the next stage of the new bridge so that it can be provided when necessary. As I have said, we are taking every step to ensure that the time scale is kept as short as possible on the assumption that the traffic builds up in the way we expect.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau, Gwent): I certainly congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on the statement. However, many Opposition Members think that a special tribute is due to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) and Gwent county council. They have fought so long for this project. May I say that perhaps the best way of celebrating would be to abolish tolls on the present bridge and make sure that we do not have tolls on the new one?

Mr. Edwards: If it makes people happy to be congratulated, no doubt congratulations will come. The truth is that everyone who has had the smallest knowledge of the south Wales economy has recognised the importance of securing this crossing. The Government have made their determination to do that absolutely plain from the word go. It has not needed any lobbying either by the hon. Member for Newport, East or by Gwent county council to bring the Government to that decision. However, I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman welcomes the announcement.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to tolls. The Government have made a statement about their tolls policy. This enables me to answer a question put by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) that I did not answer. The cost of the bridge will fall within the appropriate departmental budgets in the normal way. However, a toll regime and the possibilities opened up by the Dartford tunnel procedure may offer the possibility of reducing the demand on the public purse and making it possible to build more of the other roads in England and Wales, which I have no doubt hon. Members will continue to demand. I see the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) agreeing with those views. I know that his party does not want a Severn bridge at all and has argued that frequently. However, I know that he will be pressing me for other roads and I am sure that he will support a private option and a toll regime in order to produce the maximum possible resources.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): It will come as no surprise to my right hon. Friend to know that his announcement will be warmly welcomed in west Gloucestershire. Whenever there was a problem with the Severn bridge, whether it be wind or repairs, the traffic was always diverted up the A48, which runs straight through my constituency and there was absolute mayhem on that road with all the extra traffic.

As congratulations are in order, I should like to congratulate my right hon. Friend on not simply talking about something but doing something about it. It is all very well to congratulate Opposition Members on their input in lobbying my right hon. Friend but deeds come much harder than words. It is easy to talk and very difficult to grasp the nettle. I should like to congratulate my right hon. Friend on behalf of all my constituents on what he has done today. The inclusion of windshielding is an exceedingly good idea because often in the past the present Severn bridge has been closed because of high winds.

Mr. Edwards: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's thanks and I know that the decision will be welcomed in his constituency. He talked about deeds, but the House must understand from the consultants' report that the Severn is the most difficult estuarial crossing anywhere in Britain and this is a major undertaking. All the work done in the present study was an absolutely essential precursor to the further work and could not have been avoided. Indeed, without it we would never have reached our present knowledge about the possibilities of windshielding and of maintenance-free depths. We hope that with the form of bridge envisaged, which will have a short bridge section in the centre of the channel, it will be possible to avoid some of the resurfacing and maintenance problems that exist on the present bridge. That sort of fact has emerged as a result of the study.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): We warmly welcome the proposals for a second Severn crossing, and believe that it is absolutely necessary and will be of particular benefit to the south Wales economy. Will the Secretary of State say whether he will publish a timetable for the construction of the bridge? Can he tell us why a two-lane rather than a three-lane bridge will be constructed, when there is congestion on the present two-lane bridge? Why was a tunnel rejected when 100 years ago a certain Mr. I. K. Brunel was capable of constructing one for the railways? Has a Severn barrage been considered in connection with the new bridge crossing? Will the Secretary of State consider writing off the debt of the present Severn bridge?

Mr. Edwards: We are constructing an additional dual two-lane motorway with hard shoulders, which will work in tandem with the existing bridge. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman has not yet had the opportunity to read the lengthy, detailed report which makes clear recommendations about the adequacy of the solution, or to read why the consultants recommend a bridge solution rather than a tunnel solution. That has been decided not merely on cost terms, although there is a considerable cost advantage, but on operational terms. It would probably not be possible to provide hard shoulders in a tunnel and we have all learnt the importance of having them. The relevance of a barrage crossing between Cardiff and the Weston-super-Mare area to the general traffic flow from Cardiff along the M4 to London and, substantially, into the Bristol area can, at the most, be extremely marginal. We are also concerned with getting an early crossing when it is required for traffic, and not having to await possible prolonged discussions on a barrage project. The two matters are not related.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): I welcome my right hon. Friend's comments, particularly as I know of the importance of the project for both Wales and Avon. It could generate thousands of jobs on both sides of the Severn at its peak of construction. May I take this opportunity to draw to my right hon. Friend's attention the fact that many hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Northavon (Mr. Cope), will represent their constituents' interests on environmental matters during the planning process?

Mr. Edwards: I can confirm the benefit that will accrue to the Avon area and the shorter journey times involved, which is a reason why we decided to choose the M5 link. Despite the need for prompt and effective action, I fully understand the importance of consulting properly and ensuring both that the interests of local people are guarded as fully as possible in building this major road link and that the usual compensation arrangements will apply. The Severn estuary is an environmentally important area, so we must do our best to ensure that the environment is protected, although I believe that in many ways the bridge will be a positive feature in the landscape.

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): The fact that the statement is made by the Secretary of State for Wales rather than the Secretary of State for Transport shows that Conservative Central Office is more worried about election results in south Wales than in south-west England. It was only in a late answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) that the county of Avon and the fact that there is another bank to the bridge was mentioned. I agree with the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) that there is a second bank to the bridge and that those who represent the people on that side want their full share of the work and benefits that will flow from its construction. It is not good enough to present the proposal to the House merely as a benefit for Wales. There are two sides to this and I hope that that will be borne in mind.

Mr. Edwards: The right hon. Gentleman is wrong in saying that it needed my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) to draw attention to the Avon side of the bridge. I drafted that section of the statement and expressly inserted a reference to "Severnside" because I fully appreciate that the proposal affects both sides. I welcome the invitation of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to me to make this statement because it helps to emphasise the close collaboration between the two Departments in what is an essential junction for communities on both sides of the estuary.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, West): May I join the general chorus of congratulations to my right hon. Friend on his welcome announcement? I wish to follow the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) and the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks). Has my right hon. Friend worked out, or does he intend to work out, any way in which the undoubted economic benefits for the area as a whole—that is, both south Wales and Avon—can be equalised so that contractors on the Avon side of the estuary will compete on equal terms with those on the subsidised assisted area on the Severn side?

Mr. Edwards: I do not know of subsidies for road contractors which would allow one side to have a competitive advantage over the other. Obviously, we shall consider many important matters, such as whether the tender is competitive and the technical ability of the contractor to carry out this formidable engineering task. We shall in the next phase consider the options opened up to us by the Dartford tunnel procedures and the possibility of producing a design and tender operating procedure.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): My right hon. Friend and his colleagues deserve the warmest congratulations on having conducted a careful study and on having acted so swiftly on its results. Does he agree that this shows that excellent communications are by far the best way of bringing jobs to areas, whether we speak of north Wales, south Wales or Avonside?

Mr. Edwards: I agree. We have taken the decision in the month in which we are considering tenders for the Conwy tunnel crossing, which will be the largest such operation yet undertaken in the United Kingdom. Therefore, we are tackling with massive new engineering schemes two of the major traffic needs of the Principality, and that should be taken on board.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): The right hon. Gentleman can be assured that there will be a welcome in south Wales for his announcement. Everyone is happy about it as it is important to our economy. Whatever the Secretary of State said in respect of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), he is the man who will have tribute paid to him for his persistence. It is a pity that the Secretary of State is insistent about tolls. Will he ensure that if we must have tolls, we have toll points on both sides of the bridge to avoid the problem on the present bridge of traffic waiting on the bridge?

Mr. Edwards: No doubt the world will be amazed at this desperate need to find some form of support for the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes). It will be amazing if the world is ever brought to believe that he influenced the Government's decision on this major project, but if people think that he did, so be it.

The hon. Gentleman will see, when he comes to read the consultants' report that the consultants address themselves to the question of toll booths and where they might be positioned. Clearly that is a practical matter that will have to be gone into in some detail before a final decision is taken.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The Secretary of State has done me the courtesy of quoting what I would have said before I said it so that I do not need to repeat it.

In terms of transportation priorities, both cross-border and within Wales, can he say what the effect will be on his departmental vote? In particular, what effect might this have on the need to dual the Heads of the Valleys road and to improve transportation within the valleys? Does the fact that either he or his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport propose to introduce a Bill have implications for the environmental safeguards that will be required on the estuary?

Mr. Edwards: I am glad to have the hon. Gentleman's confirmation that Plaid Cymru in fact is opposed to a second Severn crossing, and wants the road to be built elsewhere. I had not thought he would do that.

Mr. Thomas: I did not say that.

Mr. Edwards: That was what I said, and the hon. Gentleman thanked me for confirming it. If there is some misunderstanding, perhaps it can be settled within his party.

I can tell him that we are consulting on the other priorities for the 1990s in Wales, as he knows, and will consider the various recommendations currently being put to us from all over Wales.

With regard to environmental issues, we clearly have to give an adequate opportunity for those who will be

[Mr. Edwards]

affected to comment, and we shall do that. The object of the legislation is to avoid the possible long delays that can take place if one uses traditional planning procedures, which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, can take 10 or 15 years on such a project.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): The sum of £200 million is a great deal of money, but there is no doubt that on commercial criteria alone this expenditure is justified. That being the case, have we not missed an opportunity to contain public expenditure with this project? As it is commercially justifiable, could we not, as with the Channel tunnel, have had it done through the private sector?

Mr. Edwards: What I said about the Dartford tunnel options may not be clear. The whole of the Dartford tunnel tendering procedure was designed to ascertain whether a privately financed solution was practical. My right hon. Friend is at present considering the tenders received. In the light of that experience, we shall certainly want to see whether that is a possibility in this case. As I pointed out earlier, it could release resources for all the other desirable road projects that people want.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I am sorry to hear the Secretary of State steadfastly refuse to congratulate Gwent county council and my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes). I wondered whether the Minister's statement is a result of a sudden realisation by the Conservative party that the general election is well above the horizon. Is there a fund of some sort for these projects that will be announced? If so, will anything be available to other parts of Wales? In particular, could we have a dual carriageway on the A483 instead of the present ragbag of roads — unless, of course, the Secretary of State has already resigned himself to the fact that the constituencies of Delyn and Clwyd, South-West will be Labour gains at the next election?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman has clearly failed to recognise that we appointed the consultants some two years ago to report in August, and they have reported ahead of schedule. We said that we would report on the consultants' conclusions as soon as possible. Not only have we reported on the conclusions of the report, we have announced our decision on where the road will go. In view of what he said about roads in his part of the world, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will support a privately financed bridge, if that proves a feasible option proposition.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): The Secretary of State well knows that on 29 November 1984 the Government cut the percentage of the working population in Wales qualifying for regional development grant from 90 per cent. to 35 per cent. In order to maximise the advantages of the new bridge to the economy of south Wales, does he intend to restore those losses?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman has grossly misrepresented the statistical position because, under the different arrangements, a very high proportion of the population of Wales receives regional assistance. What we have done is to change the pattern of regional assistance so that Wales benefits considerably more from regional assistance, as was pointed out by one of my hon. Friends. What this will do, as the consultants clearly point out, is to give a considerable further boost to regional policy.

Dr. Roger Thomas (Carmarthen): Can I seek the assurance that this is a genuine additional bridge, a complementary bridge, rather than a replacement bridge? Many people in south Wales fear that the present bridge will never be fully safely operational again. Wales needs two bridges, not one and a half.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. We are pressing on with the programme. It is going well. We are confident that, when it is complete, the present bridge will be absolutely secure as a crossing. As I said earlier, the limitations on that bridge are those of capacity. We are now seeking to enlarge substantially the capacity of the crossing.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I welcome the statement, and I am glad that it has been made by the Secretary of State for Wales. The crossing of the Severn is a vital connection to and from Wales. I say this with no disrespect to the Secretary of State for Transport who is in his place in the Chamber.

Broadly speaking, the scheme is what I have been advocating for quite some time and, in that sense, I have been backed up by my right hon. and hon. Friends, by county councils like Gwent and by Newport borough council. Will the Secretary of State appreciate that this is the culmination of several years of campaigning that commenced with the famous Adjournment debate on 28 October 1983 when I was alone in the Chamber with the hon. Lady the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker)? *[Interruption.]* She was promoted after that.

Contrary to what the Secretary of State has told the House today, does he appreciate that there were many fainthearts at that time, some of them in high places, but later on even CBI Wales started to sit up and take notice, and that took a bit of doing?

I regret, of course, that there is no intention as yet on the part of the Government to abolish tolls on estuarial crossings. I advise and urge the Government to think again about this matter, particularly bearing in mind the horrific unemployment situation in Wales, about which so much needs to be done.

Can the Secretary of State tell us about the proposed time scale for the building of the bridge? Will he, apart from being ruthless about planning, try to ensure that the planning procedures are sharpened up? Did he, like me, note a little apathy in the third paragraph in the conclusion of the report in its reference to delays in future years? Can I assure the Secretary of State, on behalf of thousands of motorists, that lane closures, delays and frustration very much exist already? They need to be eliminated as quickly as possible.

Finally, will the Secretary of State assure the House that the contract for the building of the bridge will be awarded to a British company, because there is already speculation to the contrary?

Mr. Edwards: If that was the speculation before the House had even been told of the decision to build, one can see the value of it. I have laid down the criteria that the Department of Transport will have to take into account in choosing the contractors. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is pleased about the decision that we have

taken. A great many people, including the hon. Gentleman, have made representations over the years, none more vigorously than my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson), whose first parliamentary question in the House addressed itself to this very topic. If credit is to be given to anyone, it is to the hon. Member within the Government and my Department, who has never ceased to press the importance of the matter upon me.

Royal Ordnance plc

5 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about Royal Ordnance plc.

On 17 June, I announced the Government's decision not to proceed with the planned flotation of Royal Ordnance plc. I also made it clear in answer to questions on 18 June that we would review all the various options to decide how best to achieve our aim of privatisation. That review is now completed and I can tell the House that, with the exception of one factory, it remains our firm preference to sell the company as a whole. We would hope to do so by a private sale if that proves practicable. Over the coming weeks, we shall be inviting bids on the basis of a selling memorandum and I shall report further to the House when we have made some concrete progress.

The exception is the tank-building business at Leeds. Following discussions between the Ministry of Defence and Vickers, an offer has been made by Vickers plc to purchase Royal Ordnance Leeds, which the Government and the board of Royal Ordnance have accepted, subject to detailed discussions now taking place between Royal Ordnance and Vickers to finalise the agreement. The price will be related to an audited net asset value but we expect it to be about £11 million. As part of the agreement, Vickers will build a major new facility at the Leeds site, similar to its factory at Newcastle. That reflects its faith in the business and its determination to win the export orders that are critical to the continuing future of the factory.

I can also tell the House that in the light of the agreement, the way is now clear for a decision to order a seventh regiment of Challenger tanks, subject to detailed contract terms. Vickers has agreed that the tanks will be manufactured at Leeds and we have negotiated with Vickers prices that represent an improvement on the terms offered by Royal Ordnance. I am satisfied that the competitive pressures that have operated on both companies during our various negotiations have ensured that the Ministry of Defence will receive good value for money for this important order.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The most significant and perhaps the most disturbing announcement in the statement, which was leaked heavily in this morning's newspapers, is the sale of the tank factory at Leeds to its main and only competitor, Vickers. We believe that that sale is another step in what will turn out to be the dismemberment of the Royal Ordnance factories. The Secretary of State's "firm preference" and fine words mean nothing at all after the way in which the Government and his Department have treated both the management and employees of the Royal Ordnance factories.

It is extraordinary that a policy of privatisation that was supposed to encourage competition within the British defence industry is eliminating that competition and creating a monopoly supplier in the British economy for main battle tanks. Is the Secretary of State aware that his predecessor wrote a personal letter to all the employees of all the Royal Ordnance factories assuring them that their factories would not be sold off to a competitor, which could, by the very nature of being a competitor, close

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

down those factories? That assurance has now been cynically and brutally abrogated by the right hon. Gentleman.

If two private sector companies were to merge the important sectors of their business in that way, a Government of the day, rightly, would refer the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The Government are doing exactly the same thing; they are promoting a merger between two competitors and thereby creating a monopoly. Why should not that be considered by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, in the national interest?

Is the right hon. Gentleman still persisting, as we think he is, in his policy of competitive tendering for defence contracts? If so, the only competition in future for the building of tanks will come from foreign competitors. In view of the amount of support that is given by foreign countries to their defence industries, there is a real danger in future that the next generation of the main battle tank for the British Army will be built not in Britain, but in France, Germany or the United States. The right hon. Gentleman's policy on the ordnance factories is in a mess, and he knows it. What he should do now is keep them in the public sector, where they have been profitable, efficient and competitive.

Mr. Younger: I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman did not give a welcome to this encouraging announcement. I think that he will find that not only he but others will regret the fact that they have made that move at this time without looking more carefully at it. If one looks at the deal from the point of view of those whose livelihood is in building tanks, one sees it as a most important and positive step in giving those people a more secure future.

The undertaking that my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), my predecessor, gave the employees in the letter that he wrote is maintained by the decision that I have made today. It is exactly the case that the undertaking that he gave still applies. We do not envisage, as he did not, parts of Royal Ordnance being sold to someone who would wish to close them down to eliminate competition. That is most certainly not the case in this instance. The deal improves Leeds's future prospects and involves the commitment by the owners to build a major new factory in Leeds, to build those tanks. Therefore, no one can say that that commitment is not being fully carried out.

Of course, we wish to encourage competition in every way we can. One should bear in mind—I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will — that if there are two different tank manufacturers and nothing like enough business for both of them, one does not get meaningful competition except for a very short time. It follows that the new company, with the two factory sites together, should be able to be a much more powerful competitor agaist foreign competitors or, indeed, a more powerful component in collaborative ventures for the future.

With regard to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, under the Fair Trading Act it is the duty of the Director General of Fair Trading to consider and refer to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry anything that he considers should be referred to him. Any further decision thereafter will be for my right hon. Friend to make. I have no reason to think that there is any difficulty about that. No doubt that will be raised if it is thought appropriate.

Whichever way one looks at the statement, it is an important and positive announcement for the future of those who make tanks. I think that the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) will greatly regret having been so sour about it.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): My right hon. Friend knows that many of us have felt that Royal Ordnance has been unsatisfactorily handled, but what he said about the commitment of Vickers to further investment is welcome in part. As the details have not been finalised, will my right hon. Friend try to ensure that Vickers has a long-term commitment and that the investment is not simply to quicken up the Challenger tank order, after which the factory might have little to do? Surely an investment in the longer-term to diversify the product range is the answer. As many of us want to keep Royal Ordnance as an integrated company, was there no chance of a private sale that involved the whole of Royal Ordnance, including Leeds?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. His extremely close interest in the factory and everything to do with it is well known. I agree that the longer-term the commitment can be the better, but the length of any commitment for tank manufacture in Britain is bound to be affected by the likely ordering pattern for tanks. In the long term, I do not see any substantial increase in the number of tanks that are likely to be ordered by my Department. It follows that the long-term future for all those who make tanks is crucially dependent on having a highly competitive way of operating and therefore a better chance of getting foreign business. The combined arrangement will be much better placed to achieve that.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): Let me, as the constituency Member of Parliament, cheer up the Secretary of State a little. I welcome the Government's belated recognition that Barnbow is the best heavy tank factory in Britain, and the recognition by Vickers that the Barnbow work force is the best tank force in Britain. I deeply regret that the Government's 12-month delay in placing this order has made redundancies inevitable at Barnbow this autumn. However, if Barnbow is, as the Government admit, the best tank factory with the best work force, why on earth have the Government decided to sell it off to a firm with an inferior capacity, thus creating a private monopoly in which the British taxpayer is the only customer? How on earth can the Secretary of State reconcile that with his predecessor's statement that he wished to see competition—a statement that followed the passage that the right hon. Gentleman read out from his predecessor's statement?

On price, would not Vickers be able to recover the £11 million that the right hon. Gentleman says that it will pay for the factory out of the profits from the Challenger order alone? Will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that if an auditor finds that the factory's assets are worth more than £11 million — this morning *The Times* suggested that they are worth £16 million—Vickers will have to pay the higher price?

Why should the House, or the work force at Barnbow, have any more confidence in the undertakings from Vickers that the right hon. Gentleman has just relayed

than they had in the right hon. Gentleman's undertaking to sell off Royal Ordnance as a whole and not to sell it off in bits?

Mr. Younger: I am most grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his welcome of at least parts of the statement. He is very much more realistic than his right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies).

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) made the point that, as the only domestic customer for the purchase of tanks, the Ministry of Defence is in a unique position. It is my concern over the long-term future of tank manufacture in this country that leads me to the inevitable conclusion that this is by far the best solution. The right hon. Gentleman points to it being a monopoly. He might like to reflect carefully upon what the position would be if we allowed just the two - indeed, the only two - tank manufacturers in the country to battle it out for orders that are not nearly sufficient to keep the two going. There are barely enough orders to keep one of them going. The result would be that one of them would go to the wall. Therefore, it is much better for the long-term future of tank manufacture that this deal should be done.

I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his welcome for the seventh regiment of Challenger tanks. I very much hope that Vickers will be able to recover the money that it has invested. I have no idea whether it thinks that it will be able to do it on one order alone, but I very much hope that it will recover the money. The quicker it recovers it, the more prosperous the company, which all depend upon, will be.

I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would be able to have pretty good confidence in a company that is prepared not only to pay about £11 million for the assets of this factory but also to invest probably a larger sum in the building of an entirely new factory in its place on the same site and to employ most of the same work force. I should have thought that he would be very pleased indeed about that.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I welcome the end to the uncertainty by the announcement of the Challenger order, but is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be widespread concern in Nottingham, and in the Nottingham ROF, about the fact that the natural partnership in tank production between Leeds and Nottingham will be broken. What assurance is he able to give the House that co-operation over future tank production will be maintained? One of the major points that was made at the time of privatisation by those hon. Members with Nottingham constituencies who dealt with the Bill was that the philosophy of privatisation is wider share ownership among employees. How can my right hon. Friend guarantee wider share ownership among the employees, either in Leeds or in the rest of the ROFs, on the basis of a single sale, on whatever criteria?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the points that my hon. Friend has made, and I am grateful to him for welcoming the end of the uncertainty, which will undoubtedly be a great relief to many. However, my hon. Friend will know very well—indeed, better than most—that Nottingham is to be involved in the order announced today—the seventh regiment of Challenger tanks. In future, it will no doubt be very well placed competitively to obtain further orders, or to take part in further orders, either as a sub-contractor of Vickers, if that is the most appropriate way, or in some other way with foreign firms. My hon. Friend knows better than most that a very large part of Nottingham's output is export orders. In no way will that be altered by this statement, because it remains part of Royal Ordnance.

As for wider share ownership, I should very much have liked to see a flotation, if that had been possible, in July and an opportunity for all concerned to own shares. However, I hope that the Leeds employees will find that Vickers is a good employer, and I hope that it will discuss with the unions and all concerned at Leeds how matters are to be taken forward.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The Secretary of State will be aware from what he has been told by his Minister of State, who met a number of hon. Members at a meeting to which we took shop stewards from Barnbow, that there has been much discussion about Barnbow's future in recent months, let alone recent years. One of the overall questions that all of us will have to face up to is that, whether the factories are owned by Vickers or by anybody else, the future is bleak for Barnbow and that alternative types of production there ought to be considered, because it will not be able to support the size of work force that it has supported in the past.

Fortunately, I received a letter this morning from one of the men who works at Barnbow. I did not know that the statement was to be made today. He asked me to write to the Secretary of State with some very prescient questions. He said:

"The Government decided to privatise the Royal Ordnance Factories to make them more competitive with outside industry, but now we find RO Leeds offered to our main competitor, the reason given 'there is not room for two tank factories in the country.'"

His question is this:

"If there isn't room for two tank factories in the country how on earth can there be room for two in the same company?"

It is a real question. Are the redundancies to be in Leeds or are they to be in Newcastle? There will have to be redundancies somewhere. He then went on to say that he had listened to a chap from Vickers on Radio Leeds the other night who said:

"Vickers were all for expansion not closures."

My correspondent said that his follow-up question would have been that Leeds knows all about Vickers: look what it did to Crabtrees, Manns Dawson, Payne and Elliot, Campbell and Hunters. He said that it was no use telling the people of Leeds that Vickers was going to expand; the books are clear. The factory is to be cut back even more than it would have been had it remained in the ROF.

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for some of his remarks but, with great respect to him, I do not think that to disparage what is an extremely good company is likely to be helpful either to the right hon. Gentleman or to his constituents. Vickers is now proposing to move into his area and spend a large amount of its money, not Government money, upon building a brand new factory. There are 630 constituencies in this country. They would all be very glad to have a brand new factory. The right hon. Gentleman has got that wrong. He is absolutely right, of course, about the need for diversification. To rely upon tanks alone in the long term would be difficult, but on reflection might he not think that this is at least one step in the right direction of diversification? The products that are made by Vickers at

[Mr. Younger]

Newcastle are not the same as those which are made at Leeds. At least it will broaden the product base a little, and I certainly look to Vickers to take that further.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Will my right hon. Friend accept that those of us who represent Barnbow employees in Leeds are concerned to secure both the short-term future of that company and its long-term prospects? His announcement today that the order for the seventh regiment is to be placed at Leeds and that it is guaranteed to be completed at Leeds is very welcome, as it secures the first of these objectives. I am sure that all hon. Members with Leeds constituencies will greatly thank him for that.

My right hon. Friend's announcement of major investment by Vickers in Leeds is a completely new factor, which transforms the position. Asset-stripping by Vickers would be completely unacceptable to both sides of the House. However, any further major long-term investment by a successful company like Vickers, on top of the already major investment that it has made only a couple of miles down the road at the Howson Algraphy plant in my constituency, would be very welcome. Is my right hon. Friend sure that he has secured adequate guarantees of that investment during his negotiations, and is he sure that the contract, when it is finally signed, will have that clearly embodied in it?

Mr. Younger: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend. He is completely right when he says that there are both short-term and long-term interests in this factory and its employees which are important to us all. I am glad that at least the short-term problem has been greatly helped by today's announcement. As my hon. Friend has pointed out, asset-stripping would, indeed, be unacceptable to us all. However, this is the very reverse of asset-stripping. It is, I suppose, asset-building, in that the company is coming into the area and building an entirely new factory.

As for guarantees, as part of the agreement, Vickers has given an undertaking to move ahead in the way that I have described. I am quite certain that as an honourable company of very good standing that has every intention of making this business flourish, it will carry out what it has said it has undertaken to do.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): In the interests of consistency with earlier questions that I asked the Secretary of State, may I welcome very much the order for the Challenger tanks at Barnbow? That is by far the most important immediate question for the employees at Leeds. But the key question is the duration of the order and the time span that there will be before considering further orders. Surely, with Vickers' record in the City, as the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) said, the employees at Barnbow will not have much confidence for the future unless there is some sign of what will follow the order. Will the Secretary of State tell us how long the contract will last, because otherwise the belief that Vickers has bought the competition will not give the employees much faith for the long-term future?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman says and I thank him for his welcome for the order for the seventh regiment. Of course, he is right to say that we must consider the longer term. No decision has been taken on any further regiments' orders for Challenger tanks. I have formulated no plans to place any such further orders. It would be wrong of me to give a guarantee that that can be done, because no such decision has been taken. Naturally, that will be considered for the future. When we consider the future of the Royal Ordnance factories we must not rely solely on future orders of tanks by the British Ministry of Defence, because they are not likely to be forthcoming in large enough quantities. This order should keep the factories going until about the end of the decade. From then on it will be a question of how well the new company manages to obtain new orders in different areas.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): Will my right hon. Friend say why, when many of us thought that a flotation was in the best interests of the ordnance factory, a private sale is now the preferred option?

Mr. Younger: Yes. I had hoped that it would be possible to have a flotation, as planned, in July. As I said to the House when I announced the decision, we could not do it in July because, in our view and that of our advisers, it was clear that the company was not in the right condition for flotation. It would have been irresponsible to float the company when it was not ready to be a robust performer in the open market. My intention remains to privatise Royal Ordnance. I hope to privatise it as a whole and I shall, of course, keep the House informed.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Where will the British Army go for tanks in the future if it is not satisfied with price and quality from Vickers? What guarantees has Vickers given for the new factory? I noticed that, when responding to questions, the Secretary of State moved from saying "facility" to saying "factory". It may be useful to define whether we mean a facility or new factory.

Mr. Younger: I am not sure what the difference is. It depends whether one is speaking English or American. I mean a factory. The Americans refer to it as a facility. In future, when the British Army seeks bids for tank orders, I hope that it obtains competitive bids from tank producers abroad——

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Such as Germany?

Mr. Younger: Yes, and I hope that there will be a much better possibility of collaborative projects for the next order of main battle tanks. I hope that Vickers, in its new form, can take part in that.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): My right hon. Friend's statement will bring some relief to my constituents at ROF Bishopton. Will the Secretary of State move swiftly to enact his expressed preference to end uncertainty? Will he respond to the rumour published in the newspapers today that the sale will not be open, but that Royal Ordnance Factories plc will be sold off to Trafalgar House?

Mr. Younger: I am pleased if my statement has helped to end difficulty and uncertainty, or at least to reduce it, at Bishopton, in which my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) takes such an interest. I repeated today that my intention is still, if I can do so, to privatise Royal Ordnance as a whole, if that proves to be practical. I hope that this can be done as quickly as possible to eliminate uncertainty. I assure my hon. Friend, in response to her other question, that we are open to several bids to buy Royal Ordnance as a whole.

I do not envisage it being a sale to one bidder; I hope to get several bids, which will be properly evaluated, and I shall keep the House informed.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): It is clear that the Secretary of State's policy is in total shreds because, having given undertakings that he would put the whole of Royal Ordnance into a flotation or on to the market as one unit, he is now selling off one little bit. Will he please tell me, since morale in the ROFs is about as low as it can go, why any employee should believe that the right hon. Gentleman's undertaking today is any more use than the undertaking given by his predecessor, which he has now totally abrogated?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) is wrong. Although it is my hope successfully to privatise Royal Ordnance in one unit, I cannot give a guarantee that that will be so. Nor have I, or my predecessors, ever given such a guarantee. I hope that the hon. Lady will understand that. On morale, I readily agree that the uncertainty for all the employees of Royal Ordnance has been unsettling during this period. I wish to end that uncertainty as quickly as I can. I can say today at least that any low morale among the tank manufacturers is ended. They now have a clear and firm future as a result of my announcement today.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents at ROF Euxton will feel massively betrayed if they have no opportunity to buy shares when he floats the rest of the Royal Ordnance organisation without the tank manufacturers? The employees went along with the privatisation provided that they had that opportunity.

Mr. Younger: I note what my hon. Friend says. If it proves possible to come to an arrangement which involves employees' share ownership, no one would be more pleased than I. My hon. Friend will probably agree that his constituents and most employees of Royal Ordnance factories will be primarily concerned that the business should be given a firm future. I must balance that fact when I consider the possible ways of privatising the factories, which I hope will be as a whole.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Will the Secretary of State return to the questions put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) and the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste)? Is the investment on the new factory legally binding in the agreement or is it just a promise or an understanding as outlined by the Secretary of State? If it is not legally binding, is it not possible that Vickers could rat on the deal?

Mr. Younger: I understand that, on hearing this for the first time, the hon. Gentleman wishes to have some assurance. That is part of the agreement that has been openly entered into.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is it legally binding?

Mr. Younger: Yes. It is part of the agreement that has been openly entered into by Vickers with the Ministry of Defence. If it is of any reassurance to the hon. Gentleman, Vickers intends to start work very quickly. Vickers told me that it expects to start work at the beginning of August. There can be no doubt that Vickers has every intention of going ahead as fast as it can.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): I shall resist the temptation to take issue with my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) about the relative merits of the work forces in Leeds and Newcastle. I assure him that, although my constituents work for a private company, they are nevertheless a highly skilled work force —[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I can do without the embarrassment of being supported by Conservative Members. The Secretary of State is aware that the northern region has the highest unemployment in Britain, and Tyne Bridge, where the Vickers factory is located, has one of the highest unemployment levels in the region. Therefore, it must have been in the Secretary of State's mind, when taking the decision, that it may have implications for the Newcastle factory. Will he assure the House that he has discussed the matter with the company and that there are no detrimental employment effects on the Newcastle factory?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, although I am not sure that his language was the most felicitous. He said that his constituents, although working for private enterprise, were highly skilled. I should have thought that they were highly skilled because they worked for private enterprise. It is a matter of the expression that one uses. The hon. Gentleman knows that Vickers is a good company and is extremely proud of its relatively new factory at Newcastle. It is not likely that Vickers would do anything adversely to affect that factory.

Mr. O'Brien: What was the recommendation of the board of directors of the Leeds ROF when it met on 15 July, considered a valuation of £25 million of its plant and rejected the £11 million offer of Vickers because it was less than half of the plant's value? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the profit from the tank order will exceed £10 million and that orders on the order book are also worth more than £10 million, so Vickers has a great deal of money? Will he also confirm that the 1,400 people who are employed at Leeds will be retained by Vickers, or will there be substantial job reductions? What were the management board's recommendations concerning the Vickers offer and what will the profits from tank sales and orders on the book be? Will they not be substantially more than is required to buy the factory and build a new one?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the points on which the hon. Gentleman wants answers, and I shall do my best to supply them. The board of Royal Ordnance plc, which is in control, has agreed to this arrangement. That is the essential factor. The price that is paid will be related to an audited asset value for the plant. We must bear in mind that it is all very well to draw up the asset value of a plant, but its actual value is what somebody is prepared to pay for it. If the hon. Gentleman would like to take a little longer to consider the market and the situation of the factory, I think that he will agree with every adviser who has been asked to give an opinion that this is a remarkably good deal. Such a sum, and an undertaking to build a new factory on the same site, is a remarkable deal. I hope, although as a customer I am anxious to get the lowest possible price, that the company and the work force are so efficient that profits will be considerable. I hope that there will be enough to pay the company back so that it can be profitable and prosperous.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Is the Secretary of State aware that there are grave fears among employees in ROFs

[Mr. Peter Pike]

throughout the country except Leeds, where they will be worried about whether there will be redundancies there or at Newcastle? Does he agree that the fears that were expressed in Committee about two years ago have proved to be well founded time and again and that the Government have done tremendous harm during the past two years to the viability of ROFs? Would it not be best to drop the scheme altogether? Does he agree that the preferred option of selling the ROFs as a unit is not on?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate and understand that there have been considerable uncertainties and fears for those who work in ROFs. That is inseparable from the difficult business of trying to move it into the private sector. I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's assessment of what has happened to the efficiency of Royal Ordnance. It is very much more efficient, even now, than a few years ago. That offers a much better prospect for the future because it means that there are much better prospects of getting orders from overseas. I hope that, on reflection, the hon. Gentleman will agree that my intention to get Royal Ordnance into the private sector, if possible as a whole, is very much in the interests of his constituents.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Is the Secretary of State aware of the appalling damage to the morale of all of the work force of ROFs that has been done by him and his predecessors during the past six years, in which orders have been lost and thousands of employees have lost their jobs? That should be compared with the record of the Labour Government. As parliamentary answers show, employment in ROFs rose under Labour.

Would Vickers have agreed the deal if the undertaking to build the additional plant at Leeds had been legally binding? What is the future for the Blackburn factory? If the right hon. Gentleman intends to sell off the rest of the ROFs as a single entity why, so many months after the event, has he still not published the opening balance sheet for ROF plc, dated 2 January 1985, or the trading results for 1985, when both would have been available if a prospectus had been issued?

Mr. Younger: I know of the hon. Gentleman's great interest, especially in the Blackburn factory, which is in his constituency. What he said about morale is quite right. The only way in which to put it right is to get the company settled in its new organisation. If it is possible, I want it to be put into the private sector as a whole as it stands. I hope that that will be possible, but I cannot guarantee it.

We have had several expressions of interest from firms and organisations which would like to place a bid for Royal Ordnance as a whole. They will be evaluated. I assure the hon. Gentleman that that will be done as quickly as possible. All the necessary information, including balance sheets, for example, will have to be produced.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Will the right hon. Gentleman now answer the question asked by the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), which he carefully failed to answer? Is it not the case that the board recommended against the sale and, despite some discreet but heavy arm-twisting, is still generally against it? Will he remember that many of us in the Select Committee predicted that this would happen, so diminishing rather than increasing competition? Is it not a part of the deal that the ROF has agreed not to set up any alternative tank-building facility anywhere in Britain?

Mr. Younger: That has not been put to the Royal Ordnance board, but I can confirm that it has agreed to the deal.

Mr. Ashdown: Did it recommend the deal?

Mr. Younger: It has agreed to the deal.

Mr. Ashdown: Did it recommend it?

Mr. Younger: I do not know what the difference is. I have made it perfectly clear that this was a negotiation between the Ministry of Defence and Vickers. The board has been kept informed throughout and has agreed that it can accept the deal.

Mr. Ashdown: What did the board recommend?

Mr. Younger: I am trying to answer the question. There have been several suggestions, deals or proposals, but they have been turned down by the Ministry of Defence or the Royal Ordnance board; but they are not relevant to this case. This recommendation has been put to the Royal Ordnance board as a result of negotiation between the Ministry of Defence and Vickers. The board has accepted it. That is the important point.

Unipart and Leyland Bus

5.35 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): On 6 February, I informed the House that it was the Government's intention, with the agreement of the Rover group board, that negotiations should be pursued for the separate privatisation of Unipart by the early placement of shares with United Kingdom institutions.

With the approval of the Government, the Rover group has reached agreement in principle, subject to contract, for the sale of a 75 per cent. shareholding in Unipart to a consortium comprising Unipart management and a group of United Kingdom investment institutions led by Charterhouse bank. It is proposed to reserve up to 5 per cent. of the ordinary share capital for Unipart employees. Rover group would receive up to £50 million, depending in part on Unipart's future performance. The Rover group would subscribe up to £3·75 million for equity in the restructured company.

Rover group's links with Unipart will be retained through its holding in Unipart, and by contractual arrangements agreed between Austin Rover group and Unipart. Return to the private sector should enable Unipart to develop and diversify its operations, while continuing to meet the requirements of Rover group.

On Leyland Bus, my hon. Friend the Minister of State informed the House on 27 June that the Rover group had received tenders for Leyland Bus from Aveling Barford, and Laird group, and a Leyland Bus management consortium.

The Rover group has recommended, and the Government have agreed, that the tender from the management consortium should be taken forward.

The Rover group has therefore reached agreement in principle, subject to contract, for the sale of Leyland Bus and a 33 per cent. shareholding in Leyland Parts to a consortium of Leyland Bus management and investment institutions. It is also proposed that employees will be able to participate in the shares of the new Leyland Bus holding company. The Rover group would receive about £11·7 million for Leyland Bus and the shareholding in Leyland Parts. The details of the sale contract remain to be negotiated.

As I have consistently made clear to the House, there is substantial overcapacity in the traditional bus market and some measure of rationalisation would be inevitable under whatever ownership. It is the intention of the management team to decide urgently on the most effective new structure for their manufacturing operations, and on employment levels. Some job losses will be involved, including the future closure of Eastern Coach Works at Lowestoft. However, the Government accept the view of the Rover group that the proposals by Leyland Bus management are soundly based and provide an opportunity to develop a viable bus manufacturing operation.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Why does it make sense to amputate 75 per cent. of Unipart, which is a successful and integrated operation, from the rest of the Rover group? If it is desirable to diversify the development of Unipart, why can that not be done with it remaining wholly in the ownership of the Rover group? Is it another example of the Government's ideological obsession with selling off all the profitable parts of the public sector? Will the Secretary of State tell the House more about the price? How much is to be paid now and how much in the future? How is the price related to future profitability and what will be the capital of the restructured company?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that, in plain language, his ominous references to the rationalisation of Leyland Bus and to new employment levels mean many job losses, starting with the depressing loss of the entire plant at Eastern Coach Works in Lowestoft? How many jobs will go in all?

Does the Secretary of State now appreciate the catastrophic results of the Government's public transport policy? This is not an example of a cyclical fluctuation of demand, or of an industry in structural decline. The reduction in bus orders from 5,801 in 1980 to a projected 1,850 in 1986 results directly from the ending of the bus grant, deregulation proposals and the ending of revenue support for bus services. The jobs which will be lost are the direct result of a transport policy which has not only ruined public transport but, as we have seen today, has meant that a successful bus industry is in danger of disappearing.

In such circumstances, is it not the Government's duty to give special help and support to the areas and individuals who have suffered, and who will suffer, and to help the new company as it seeks to grapple with problems caused by the Government?

The Government should have retained Leyland Bus in the Rover group so that, as an integrated operation, it could have the best chance of success. However, as the Government were determined, whatever the arguments, to sell off Leyland Bus, Opposition Members prefer the management-trade union consortium to the other bidders.

Why does the Secretary of State, curiously, refer only to the participation of the management and investment institutions? Why does he not refer to the participation of Unity Trust, the trade union financial institution which represents all the employees in the trade unions at the plant? Will the Secretary of State undertake that the Government will not put any obstacles in the way of Unity Trust's successful involvement in the company?

Finally, when does the Secretary of State think that he can come to the Dispatch Box without a message of industrial contraction and ever-increasing job losses?

Mr. Channon: I shall try to answer the points raised by the right hon. and learned Gentleman. First, I shall try to give him details of the price of Unipart. Under the terms of the deal, approximately £50 million will be paid to the groups; of this, £30 million will be payable on completion, with a deferred element of £5 million plus interest from the marketing of Unipart shares, and up to £15 million if Unipart achieves specified future profit targets. Those are the parameters within which the deal has been structured. I do not agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman. I believe that Unipart could have a very flourishing future in the private sector; that view is widely shared by Conservative Members.

I have never disguised from the House that there are serious problems in the bus industry. They would remain whether Leyland Bus was in public or in private ownership, and it is quite irresponsible of any hon. Members to say otherwise. There have been considerable changes in the bus market over a period of years. A new

[Mr. Channon]

type of bus seems to be emerging as the probable bus of the future. I am sure that Leyland Bus's future management will be watching those developments carefully. It would not be right to retain Leyland Bus within the Leyland company. It would have a much better chance under the control and ownership of the management buy-out. I have been told today that Unity Trust is seriously interested in participating, and if that is so, it is something which I very much welcome. I am sure that the House will join me in hoping that the consortium will be successful in the future.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): As one who has pressed privately and publicly for this, the optimum decision, in terms of the offers made, to be taken, I welcome this decision greatly, and it will be welcomed by my constituents who work in the Leyland Bus factory in Farington in South Wirral. Is not that a tribute to the management team led by Ian McKinnon, and the trade union team led by Derek Bullen, who have invested so much time, trouble and now presumably money in securing the long-term future of Leyland Bus? I thank particularly my right hon. Friend, and my hon. Friend the Minister of State, who have listened carefully to the points of view of all involved.

Does the Secretary of State agree that there are still difficult decisions to be taken? Does he also agree that the joint approach of trade unions, management and others which has so characterised the campaign of the management buy-out offer, should be used to good effect to ensure that the rationalisation of the company is sensitive and productive and secures it a long-term and viable future?

Mr. Channon: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for welcoming these proposals. He has been a doughty fighter for his constituency and for this company which is located there. A great deal of credit must go to my hon. Friend for this result. I share my hon. Friend's views about the quality of the management and about Mr. McKinnon. I tried to support Mr. McKinnon and his colleagues in Thailand a little while ago in my previous job, and I shall do what I can to continue helping them. I have already told the House that difficult decisions will have to be taken, but I have every confidence that the new structure of the company will provide a good method for creating a viable bus manufacturing industry.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I welcome the Government's decision to reject the Laird bid which, in effect, would have closed the Leyland Bus plant in Workington. However, although I wish that Leyland Bus had been retained, reporting directly to the Rover board, I accept that the management consortium's proposals secure the future of the Leyland Bus plant in my constituency. I look forward to the future and ask the Secretary of State to do so too.

Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that there is another obstacle? Despite what he said, we are faced with redundancies in Workington and Farington. They may not be substantial, but they will certainly affect the populations of both areas to some extent. The Secretary of State knows that the future of the Workington plant is very much dependent on the rail business, on Railbus and on DMUs. Will he take a personal interest in ensuring that we get the work? If the Leyland bus and rail plant in Workington is to survive, it needs that business and it will not survive without it. I ask the Secretary of State to make a long-term consideration and to take a special interest in ensuring that we get that work for the future.

Mr. Channon: I am absolutely confident that the company's management will be keen to get the rail orders referred to by the hon. Gentleman. He has raised that point on a number of occasions with my hon. Friend the Minister of State and myself, and we shall, of course, take note of his comments. If the hon. Gentleman will not mind me saying so, we have taken seriously his campaign for Workington and for this factory in his constituency. My hon. Friend visited Workington recently. We take great account of the views of the hon. Gentleman and I am glad that he is partially pleased with our decision today.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): Given the appalling record of previous Governments in the management of the motor industry, will my right hon. Friend accept that there will be a widespread welcome on the Conservative Benches for the progressive liberalisation of parts of the former BL company? May I express, on behalf of my constituents in the Unipart business, a warm welcome for his proposals, which will allow them to participate in the ownership of the company and in its subsequent successful growth? I particularly welcome the retention of a 25 per cent. holding in the company by Rover group which will allow Rover group to benefit from the increased work of the Unipart business and will also ensure that the Austin Rover contract with Unipart, which is so vital in its short-term future, will be there to ensure that the company is a profitable and viable concern in future.

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome for the Unipart proposals. I know of their tremendous importance in Oxford, East, and particularly Cowley. I strongly share his views about Unipart's prospects. I hope that it will be successful in the private sector. I think that my hon. Friend is right and that for the Rover group to retain a shareholding in Unipart is a good idea. The deal with Rover is safeguarded by the contractual arrangements agreed between Austin Rover and Unipart not very long ago. I hope that there will be no problem about that. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his advice on these difficult subjects during the past few months.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): What other major car manufacturer, be it Ford, Vauxhall or Honda, has sold off one of its regular valuable sources of income, its spares division, and thereby threatened its own viability? Is not it particularly odious that Unipart has been built up with public money and now that it is to become part of the private sector its first priority will be profits? Even if it does not make those profits, Rover will not get the full sale price that the Secretary of State has announced today.

Finally, what guarantees have been given to the work force of Unipart, given that earlier this year, in February and subsequently, I have raised with the Secretary of State on a number of occasions, in the House and privately in his office, the legitimate fears of Unipart's work force about privatisation, as expressed through Mr. John Hughes, the Transport and General Workers Union convenor at Coventry, which led to his sacking by that

management? What guarantee does the Secretary of State have from the management that Mr. Hughes will be reinstated and that no other workers will be disciplined or sacked because of their trade union's fears about privatisation?

Mr. Channon: I know that the hon. Gentleman has always been opposed to the proposal and, as he points out, he has expressed that forcibly to me in public and private. I fear that I cannot satisfy him on that point. The hon. Gentleman will have to pursue the matter of Mr. Hughes with the company and not me. That is not a matter in which I can intervene.

The Rover group board believes that its best interests are served by selling Unipart now and the Government agree. The board is satisfied that proper safeguards have been built into the contractual arrangements between Austin Rover and Unipart for the foreseeable future and I hope that that future will be successful.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): I welcome the expedition with which my right hon. Friend has accomplished his part of the deal. Is it not a good thing to have this marvellous test of the way in which management and trade union relationships have been built up in Rover to see the way in which the Leyland deal has been constructed? However, will he assure the House that Rover's integrity is in no way diminished, in the sense that it can now go forward from these two deals and concentrate on the areas where it is manifestly successful?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I think that I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. I am grateful to him for his remarks generally and on the collaboration between management and trade unions in the case of Leyland Bus. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) came to see me on many occasions with trade union representatives and I was impressed by the constructive desire to keep the company going and the desire to work constructively for the future.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I join others in welcoming the Secretary of State's decision to come down in favour of the management buy-out in part or in full. However, does he realise that laying aside only 5 per cent. of the shares in Unipart for worker participation is far too little and looks like a cosmetic exercise? What percentage of shares are likely to be laid aside for employees for Leyland Bus? In particular, what is the ratio of participation in Leyland Bus between the management buy-out and the investment institutions?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his general welcome of the proposals. On Unipart, it is intended to reserve up to 5 per cent. of the ordinary share capital for employees. It is also intended to introduce schemes enabling employees to buy further shares in the company on comparable terms with investors. On flotation, if that should take place, it is envisaged that employees will be given preferential application rights. Therefore, it is better than it seems at first glance and we shall obviously keep matters under continual consideration.

The full details of Leyland bus and the participation of employees have not yet been completely worked out. They are under consideration and there is the participation, which in principle has been agreed, of Unity Trust. May I write to the hon. Gentleman with more details when they are known?

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, whatever the out-of-date Labour party may say this afternoon, the workers in these two parts of the Rover group will welcome their return to the private sector so that they too can enjoy the fruits of their hard work and success, as the Jaguar workers are? Will my right hon. Friend be able to hold out the same carrot of privatisation for those who work in the Austin Rover car group? Although that may not be an immeidate prospect, they should have that in their sights for the future so that they too can participate in their own businesses.

Mr. Channon: As my hon. Friend knows better than anyone, that has always been our intention. We said so at the last general election and the Government's position is unchanged on that point. My hon. Friend is entirely right to point to the great success of Jaguar and the great example of privatisation that that offers. Privatisation presents great prospects to employers and managers in these companies. That is being increasingly recognised.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): If Unipart and Leyland Bus will be run by exactly the same people who are already running those activities, why does the Secretary of State think that they will be more successful in private ownership than in public ownership?

Mr. Channon: Experience shows that that is the case.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on an imaginative plan on behalf of many of my constituents who work at the Farington plant for Leyland Bus. May I say on their behalf that they will welcome the opportunity to participate in the shareholding of that company on its return to the private sector? Will he give an assurance that, in the division of the present integrated businesses of bus and truck at Leyland, the parts sector going into the bus business will be adequately provided for to ensure that the business will remain viable?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that the business will remain viable. In general, I can meet his points and I am grateful to him for his welcome for what is proposed.

Mr. Joe Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is it not a fact that, in the past seven years, the Government have run the bus industry down to a third of what it was when they took office, creating massive redundancies in my trade union, and this sell-off is to increase the Exchequer's profits to create funds for a proposed election tax cut? What good is a tax cut to somebody without a job or who cannot afford a motor car and is waiting for a bus that does not come? Is he aware that the only reason that many of the workers have welcomed the proposal is because it is the least worst of the three options compared with Aveling Barford and Laird? The whole sorry picture of bus manufacture under the Government has been nothing but a disgrace.

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman exaggerates. There have been dramatic changes in the bus industry. The market is changing and people must be responsive to change. Most of the changes were inevitable and would have taken place whatever the policies of successive Governments. The prospect offered to Leyland Bus under these arrangements gives it the best chance of success in a difficult market. I think that the view is widely shared

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in the House and by a great many of the workers, and I hope that they will have a successful time in the new company.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Given the rather churlish welcome by the Opposition to the wider share ownership prospects of this launch, will my right hon. Friend confirm that 5 per cent. of this company is worth between £3 million and £4 million, and that thus each worker in Unipart could if he wished purchase up to £4,000-worth of preferential shares? That is to be warmly welcomed and shows the prospects that exist for privatisation and the growing confidence in the competitive qualities of British manufacturing industry and the car industry in particular.

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out those facts. As I said to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), I hope that there will be other opportunities for the employees of Unipart. That will be widely welcomed by the workers there and is a good example of how privatisation can work satisfactorily and to the benefit of all concerned.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): The Secretary of State should not take too much note of his hon. Friends, who would not know a worker if they fell over one. Instead of taking note of their comments, will he begin to answer the questions that were put earlier? The first question was, can he name any other motor manufacturer which does not own and control a spares business? Will he then tell us the advantages of selling off Unipart and why it has been sold at a knockdown price of £50 million when last year it was valued at £100 million? Is this not just pure political dogma? While the Leyland Bus deal is the best of some bad offers, surely it would have been better to leave Unipart with British Leyland because the same management will still run it. Will he tell us how many jobs will be lost at Lowestoft, at Leyland and at Workington, and whether the workers who lose their jobs will be cheering him then?

Mr. Channon: I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is the view of the Rover group board that the arrangement about Unipart is a good idea. It also takes the view that it has negotiated the best possible price for Unipart with Charterhouse. If I might take one example of a company in the position to which he has referred, the obvious example is Jaguar. It has not been a howling failure since it was privatised. I note that the hon. Gentleman laughs at that. It is interesting to see Opposition Members laughing at Jaguar, which is such an outstanding success.

I have already told the House that unfortunately it seems that the Leyland Bus Eastern Coach Works at Lowestoft will have to close, but if any way can be found to keep it open we will try to help. I believe that some 484 people are employed at the Eastern Coach Works. That was the figure at the last convenient date. The management will have to consider carefully the future of these companies, but it has confirmed to me that it intends to keep open the works at Farington and Workington and that news will be widely welcomed in the House.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The Secretary of State told us that some form of rationalisation will take place. Can he tell us exactly how many redundancies will occur as a direct result of his statement? As my right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said, it is because of the Government's deregulation of the bus services that people do not need so many buses. The House knows that, much earlier, the Secretary of State had his fingers burnt when he tried to sell the whole of British Leyland. The workers should know that now he is starting off by selling Leyland Bus and Unipart. Next to go will be trucks and then the Rover group itself will be under threat. Given that the Leyland work force was on holiday on 17 July, does he not think that this is rather a disgusting holiday postcard to sent to those workers who will come back to some form of rationalisation that will mean job losses?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman underestimates that which the workers in these factories have known for a long time: that losses were being made in the bus industry and that whatever ownership it was in, rationalisation measures had to be taken. It would have been irresponsible of me not to mention the decisions of the Government at the earliest date that we could before the House went into recess. It has proved possible to do that and to have delayed the statement would have been irresponsible. Indeed, I have been pressed time and again to announce measures as soon as conceivably possible. for the reasons that I have given to the House on at least three occasions, I cannot give a figure for the number of redundancies. That is because final proposals by the management have yet to be made. The management will have to look carefully at the business. This solution offers a reasonable long-term prospect and offers that prospect to Farington and Workington. I should have thought the House would welcome that.

Nuclear Waste (Compensation)

6.7 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The refusal of NIREX to compensate property owners in Fulbeck who cannot sell their properties because of plans to dispose of nuclear waste at Fulbeck."

As you will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, and as the House will know, I and residents in and around Fulbeck strongly oppose the proposal to put low-level nuclear waste into what is euphemistically called a near-surface disposal facility.

At the moment, I wish to concentrate on an important, albeit fairly narrow, matter — property compensation. This falls into two parts. The first part is being dealt with and is in connection with local residents who were selling property at the time of the announcement and whose contracts fell through. I am happy to say that I and others were able to persuade NIREX to pick up those contracts. A much more serious problem is now arising, which is that, because of the announcement by NIREX to treat Fulbeck as a possible waste disposal site, many local property owners are unable to sell their properties, either at all or at full valuation. I and others have been pressing NIREX to enter into some agreement either to purchase the properties or to make compensation. It has refused to do that and that is unacceptable and should be unacceptable to the House.

There is a precedent which I am entitled to call in aid because in Kent the Channel Tunnel company has now given an undertaking that if, during the next 10 years, property owners are unable to sell their properties at full valuation, the company will buy in the properties. Unfortunately, I have been unable to persuade NIREX to take a similar view. That is an injustice to my constituents and requires the urgent attention of this House.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The refusal of NIREX to compensate property owners in Fulbeck who cannot sell their properties because of plans to dispose of nuclear waste at Fulbeck."

I have listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter which he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Orders of the Day

Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 113 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Adjournment (Summer)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House, at its rising on Friday 25th July, do adjourn until Tuesday 21st October and that the House shall not adjourn on Friday 25th July until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses. [Mr. Neubert.]

Mr. Speaker: No fewer than 35 right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in this debate. I hope that contributions will be brief in what is, after all, only a three-hour debate. I have selected the first two amendments on the Order Paper in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

6.10 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Question, to leave out the first "Friday 25th" and insert "Monday 28th".

Mr. Speaker: With this we shall discuss the amendment to leave out the second "Friday 25th" and insert "Monday 28th".

Mr. Shore: We want the House to adjourn, not tomorrow, but on Monday 28 July, so that a debate can be held on the report on the Westland affair by the Select Committee on Defence.

It is six months since the House debated the extraordinary circumstances that attended the resignation of the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). That debate, on 15 January, was on an Opposition motion calling for a Committee of the House to be set up to investigate all aspects of the Westland affair. The debate concluded with a vote on the Prime Minister's motion which was carried and which included the following words:

"the House . . . recognises the competence of departmental Select Committees of the House of Commons to consider the issues raised by these developments."—[*Official Report*, 15 January 1986; Vol. 89, c. 1090.]

The Select Committee on Defence took evidence at once and, indeed, two of the key witnesses, the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robert Armstrong, who carried out the so-called leak inquiry, gave their testimony before the Select Committee as long ago as 30 January and 5 February respectively. Clearly there were contentious and difficult matters for the Committee to consider in drawing up its very careful report, including the fact that it was denied access to the five civil servants directly involved in the most notorious incident—the leak of the Solicitor-General's letter to the Press Association. I refer to Mr. Bernard Ingham, the Prime Minister's press secretary, Mr. Charles Powell, one of the principal private secretaries at No. 10, Miss Colette Bowe, Mr. Mogg and Mr. Mitchell, senior officials at the Department of Trade and Industry.

Only today, at 11 am, was the Committee's report published. The timing is important and unfortunate, but it makes it certain that if the House adjourns this Friday we shall have no time to debate the report until the House resumes in October—three months ahead. I have no doubt that the Government hope that during that time the impact of the report will be blunted and its contents buried beneath the weight of other and subsequent events. I suggest strongly that the House should not allow that to happen and that the report be debated before we adjourn for the summer recess.

Major issues were left unresolved in the earlier debates in the House. I am referring, not to the honest differences of policy choices between Cabinet Ministers over the future of Westland—such differences certainly existed, as have similar differences in Cabinet over many other issues. Left unanswered was whether the Government had been proclaiming one policy in public—neutrality about the future ownership of the company—and another in private, backing a takeover by the American Sikorski firm. In other words, left unanswered was the question whether the Government were deceiving the country and the House about their real policy. That central question of deceit and partisanship arose on several occasions and in a number of extraordinary contexts. It gave rise to a series of further questions which needed urgent answers.

That brings me to today's publication of the Select Commitee on Defence report which cries out for discussion and debate.

Apart from a detailed description of the part played by the key figures in the drama, the story describes a major effort by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Prime Minister to discredit the then Secretary of State for Defence and the deliberate and unconstitutional leaking of the Solicitor-General's letter to that end.

The rest of the story deals with the attempts to cover up ministerial involvement in the leak by initiating an inquiry into the actions of officials, when all the principal people involved knew from the start what had happened and who was responsible.

I begin with the discrediting of the former Secretary of State for Defence. Paragraph 105 of the report states:

"The view seems to have been that as long as he remained in office and promoted the cause of the European Consortium, the activities of the Ministry of Defence could be countered by steps taken elsewhere in Government."

Those steps included the instigating of the famous letter written by the Solicitor-General, at the Prime Minister's suggestion, and its deliberate leaking into the public domain.

The Prime Minister's excuse throughout has been that it was essential, in the interests of shareholders, to correct so-called material inaccuracies in a letter written by the then Secretary of State for Defence to Lloyds merchant bank. This had to be done—and done quickly, so it was said—so that it could be in the hands of Sir John Cuckney before his press conference on 6 January.

The Select Committee, however, is quite clear. In paragraph 160 it states:

"Since the information was passed by telephone to Westland in any event, the reason given by the Prime Minister for releasing the information to the Press Association begins to look flimsy, to say the least. Sir John Cuckney told us that the information made no difference to his policy at the press conference."

What, then, was the real reason for making the Solicitor-General's letter public? The Select Committee is categoric. It states in paragraph 162:

"It is clear that the passages chosen for selective disclosure from the Solicitor-General's letter were calculated to do the maximum damage to Mr. Heseltine's case and to his personal credibility."

The Select Committee further reveals from an examination of the Press Association tapes on 6 January and the reports carried by newspapers on 7 January that "further parts of the letter were disclosed after the original call from Miss Bowe to the Press Association. The urgency argument cannot apply to these disclosures. Their only

purpose can have been to further discredit Mr. Heseltine. The fact that additional disclosures appear to have been made has not been acknowledged by the Government."

The deliberate leak was open, outrageous and unconstitutional. The Solicitor-General then demanded that an official inquiry be set up. For similar, and perhaps less serious, breaches of the Official Secrets Act, Clive Ponting and other officials have been prosecuted in the past. But here we come to another extraordinary fact. On 16 January the Attorney-General guaranteed immunity from prosecution to Miss Colette Bowe of the DTI who had read sections of the Solicitor-General's letter over the telephone to the Press Association. According to paragraph 195 of the Select Committee's report,

"the Attorney-General said that when he was asked to grant immunity he was also told enough 'to make it clear to me that under no circumstances would I have prosecuted her in any event.' These statements are unequivocal."

The report continues:

"Unauthorised disclosure would have been an offence. If 'under no circumstances' would the Attorney have prosecuted Miss Bowe, then he must have known that the disclosure had been authorised. He must also have received this information from Sir Robert Armstrong."

Prior to the Select Committee's report there could have been only two explanations for the Attorney-General's conduct — that he was deliberately misled by senior colleagues who asked for Miss Bowe's immunity while withholding from him the fact that the disclosure in question had been authorised, or that the Attorney-General himself had participated in the charade of putting the spotlight on officials by being a party to concealing the roles played in leaking the letter by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

It is astonishing that in the debates on the Westland affair, which focused mainly on the leak of the Solicitor-General's letter, no Law Officer has been allowed to participate. The Attorney-General certainly has a lot to explain. I am sure that an early opportunity should be allowed for him to do so. His written answer to a question today does not fully explain why he gave immunity to Miss Colette Bowe. He says that she acted "in complete good faith". But how can a breach of the Official Secrets Act be in complete good faith unless it was sanctioned by a Minister?

What about No. 10's role? Of course, we have to distinguish between the chief officials—in this case Mr. Bernard Ingham, the chief press officer, and Mr. Powell, one of the principal private secretaries — and their political mistress, the Prime Minister. As we all know, while they are in frequent personal touch, they do not necessarily tell each other what they are doing. They just commune. As we heard from the Prime Minister earlier today, she has total confidence in their intuitive judgment.

We all know that Miss Bowe and Mr. Mogg of the DTI, on the instructions of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, were required to get clearance from No. 10 before authorising the leak, and preferably that No. 10 itself should release the Solicitor-General's letter. No. 10 passed the buck back to the DTI. But, as the Committee points out in paragraph 155:

"As far as the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter was concerned . . .Mr. Ingham undoubtedly realised the implication of what was about to take place and wished to distance No. 10 and the Prime Minister from the consequences."

As the Committee says on the still more important point:

"it is quite extraordinary that five senior officials accepted apparently without demur that giving extracts from the Solicitor-General's letter to the Press Association was 'the only way to do it in the time'."

Even more surprising is the fact that Mr. Bernard Ingham, the chief press officer, did not veto the release of the letter and report the request at once to the Prime Minister. As for Sir Robert Armstrong, the Cabinet Secretary and head of the Home Civil Service, it is clear that he allowed himself to be used for the unsavoury purpose of an attempted cover-up. As the Select Committee put it in paragraph 196:

"the inquiry's principal finding was that the disclosure had been authorised by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. This must have been known before the inquiry began to, among others, Mr. Brittan, Sir Robert Armstrong, Mr. Ingham and Powell."

Yet Sir Robert proceeded. Not surprisingly, he failed in the most routine function of directing any of his inquiries to the Ministers concerned. It was only the civil servants who were called in for explanation. Even more surprisingly, to quote from paragraph 213:

"The disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter without his permission was an improper act",

and that the officials concerned,

"were wrong to disclose it or to connive at its disclosure. Yet . . . no disciplinary action is to be taken against any of the officials concerned."

As the report adds:

"We find this extraordinary. In commenting upon these matters, Sir Robert could bring himself to say only the disclosure was 'very regrettable' . . . 'I think it would have been much better not to have disclosed the information that way'. Asked how he would behave had such a disclosure been suggested to him, Sir Robert thought that it was an impossible question to answer. He could not say what he would have done in the circumstances."

As the Select Committee rightly says in paragraph 214:

"It is to the Head of the Home Civil Service that all civil servants have to look for example and a clear lead in such things. In this case that lead has not been given."

Now for the Prime Minister. She will no doubt take some comfort from the Select Committee's statement in paragraph 183:

"The evidence is that the action of the Prime Minister's office on 6 January in relation to the disclosure was without her direct authority. She has stated that she had no knowledge on 6 January of what was taking place. We accept this".

However, that does not answer the question about when she was in fact informed. In paragraph 197 it is recorded:

"The Prime Minister told the House that she did not know about Mr. Brittan's 'own role in the matter of disclosure until the inquiry had reported'."

That was on 22 January. But, unlike the statement that it made about accepting the Prime Minister's word that she did not know of the events of 6 January, the Select Committee offers no comment on this important matter, except to recite a series of questions asked in the House of Commons during the 23 January statement. Then the Prime Minister's reply to direct questions was simply evasive. Further, when the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) was interrogated by the Select Committee, the report states in paragraph 204:

"We asked Mr. Brittan whether or not he had any conversation with the Prime Minister, about the fact that he had authorised disclosure of part of the Solicitor-General's letter, before the Prime Minister received the report of the inquiry. He refused to tell us. When it was put to him that there was a period of time after the inquiry had been set up during which he knew what his role had been but chose not to inform the Prime Minister, he would not comment."

As the questions are so clear and relevant, why did the Prime Minister evade on 23 January and why did the

[Mr. Shore]

former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry refuse to answer the Select Committee's questions? Once again, they should at least be given the opportunity of an early debate and to give their own explanations.

This report deals with very serious matters affecting the reputation of senior Ministers, the Law Officers and very senior civil servants. It is a unanimous and scrupulous report. Undoubtedly an early debate is needed, yet if present arrangements stand there will be no opportunity for at least three months for the House to hear the explanations of the principal Ministers concerned. The fact that we do not have the opportunity to debate in the House of Commons does not mean that debate and it is much less likely to be well informed —will not take place elsewhere, and much of it will be done, as the report itself demonstrated, by unattributable briefing, press guidance, telephone calls and so on.

This is no way to discuss a major issue that affects the conduct of Government and the credibility of senior Ministers, including the Prime Minister herself. That is why we shall vote for our amendment tonight.

6.26 pm

Mr. Reg Prentice (Daventry): I do not intend to follow the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), and I do not see why anyone else should. I suggest to the right hon. Gentleman that in many ways his speech was an abuse of the House.

The motion before us affects the dates of the recess. The short debate that we traditonally have on this occasion is used by Back Benchers to express briefly their concern that certain matters that they think are important should have further debate. It is essentially a Back Benchers' occasion. The right hon. Gentleman did not simply tell us why he thought that there should be a debate on the Westland affair but made the speech that he would have made in opening a debate on the subject. In doing so he took far too much time.

This is an issue which the minority of our constituents who were interested a few months ago have forgotten. Again it merely shows how far the Labour party is out of touch with the real concerns of people and how obsessed it is with fighting yesterday's battle.

I want to refer to one aspect of the timing of the summer recess. We go into recess just as Ministers have begun the annual process of the public expenditure review. We do that at about this stage every year. We shall come back from the recess when the review is either completed or nearing completion. That also repeats the pattern of previous years.

I wish to put a general proposition and a specific point. My general proposition is that the public expenditure review is among the most important decision-making processes that affect any Government in any year. It determines the shape and size of all our main spending programmes. It affects our national economy and to a large extent determines the shape of the Chancellor's Budget.

Because of our timetable, the public expenditure review is largely immune from parliamentary reaction. It is immune from any process of debate by which Members of Parliament can voice their views on expenditure priorities while the discussions on public expenditure take place.

A radical review of the timetable of the House during the 12-month period is required. The public expenditure review and the priorities contained within it demand far more of our parliamentary time. Having made that general point, I wish to make a specific plea to the Government to pay close attention, in the coming months and in the context of public expenditure, to the overseas aid programme.

The programme is much too small, has been too small under successive Governments and ought to be increased. The irony is that last year and the year before we had debates on the overseas aid programme, as outlined in the public expenditure review. On 22 November 1984, we had a day's debate on the subject when the House commented on the aid programme for the coming year. That programme was criticised on both sides of the House because it was inadequate. Last year we had a foreign affairs debate during the debate on the Loyal Address in which we largely concentrated on the overseas aid programme. Similar criticisms of the inadequacy of the programme were made but, at that time, the expenditure figures had not been announced they were announced three days later. However, they were generally known. The criticisms were retrospective criticisms of the policies made by Government.

I had hoped that, somehow, we could have adjourned a little later this year in order to have a full scale debate on overseas aid. In that way the views of hon. Members on both sides could concentrate on the need for a larger programme. I do not wish to repeat the traditional arguments for the overseas aid programme but I believe there are overriding moral arguments and arguments of enlightened self-interest. Most hon. Members who speak on this matter agree with the general argument—there is no difference between political parties. There is the simple recognition that successive Governments have not measured up to their promises.

I shall make four points for increasing aid this year, and my arguments are especially applicable this year. First, the crisis in sub-Saharan Africa has not gone away and will not go away. Only last week, the Overseas Development Administration announced a new initiative to help with an airlift to people in the Sekota region of Ethiopia. People are starving there because of what has become the all-too-familiar sequence. Earlier poor levels of rainfall led to a low yield of crops. This was followed by flash floods which led to the interruption of transport facilities. Therefore, an airlift had to be mounted—this time by the Belgian air force and supported by contributions from this country and other donor countries. That case is typical of the announcements which have been made by the ODA and its sister organisations in the western world. Such announcements have been made week by week over the past two years and they will continue to be made. We are giving help but what is wrong — many other hon. Members agree—is that the help we are giving is within the scope of a small aid programme and is therefore at the expense of other recipients. We have not recognised that this crisis in Africa presents a new dimension to the problem and it demands extra resources from all the major donors.

Secondly, public opinion is readier to support a greater aid effort from this country. The success of Live Aid, Band Aid and Sports Aid and the success of hundreds of local initiatives demonstrates people's concern. People are prepared to give and are prepared to work for fund-raising

activities and they want the Government to do more. It is pure coincidence that, today, Her Majesty the Queen has knighted Mr. Geldof, but the fact that she has done so underlines the message that I am trying to convey.

My third point is something of a paradox. We could do substantially more for the aid programme at the cost of a tiny amount in relation to general public spending. At the moment, the net aid programme is costing something less than £1·25 billion a year, while total public spending is £140 billion a year. We are talking about less than 1 per cent. of the total expenditure. About a year ago, I wrote to the Prime Minister about this and pointed out that a 50 per cent. increase in the aid programme would mean an increase in public spending of less than 0·5 per cent. However, the Prime Minister said that this would mean an extra £500 million and was an unthinkable amount. I do not believe that that is an unthinkable amount. If the political will were there it would and should have been done then, and it can be this year.

My final point is that it is time our actions lived up to our words. This Government, like previous Governments, have supported, at special assemblies of the United Nations and numerous other international conferences, the case for a larger transfer of resources from the developed countries. The summit meetings of the seven leading economic powers have made that appeal. We were part of that when the summit met in London, two years ago, in June 1984. Paragraph 15 of its communiqué states:

"Ministers urged all donors to make determined efforts to increase aid flows in line with agreed targets".

If we are committed, on paper, to making increased efforts, I suggest to the Government it is time we increased it. We could do so this year and we could accompany it with an appeal to other developed countries, not only in the west but in the Soviet bloc, to do more. We could give a bold and imaginative lead to the world in the most important question now facing people.

6.37 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): As I only took my seat in this House on Tuesday of this week it would be regrettable for me not to voice the concerns of my constituents before this House adjourns.

It is 47 years ago to this very month that my father, Ness Edwards, made his maiden speech as Member of Parliament for Caerphilly. I am proud to be here following in his footsteps. He taught me respect and admiration for this House and for that, as for many things, I have always been grateful.

I understand it is the custom to say something pleasant about the former Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme. His name escapes me at the moment; however, I should make it clear that I have known him intimately for some years. He has assured me that I will not be allowed enough time in this House to mention all his virtues. I will confine myself to saying that I have been deeply touched by the tributes that people have paid to him—from all sides of the House. I am sure he was a respected Member and I am sure that he will be deeply missed by everyone.

John and I have a lot in common, not least our deep regard for the borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme and its people. I am proud that I have been elected to speak for its people, its independence and its interests. Even if I had not been elected, I would have wanted to remain resident in Newcastle-under-Lyme. It was therefore distressing to us both that part of the malicious whispering and leafleting campaigns of the Liberals in the by-election was that we intended to move our home from Newcastle-under-Lyme. There was never any truth in that allegation.

I cannot help referring to the by-election, and in doing so I may be slightly controversial. It was entirely untrue that the former Member and myself had all along planned that the seat should be handed over to me. I can assure hon. Members that both he and I approached a number of people offering our support if they wished to stand. The allegation perpetrated by the Liberals that there was irregularity in the procedure to select a Labour candidate for Newcastle-under-Lyme—even the smallest irregularity—was not true. The Liberals did not and could not produce anything that would justify that smear.

The Liberals committed a gross misrepresentation on the issue of salaries, including the implication that the secretarial salary was somehow to be added to my allowance. It was suggested that we had completely free transport, free post and a free telephone regardless of the circumstances. That was disgraceful. In no election campaign have I ever known a wife's earnings to be added to that of her husband's. That part of the Liberal party's campaign was sexist in the extreme.

It is untrue also, as the Liberals claimed in a leaflet, that when eggs were thrown at our opponents we both stood yards away and appeared to do nothing to stop the egg throwing. That is so untrue. We were never present when eggs were thrown. That is typical of the smear campaign in which the Liberals indulged.

By their campaign the Liberals have damaged the good name of the office of Member of Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyme and they have smeared the people and their party's reputation in Newcastle-under-Lyme. The Liberals' disgraceful campaign, only part of which I have mentioned, damaged the reputation of all political parties and all politicians. I hope that that message will reach Liberal Members and their supporters.

That is enough of the squalid approach to politics that the Liberals perpetrate in by-elections. They were important messages for us all from the electors of Newcastle-under-Lyme. It is clear that they want more jobs and that they are deeply concerned about the plight of young people. It is obvious that they are concerned at the lack of resources for nurses, schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities. They are disturbed by the crisis in the National Health Service and by the long waiting lists. The old age pensioners express their great anger and bitterness at the entirely inadequate 40p increase in the pension. I have been sent to Parliament by the people of Newcastle-under-Lyme to voice their concerns, and this I shall continue to do.

6.45 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): In all the years that I have been a Member of this place I have never before been called by the Chair immediately after a maiden speaker. I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding). I think that we are all aware that it is a tremendously nerve-wracking experience to speak in the House at any time, and especially on the first occasion. I think that the hon. Lady delivered her maiden speech with great humour and charm.

The hon. Lady did not tell us anything new about the Liberals. We have all had experience of the same sort of tactics from Liberals in our time. I am sorry that the only

[Sir Fergus Montgomery]

Liberal Member present to hear the hon. Lady was the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon). I hope that he will carry back to his leader what the hon. Lady said. I am sorry that he found it so humorous. If I were a Member representing a party who had indulged in those tactics, I would have wriggled in my seat with shame.

I have great admiration for the hon. Lady's husband. He and I were quite interested in horse racing and we used to have modest bets. I think that he always won more than I did, and I was not very happy about that. I admire him also because he was the hammer of the extreme Left wing of the Labour party, which has done so much harm to the Labour party. He showed enormous courage. I hope that we shall hear from the hon. Lady again in the not too distant future.

I wish to raise two issues which I think are of importance. The first one is set out in early-day motion 1140, which has all-party support. By the reintroduction of trucking charges, the British Airports Authority will be able to act in a monopolistic fashion and discriminate against non-British Airports Authority airports such as Manchester. Many of us have fought valiantly for Manchester airport over the years. The authority will be able also to discriminate against certain international airlines, which I believe is contrary to the spirit of the Government's White Paper and the Airports Act 1986.

On 1 May, the British Airports Authority reintroduced charges for airline operators or their agents to truck cargo to and from Heathrow airport. The charges on trucking movements will not apply to operators whose cargo has an inward or outward bound air leg at Heathrow or any other authority airport. In other words, the charges discriminate in favour of authority airports and against others.

I shall give some examples of discrimination. British Airways and British Caledonian use Heathrow and Gatwick as their gateways and are exempt from movement charges. Airlines such as KLM, Lufthansa and Air France, which use Heathrow to assemble cargo for trucking to their European airport hubs, such as Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Paris, are charged fees and movement charges. This is despite IATA resolution 597B, which allows carriers to substitute trucking movement for air carriage.

British Caledonian does not fly from Heathrow but because its cargoes enter and exit from Gatwick, trucking charges are not levied. KLM, Air Canada and Singapore Airlines all have services from Heathrow but they are charged for moving certain cargo from Heathrow to Manchester. The discrimination between airlines contradicts the White Paper entitled "Airlines Competition Policy", which pledged the Government to promote competition in all markets. Airlines such as KLM, Air Canada and Singapore Airlines need to truck from Heathrow to Manchester excess freight, special cargoes or urgent goods for which a London service is unavailable. As Manchester is a non-authority airport, full charges apply. If the cargoes were trucked to Stansted, which is an authority airport, for outbound air carriage, the charges would not apply.

Such discrimination is entirely contrary to the undertaking that was given by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), the Under-Secretary of State for Transport during the Committee proceedings on the Airports Bill. He said:

"It is totally accepted by the Government that none of the three London airports should be able to develop or trade unfairly against other United Kingdom airports." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee J*, 20 February 1986, c. 204.]

Although the charges are levied only on movements between Heathrow and non-British Airports Authority airports, the fact that Heathrow remains part of the BAA structure provides an opportunity to use income generated by trucking charges to subsidise other BAA airports such as Stansted. The discrimination between BAA and non-BAA airports in levying those charges is a positive benefit to Stansted. That is contrary to undertakings given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment who said, when he was Secretary of State for Transport:

"I now give the House the assurance that it has sought that there will be no subsidies from the other London airports to Stansted." —[*Official Report*, 9 April 1986; Vol. 95, c. 265.]

I feel that we have reached a serious position whereby things are happening contrary to pledges given by Ministers. I point out the difficulties for an airline such as Singapore Airlines. Singapore Airlines uses Air Canada as its cargo agent. Singapore Airlines runs a daily service to Singapore from Heathrow. Since 1 April 1986, it has run a twice-weekly flight, a mixed passenger freight service, from Manchester. Those who battled for Manchester over the years were thrilled when Singapore Airlines was given permission to operate that route.

Trucking takes place from Heathrow because incoming cargo at Manchester is trucked to Heathrow for distribution. Secondly, five out of the seven weekly flights from Heathrow to Singapore are non-stop, thus reducing the scope for cargo carriage to points en route. Some of the cargoes must be sent from Manchester. Passenger load factors at Heathrow are so high that the capacity for cargo is limited. Rather than add to the congestion and delay at Heathrow, some of the excess cargo goes to Manchester, where capacity is available. Air Canada, as the handling agent pays trucking charges, which in turn are passed on to Singapore Airlines.

Singapore Airlines estimates a weekly charge of £1,200, or in excess of £60,000 a year. That is a heavy additional burden to bear in the first year of a new Manchester service. I wonder whether it is a coincidence that the charges were introduced one month after the start of the new Manchester service. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House can give some guidance tonight.

The reintroduction of trucking charges is incompatible with the Government's airline competetion policy and their Airports Act. It discriminates between airports and between airlines. I think that it runs the risk of retaliation from continental airport authorities which may seek similar means of protecting their operations and penalising United Kingdom carriers.

Even if trucking charges can be justified as a means of balancing the British Airports Authority's books, they should be levied on all operators—not just those who were far-sighted enough to negotiate long leases in 1969. They should not discriminate beween British Airports Authority airports and other airports. They should be related to true costs, and not levied at penal rates. The same amount of income can be generated by charging more operators less money.

The second point I wish to raise concerns one of my constituents, Mr. John Stalker, who is the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester police. My right hon. Friend is aware that the problem has caused concern to all

hon. Members. When it was suggested initially that perhaps there was an Irish connection, I pooh-poohed that suggestion. I am afraid that the more I read and hear, the more I have become suspicious about the so-called Irish connection. Mr. Stalker, investigating certain complaints against the Royal Ulster Constabulary, seems to have been determined to get to the whole truth. As a consequence, I think that he has antagonised certain people in the Province.

It has been claimed that Mr. Stalker carried out independent forensic tests in Ireland that proved that the Royal Ulster Constabulary evidence was false in the controversial cases where it had shot and killed suspects. In the case of 17-year-old Michael Tighe, Mr. Stalker's team concluded that an ambush set up by an agent provocateur led to the cold-blooded murder of the wrong man.

It is claimed that, just before Mr. Stalker was taken off the inquiry, he was planning to interview the Chief Constable and the deputy chief constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and he intended to recommend that the RUC was badly officered and needed sweeping reforms. Suddenly, at the end of May, Mr. Stalker was removed from duty and replaced by Mr. Sampson, the chief constable of West Yorkshire.

Mr. Sampson was appointed not just to take over the investigation into the RUC but to head an investigation on Mr. John Stalker. It was strange to have the same man heading two intertwined inquiries. I can only describe that decision as a piece of bad judgment by somebody in authority.

It is sufficient to say that, since the end of May, John Stalker and his family have had the most awful time and have lived under a terrible cloud. Mr. Stalker has been subjected to trial by innuendo and gossip. It is about time that this sorry business was brought to an end.

John Stalker must have been pleased that he received so many tributes from members of the Greater Manchester police force. My wife was a member of the Greater Manchester police committee until April this year, when the Greater Manchester council was abolished. She said that, the more she saw of John Stalker, the higher he went in her estimation. She said that he conveyed the impression that he was not just a good policeman but a completely honest and incorruptible man.

I should like to know from my right hon. Friend why the investigation has gone on for two months. Very little seems to have happened. Somebody, somewhere, must have some responsibility. It is about time that we knew the full facts of the case. We pride ourselves on claiming that British justice is the best in the world, but I have seen little sign of justice in the case of Mr. John Stalker. I hope that, before the House rises, my right hon. Friend can give me some information on the two issues I have raised tonight.

6.57 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I am happy to be the first Labour Member to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) both on her victory and on the speech that she has just made, and look forward to the many speeches that I am sure she will make in future. I am one of the few Members of the House of Commons who were Members when her father was a Member. Some hon. Members received their earliest instruction in trade union history from him. In my constituency, his name is honoured, especially on that account. My hon. Friend's husband sustained that tradition in the House. I am sure that he will do so in his future appointments. He could not have been luckier in having his wife as his successor in that constituency.

The most avid observers noted a difference between my hon. Friend's speech and some of her husband's speeches. Her speech was briefer. When he spoke at greater length, it was always done in the interests of greater humanity at large, and deliberately, and we all knew exactly what he was doing. We are glad to see my hon. Friend here. I am sure that she will make a great contribution to future Parliaments. I thank her for her maiden speech.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) outlined why Labour Members feel that our motion should be carried and why the Leader of the House should not be a party to rejecting it. I shall couple that matter with one that I raised a week ago. I believe that it is intertwined with the question of confidence in the Government and what this Government get up to when Parliament turns its back.

The Commonwealth conference will be held within a matter of days. Everyone knows that it is likely to be the most critical Commonwealth conference for generations. Everyone knows that there is a possibility of such strains being placed on the Commonwealth that some members may wish to depart from it. It would be an utter disgrace if the Commonwealth, or parts of it, were allowed to be shed in such circumstances without the House of Commons having a chance to give its view.

I ask the Leader of the House to give me an assurance in slightly more forthcoming terms than when he merely referred me to the ordinary provision under which Parliament can be recalled. We want something better. If there is a crisis at the Commonwealth conference and a danger of member countries leaving the Commonwealth, I hope that the Government will take the initiative in recalling the House. That may happen in a couple of weeks, but it would be a disgrace if, after so many warnings had been given and when such grave issues are at stake, ruptures of the Commonwealth occurred after that meeting and the House were denied the right to have a proper report and debate on it. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will give that assurance.

These matters are connected with the confidence, or lack of confidence, we may feel in the way in which the Government conduct their affairs. Winston Churchill once said that we use recriminations about the past to enforce effective action in the present and future. Recriminations about the Westland affair ensure that nothing of that sort recurs. To ensure that there is no recurrence, we have to remodel the way in which the Government conduct their affairs. It is difficult to do that, because the Prime Minister is headstrong and seeks to impose her will on the Cabinet and the House of Commons in a way that few Prime Ministers have sought to do. In many instances, she has done that with disastrous consequences.

We recall the Prime Minister's rejection before the Falklands war of proper discussion in Cabinet in time. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office demanded discussions in Cabinet, but the right hon. Lady pushed it aside. Several instances could be cited, from the Falklands war to the Westland affair and on issues even more important than Westland — for example, British Leyland — when the Prime Minister has deliberately sought to ensure that the Cabinet does not have a proper chance to discuss what is involved and has thereby deprived the House of Commons

[Mr. Michael Foot]

of the chance to influence events. The Prime Minister's method of conducting this country's affairs—by running the Cabinet and by trying to enlist the few people on her side whom she can mobilise at essential moments or even by making the decisions and demanding that the rest follow and that the House dance to her tune—has been damaging in respect of employment, our relations with the Commonwealth and many other matters.

The Westland affair illustrates this in a glaring manner. Impartial Members on both sides of the House have been able to bring their influence to bear to discuss the matters in detail. All the members of the Select Committee on Defence deserve congratulations for their presentation of the report. Hon. Members, including the Chairman—the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins)—have done a considerable service to democracy by presenting a report of this nature. The Government's brushing it aside, as the Leader of the House sought to do and as the Prime Minister did today, is not the proper way to proceed. The right hon. Lady will live to regret it greatly. I do not believe that any previous Prime Minister would have pushed aside such an issue and sought to sweep it under the carpet without further debate in the hope that it would subside altogether. It will not.

It has been suggested that the Committee's report exonerated the Prime Minister. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney has referred effectively to that point and I shall not cover it. I believe that the House will insist on having a full debate on this subject.

It has been said that paragraph 183 exonerates the Prime Minister, but paragraph 184, referring to the Prime Minister's account, states:

> "We asked Sir Robert Armstrong about this; and he thought it 'strange, but I believe that to be the case'."

It becomes "curiouser and curiouser", as Alice in Wonderland said, in paragraph 185:

> "The Secretary of the Cabinet's descripion of this as 'strange' is something of an understatement."

What if his statement were accurate? What would that mean? In other words, the Committee said that what it had been asked to believe was barely credible. The Prime Minister and the head of the Civil Service sought to persuade the Committee to believe them, but it did not.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The right hon. Gentleman has quoted from paragraph 184. Will he read the latter part of paragraph 183 in which the Committee made it clear that it accepted, in respect of the disclosure on 6 January, that there was no evidence that suggested that the Prime Minister knew of the disclosure?

Mr. Foot: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has not been following me. Perhaps he has been following the report as carefully as he normally does, but he has not followed it properly. That passage was read by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney. If the hon. Gentleman reads the subsequent paragraphs, he will see that they undermine any belief that the Prime Minister is exonerated. I shall leave aside the Attorney-General's part, although many questions must be answered, but the House has a special duty to know about the "collusion" that took place. I referred to that during business questions when I said that collusion is guilty association. Guilty association between the Prime Minister and the head of the Civil Service is revealed in the report.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney underlined what the report says—that the House of Commons and everyone else should have the right to look to the head of the Civil Service in these matters. The Committee looked to him as it was entitled to do, but he failed the Committee. His explanations cannot be believed. It is very serious when the head of the Civil Service has such charges made against him by a House of Commons Committee. It is a serious matter when hon. Members are sent away without having a full chance to examine the report.

It is a serious matter also when, a few days before the event—I suppose that the Prime Minister knew exactly what was in the report—the right hon. Lady took exceptional measures to reappoint that head of the Civil Service. Either she knew what was in the report and acted in that way in defiance of what would happen later, or she thought that, if the report was to be critical of the head of the Civil Service, she had better get the blow in first. Either way, that is discreditable. I do not believe that any previous head of the Civil Service confronted with such a unanimous report by a House of Commons Committee would have wished to stay in his post.

The only reason the head of the Civil Service stays in his post is to protect the Prime Minister. He thinks that that will be the last service that he can perform. The Prime Minister has no right to require civil servants to behave in that way. She had no right to deny the minions in her office the possibility of giving evidence before the Committee. She had no right to give instructions and to use them. She has even less right to use the head of the Civil Service in the way that she has. She has fatally undermined their capacity to act in future cases. What is to happen in future cases if the head of the Civil Service and the Prime Minister receive messages from the Attorney-General or the Solicitor-General? Will they think themselves entitled to follow the model of publication that was followed in this case? It was a model of publication where no action was taken against those who committed the offence. All those issues are very grave for the future. If the head of the Civil Service is to perform his functions properly for the House and the country, he should offer his resignation to the House of Commons and to the Prime Minister. I believe that the Prime Minister should come to the House and explain the matter.

I congratulate the Committee on its report. The concluding remark—I do not think it is normal for such Committees to suggest, but I think that it is right—says that if anybody thinks that any of the accusations against the head of the Civil Service and the Prime Minister are unfair they should come before the Committee again and state their case. That is the offer. Therefore, nobody can say that I or my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney have been unfair because the Committee has guarded against it. Of course, the only proper place for the Prime Minister to state her case is in the House of Commons. One day she will have to pay for having misled the Committee, misled the head of the Civil Service, and misled the House.

I am sorry that the Leader of the House should also be a party to the matter. He once spoke about a balanced ticket. He is a kind of balanced ticket all on his own. Perhaps that was his idea. However, if there is to be any

balance left in the Government, the right hon. Gentleman and those like him who believe in honour in our politics should exert themselves before it is too late.

7.11 pm

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I appreciate that I am hardly likely to endear myself to my colleagues by urging my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to postpone the adjournment for the Summer recess. However, I wish to raise an urgent matter which is important, not just to Scottish Members but which has a direct bearing upon the responsibility of Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry. That matter relates to the status to be accorded to undertakings given in offer documents during takeover bids. I specifically refer to the takeover bid by Guinness for Distillers.

It may be helpful if I give hon. Members a brief history of the way in which the takeover bid unfolded. I am sure that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) will assist me if I have a lapse of memory. The Argyll group launched a takeover bid for Distillers, a large Scottish drinks business, which was popularly thought to have lost its way. Throughout the takeover battle, the Argyll group constantly reminded people of its absolute commitment to locate its corporate headquarters in Scotland should the takeover be successful. I do not believe that anyone in the House has cause to believe that Mr. James Gulliver and his board, which includes one of our colleagues in the House, would not have honoured to the letter obligations it made in the course of that bid.

The Distillers board was hostile to the takeover from Argyll and it found a white knight in Guinness, which the previous year had taken over the Bell's whisky group, one of the independent Scottish whisky distillers. Distillers Company Ltd., which had argued that there was no commercial logic in the Argyll group's bid and had vigorously asserted its determination to stay independent, suddenly raised the white flag and recommended the Guinness offer to its shareholders.

In fairness, Guinness acknowledged the Scottish dimension throughout its takeover efforts. Anything that Argyll had offered, Guinness offered more. The board's structure was to be a joint board, a holding company to have as its non-executive chairman Sir Thomas Risk, a corporate lawyer who is as influential as he is respected. It was to have a group corporate headquarters in Scotland.

At the press briefings Guinness waxed lyrical about all the things it would do for Scotland. We were told that the chief executive was house-hunting in Edinburgh and around that part of Scotland. I understand that more recently he has been house-hunting in Oxfordshire. Any Guinness or Distillers employee who had a job in London would have to justify that job to Ernest Saunders and explain why it should stay in London rather than be relocated to Edinburgh.

I believe that the Scottish business, industrial and political community were left with the thought that the effective day-to-day control of an amalgamated combine, including Distillers, would remain in Scotland after the takeover. However, there were problems for Guinness. The Director General of Fair Trading recommended that the Argyll bid should not be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission because there was no prima facie evidence that competition would be endangered by the merger. Guinness, with Bell's already under its belt, would, with DCL, have a sizeable proportion of the domestic Scotch whisky industry. Presumably, that was the reason for the Office of Fair Trading recommending to the Department of Trade and Industry that there should be a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of the Guinness/Distillers bid.

One way or another Guinness successfully avoided a reference by agreeing to dispose of a number of the brands of Distillers to Whyte and Mackay, another Scottish whisky distiller. We do not know what additional assurances may have been given by Guinness to the Office of Fair Trading in order to avoid a reference. However, we know that the second Guinness bid was not referred. We were then left with the position where Argyll and Distillers slogged it out in the market. I believe that the involvement of Sir Thomas Risk was a crucial factor in delivering victory to Guinness.

The offer document dated 3 March said:

"Following the merger, Sir Thomas Risk, Governor of the Bank of Scotland, will be appointed non-executive chairman of the combined group . . . Mr. Ernest Saunders will be appointed as vice-chairman . . . Mr. Ernest Saunders will also be appointed as group chief executive."

The other vital clause in the offer document was Guinness's reaffirmation:

"We shall take the necessary steps to make the holding company a Scottish registered company and will move the group headquarters to Edinburgh, where the group chief executive's office will be located."

Mr. Alexander Pollock (Moray): I wonder whether my hon. Friend had an experience similar to mine, whereby Mr. Ernest Saunders sought to have a meeting during the takeover battle and made those assurances in person, underlining his commitment to the offer he was putting to the shareholders.

Mr. Hirst: Yes, indeed. More than that, I believe that those undertakings, which were categorically understood as such, were also made in a room in the House of Commons.

The small shareholders of Distillers and a number of the important Scottish financial institutions that were significant shareholders in Distillers accepted the Guinness offer. Guinness duly won the hand of Distillers. In the three months since then it has seemed less of a marriage and more of a rape. Sir Thomas Risk was publicly spurned as the chairman of the combined group. We understand that Mr. Saunders is now to take that slot.

Sir Thomas Risk is a highly experienced company director and a man with an extremely distinguished pedigree as a corporate lawyer. He is the former chairman of one of the largest mutal insurance companies and the Governor of the Bank of Scotland. It is unthinkable that, at any stage, he did not know what was expected of him as the non-executive chairman of the combined group. Apparently, there is no longer to be a joint board and the name of the new group, which had been left in limbo, remains Guinness plc.

The corporate headquarters are not yet sited in Scotland. We are told that Guinness is appraising the position, but since it had the active co-operation of the Distillers board during the vital weeks of the takeover bid one must assume that it was in a far better position to appraise the position of the Distillers group than was Argyll — the non-preferred bidder which nevertheless could make a commitment about the location of the head office.

[Mr. Hirst]

Since then Guinness has declined to give assurances that it intends to honour its obligations, and we do not know what decision it may make in the future. The issues are far greater than simply the financial wheeling and dealing that may go on during a takeover bid. In the past fortnight the Bank of England, the Takeover Panel, the Stock Exchange, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and a wide range of City institutions have publicly expressed their concern about the development. Undertakings were given and statements made in the offer that Guinness made, and if similar statements had been made in a prospectus and subsequently breached, one might reasonably have expected to see criminal charges preferred under companies legislation.

The Government have clearly signalled their preference for self-regulation rather than the establishment of a Securities and Exchange Commission with statutory powers of regulation. To retain confidence in self-regulation, self-regulation must be based on the highest standards of professional and commercial integrity. It cannot be right that undertakings given during the heat of a takeover bid can be lightly tossed aside if they are subsequently found to be inconvenient. A measure of that City concern must be the unprecedented public criticism by the Bank of England at the way in which the proposed new board changes ignore material statements made during the bid battle, which undoubtedly influenced its outcome. The Governor of the Bank of England underlined the importance that he attached to the Scottish dimension, given that Distillers is the largest industrial company based in Scotland.

The Takeover Panel, whose involvement in a takeover bid normally ends at the conclusion of a bid, has also, in an unprecedented way, expressed concern about how undertakings have been disregarded. The concern expressed by financial institutions has spread much further than Edinburgh. That deep anxiety is felt across the political, social and business spectrum in Scotland.

People are entitled to feel anxious about the other declared intention of Guinness to set up its corporate headquarters in Scotland. If it has welshed—if that is not an unfair word to use—on other commitments, is it unreasonable to think that it may do so on that remaining vital commitment on its corporate headquarters?

The site of that headquarters matters. The constant drift of decision-making in Scottish companies to headquarters in the south has been a strong factor in enfeebling the Scottish economy. I do not make that comment from the standpoint of narrow nationalism. Without a suitable range of corporate headquarters in Scotland there will not be the professional support and other services which are essential to sustain the business community.

I want Guinness to honour its obligations and to play its part in Scotland. It must understand that it must act to restore the public confidence that has been endangered by the developments of the past few weeks. It is an important company. It earns substantial profits and employs thousands of people in Scotland, including some of my constituents. As a substantial public limited company it has obligations which the public must see being honoured.

Because the matter is sufficiently urgent and important to merit a discussion of its wider ramifications in the House, I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to set time aside for such a debate, and to ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to take the closest interest in developments, lest there be any unfavourable developments in this saga while the House is adjourned for the summer.

7.24 pm

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): In the circumstances, it is appropriate for me to add my genuine congratulations to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) on the lucid and articulate way in which she made her maiden speech. No one could be under any illusions about how she felt, what she meant to say or the message she wished to give to the House. There is a certain precedent which suggests that one should be uncontroversial in one's maiden speech, but I can assure the hon. Lady that attacking the Liberal party in the House is regarded as uncontroversial. It has sustained many a political career in the House and I suspect we shall have a great deal more of it.

The campaign was certainly vigorous and the area is yet another island of Britain which I have come to know through a by-election. The by-election was called deliberately and in extraordinary circumstances. It is difficult to believe that the great plotter, whom we all came to admire when he was an hon. Member, had nothing to do with it. It was called in the shortest time possible, when most of the electorate were on holiday for at least a fortnight. That was how the campaign started, although I am not sure that it improved as it went on. I congratulate the hon. Lady and I am sure that she will make a vital contribution to the House. Indeed, as a women she is doubly welcome.

The subject that I wish to raise will come as no surprise to the Leader of the House because I have raised it at nearly every opportunity since the fatal day in October 1985. I raise it again today because, as the right hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice) explained, this is our last opportunity to do so. I wish to speak about the tin crisis which is affecting my county.

The one good bit of news I have had today is that Rio Tinto-Zinc which owns the mines has announced that its plans to close the mines have been postponed by a fortnight, thus giving us until mid-August to resolve the matter. Sometimes, when one is passionately involved in an issue, one begins to believe that everyone else must know the arguments surrounding it. Sadly, despite efforts, that is not true in this case.

The initial part of the story is well known. The tin market collapsed in October 1985 and overnight the price of tin fell from £8,000 to less than £4,000 a tonne. Overnight, that turned a prosperous, growing, vigorous mining industry, on which a substantial section of my county's economy had for a long time been based, with a bright future into one with immediate, and perhaps even terminal, difficulties.

We noted the Government's enthusiasm to try to rescue the tin market and I have no criticism of them for their efforts in that direction. My area might have been better off if they had succeeded. We look to the Government to assist us in this moment of great trial and tribulation. Our argument is strong. With the present international price for tin, no more than 5 per cent. of the tin mines in the world can be breaking even, let alone making a profit. Therefore, it is inevitable that some time the price must

increase. If it increases to the break-even point at world demand level, it will produce a price of about £6,500 a tonne. At that price, the mines in my constituency, including Wheal Jane and South Crofty, would undoubtedly be viable. That has been our argument and that is what all the discussions and speeches have been about.

However, we need some assistance to see us through the period of recovery. Without it, the mines will close. We have apparently made some progress. I pay credit to the Department of Trade and Industry which must have heard this speech more often than the Leader of the House, but having heard it before, hear it again they undoubtedly will. The Department of Trade and Industry has apparently told the Treasury that the original definition for assisting the mines is fulfilled. It is that the mines must show a sign of robust viability. I confess that I have never quite discovered what that means, but those were the words used.

We are led to believe, and my miners understand, from leaks from the Department of Trade and Industry that the application by Carnon Consolidated for the mines nearest my constituency fulfils whatever the criteria were. Having been greatly involved since last October, I can tell the House that that is a massive hurdle to have cleared. Apparently, we have the Department of Trade and Industry on our side.

However, the good news terminates there. It seems that the Department of Trade and Industry is not trusted, to the tune of £15 million, to make a decision. It has to submit its recommendation to the Treasury, and we are told that the Treasury is, some say blocking it, some say looking at it in depth. What is certain is that it has not provided the cash.

I want to tell the Treasury, through the Leader of the House, why it should back this deal. If these mines are shut, 1,000 jobs will be lost. In areas like mine, where unemployment is literally endemic and the prospects of people finding alternative employment within 40 or 50 miles of where they live is dozens if not hundreds to one against, it is well known that the 1,000 people involved will be unemployed.

We hear lovely arguments in the House as to how much it actually costs for the state to maintain an unemployed person. One suspects that it is about £6,000 per person.

Mr. Foot: More than that.

Mr. Penhaligon: Certainly £6,000 per person—I do not believe that one often improves one's argument by overstating it. For 1,000 people, that is £6 million a year. The irony is that that sum, over three years, is about the same sort of sum that has been considered to give the mines the prospect of a future.

If the Government back this rescue—I recognise that that is what it is—there is a real possibility that at the end of three years there will be a viable, credible tin mining industry in my county able to provide well-paid jobs without subsidy, thus continuing the growth pattern that was established until the market changed. That is, if the Government say yes.

If the Government say no, at the end of the three years they will have spent about the same sum and then, as we know, there will be no possibility of any industry in the county at all. I say to the Leader of the House, and I hope that he will say to the Treasury, that such a decision for those involved would be beyond all rational belief.

The only decision made so far in this saga that seems to approach such a decision in asininity is what I understand to be the final decision by the Government not even to give Geevor mine £150,000 so that, in partnership with the new owners of the mine, it can keep the mine dry for a couple of years to see what the market looks like then. The Government have already offered £1 million to West Penwith for a package deal. I have no doubt that there would be a willingness to give up £150,000 of that £1 million deal to give this mine a chance.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Does the hon. Gentleman realise that, as I understand it, a decision on the Carnon Consolidated application is almost certain to be taken early next week?

With regard to Geevor, does he also appreciate that, although the Government turned down the application for £150,000 for care and maintenance, a sum that I described as a piffling amount, ways are still being considered to give some indirect help to Geevor?

Is not the message that hon. Members on both sides of the House must get across to the Leader of the House, to the Government and to whomever will take the decision on Carnon, that a whole industry—one of the oldest industries in the land—is at stake? People will not forgive those who take the decision if that industry collapses for the sake of what in the end will seem a very small sum.

Will the hon. Gentleman therefore agree that we must join forces and impress on the Leader of the House and on those Cabinet Ministers who will take the decision that we must have the right decision for Cornwall?

Mr. Penhaligon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that. I believe that we worked hard together on this.

The Minister has been well aware of the interest of the west country in this case. The decision is to be made next week, and I desperately hope that it is a good one. Believing as I do in democracy and the power of this Chamber to discuss and examine, and given that the crisis has existed since last October, if the final decision to put at end to an industry vital to the communities and families in the area was made in the first few hours of a week in which the Government could not be called to public account, I believe that would do Parliament and democracy a great deal of harm.

Knowing that the Leader of the House has some sensitivity in regard to these problems, I urge him to convey to the Treasury that the Government's own Department of Trade and Industry has examined this matter for weeks, for months and, it seems to those of us involved, for years, and apparently now accepts that Carnon Consoljdated fulfils the criteria laid down. At this late hour to haul away the plank when so much effort has been made in the House would be an obscenity and an outrage, and it would be remembered at least by Cornish people a great deal longer even, I suspect, than the Westland crisis, the opening subject matter of the debate.

7.36 pm

Mr. Michael NcNair-Wilson (Newbury): When I first saw that the Opposition wanted to delay the recess by a further 24 hours, I found myself inclined to support their suggestion because I assumed that they wanted the additional time to raise a matter of real importance to the nation. When I heard the windy rhetoric of the right hon.

[Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson]

Members for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), I could not help wondering to myself why they thought that making party political points was so much more important than looking at some of the real issues facing the nation and its people. Indeed, I go further and suggest to both right hon. Gentlemen that they will not find the 10,000 people working at Westland anxious to read their speeches or to hear their nit picking. They will be grateful to have jobs in a company that now has a new and brighter future than any that could have been envisaged some months ago. That was the real issue. That issue has been resolved, thank goodness, in their terms.

Mr. Shore: The hon. Gentleman is criticising not my right hon. Friend and me but the report of an all-party Select Committee chaired by one of his right hon. Friends and dominated by Conservative Members of Parliament. I do not think that the report is frivolous, party political and partisan. I think that it is a serious report making fundamental political and constitutional points.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: I have no doubt that the right hon. Gentleman thinks that. Nevertheless, I am equally sure that he was seeking to make as much party political capital as he could. I do not criticise him for that—no doubt that is what he thinks he has to do.

If he really wants the House to delay its recess, I suggest to him that the House should give its thoughts to a subject perhaps rather more important than a Select Committee report. That is, unemployment. Curiously enough, although the Opposition often tell us about their views on unemployment, they have managed to avoid seeking a full day's debate on the subject for several months. Only last week the most recent unemployment figure was published showing that 3,220,000 were out of work in the United Kingdom or were drawing unemployment benefit.

On the face of it, that appears to be a huge pool of unused labour, which could be making a positive contribution to the economy. It is also a massive drain on the nation's resources, estimated by Professor Adrian Sinfield of Edinburgh university as being about £20 billion a year. Thus, if any aspect of public expenditure should be exercising the mind of the House and requiring us perhaps to find an additional day before the recess upon which to have a debate, it seems to me that unemployment is paramount.

As we all know, unemployment is at varying levels in the country. As an hon. Member sitting for a prosperous southern seat, I have to admit to being concerned by a recent "Panorama" programme showing the situation in the north-east. In particular, I was struck by the young men, many of them married, who were prepared to leave their wives and children to find work in the south because there was no demand for their labour in their home towns. I salute their courage and determination to make something of their lives, and I salute their anxiety to provide for their families, although they know that their absence in the south must create huge strains on their marriages. Some, as I know from my constituency, have even uprooted their families from the communities in which they have grown up, and brought them to the south hoping to find a council house, or, if they can afford it, a house that they can buy.

I wonder sometimes what those people make of the south; of the wide spectrum of job opportunities and of the new industries that they find in places such as Berkshire. I wonder whether they ask themselves, as I ask myself, why the new jobs created in the new southern industries could not have been started as well in the midlands or the north. I hope that the new Government initiative, announced in *The Times* earlier this week, to create development corporations in derelict areas, will mean that that exodus from the north and the north-east will soon dry up.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNair-Wilson: If I give way, others will not be able to speak. It would be only fair for me to get on with my speech and give them a chance.

From what I have said, it might seem that unemployment is almost unknown in Newbury and west Berkshire, but sadly the latest figures do not bear that out. In the Newbury travel-to-work area, over 2,000 people are out of work, or at least claiming benefit. In Reading, the figure in the travel-to-work area is over 10,000. In Berkshire overall, almost 7 per cent. of the working population is drawing benefit, the figure for Newbury being 7·4 per cent. However, I have to admit to the House and to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that I am increasingly coming to the conclusion that those figures are anything but precise. While 2,000 people are drawing unemployment benefit in Newbury, at Newbury jobcentre there are no fewer than 500 vacancies, and at Reading jobcentre a further 1,300. Yet of the unemployed in Newbury only 9·4 per cent. have registered at the jobcentre—that is, 217 of the 2,000. In national terms, only 12·8 per cent. of those drawing unemployment benefit have chosen to register at their jobcentres. In Newbury, of those registered as unemployed, 20 per cent. or thereabouts have been unemployed for a year or more, some because they are in the over-50s category, others because they are handicapped. Therefore, of the 2,292 approximately 1,800 are available for work, of which 60 per cent. are women.

As I have already said, the jobcentre has over 500 vacancies on its books. The local newspaper, the *Newbury Weekly News*, is currently carrying four or five pages of job advertisements every week, which means dozens of vacancies in all types of employment, while the Reading *Evening Post* on average carries 150 full-time and part-time jobs each evening. No wonder a Reading business man said a few days ago that he, who has vacancies at all levels in his company, has come to the conclusion that too many of those drawing benefit are work-shy. Then there are the various private employment agencies that manage to make a fairly good living.

So with such a wide spread of jobs on offer, one is bound to ask how it is possible for Newbury to have 7·4 per cent. unemployment. I can conclude only that the answer lies in three directions. First, I suggest that there is a mismatch between the unemployed and the jobs available—in other words, a lack of skills. Secondly, perhaps 50 per cent of the women may be expecting babies and are drawing unemployment benefit in the last 11 weeks of their pregnancy. Thirdly, some of those drawing unemployment benefit are not looking for work, hence the low percentage registering at the jobcentre. Those are guesstimates, but because compulsory registration at

jobcentres as a condition for drawing unemployment benefit is no longer mandatory, the precise information about Britain's jobless, such as those in Newbury, does not exist.

I am not trying to suggest that the current total is necessarily inaccurate. What I am arguing is that we do not know, and that the Rayner economy in 1982 of doing away with compulsory registration to save £10 million a year on administrative costs may prove to have been a costly saving. Certainly, the present Secretary of State for Employment told me that he believed that hundreds of millions of pounds were being claimed in unemployment benefit by some people who had no intention of looking for work or who had joined the black economy. As we also know, over 2,000 persons were prosecuted last year for claiming benefit falsely.

If all that is so, surely a rethink about compulsory job registration at jobcentres is required, together with regular interviewing of those who are unemployed along the lines of the re-start scheme, introduced a few weeks ago to match capabilities to opportunities among the long-term unemployed. After all, we are spending £112 million a year on jobcentres, and there seems little point in that expenditure if we do not utilise the centres to the maximum. Of course, I recognise that one does not have to register at a jobcentre to use it, but it seems to me that those who register are registering their earnestness to find work whereas those who prefer not to seem to lack that same drive.

I recognise that jobcentres, however well they are organised and used, do not create employment if the jobs are not there in the first place. I recognise that the abundance of opportunities in Berkshire is not paralleled in the counties north of Birmingham, yet I believe that all those areas have certain things in common. The first is that nobody is really sure of the size of the unemployment problem. Secondly, certain skills are in desperately short supply. In Berkshire, the skillcentre in Reading has suspended recruitment for its courses on bricklaying, industrial electrics and plumbing because they are hopelessly oversubscribed. There is a two to three-month waiting list for courses in electro-mechanical draughtsmanship, electric arc welding, heavy vehicle repair and maintenance and storekeeping.

I also suggest that in north or south there is an abundance of community jobs that need doing—clearing the flotsam from our beaches and the litter in our streets and countryside, improving derelict sites, tidying up the countryside, and helping the community. I recognise the valuable work being performed within the community programmes, but I suggest that we should take the matter one step further. Community programmes are looked upon as something to do between jobs—they are not dignified as real employment. But I suggest that they are and have a long-term future.

Further, it seems to me that if the state is to spend £20 billion a year on unemployment, which, in effect, is a state wage, it has the right, after a given time, to ask unemployed people to join the community programme as full-time employees recompensed with a proper living wage. At present it is argued that a married man with two children who is out of work costs the state about £177 a week, or £9,200 per annum. It is also a fact that some commentators claim that a family needs an income which is 140 per cent. of the supplementary benefit rate. That would mean, net, about £5,300 per annum, or £102·27 a week. If the latter were the community programme wage, the savings to the Exchequer would be considerably over what it is paying out as unemployment benefit. But, much more important than that, any unemployed person could take up such a job as real employment, although he would be free to leave, of course, if something better turned up.

Some people call this type of scheme workfare. No matter what it is called, it seems to be one way of ending the sense of waster and depression which affects those who are genuinely anxious to work, but who can find nothing to do. I commend it to my right hon. Friend.

7.50 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I congratulate the new hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding). She follows two men — her husband, to whom she referred delightfully, and Stephen Swingler who, in their different ways, contributed to the work of the House of Commons. I knew her father. He came from the same part of the world as me. He was of the generation who attended the old labour colleges. Higher education was not freely available. In the 1920s those colleges contributed to much original thought. It was of the kind that some of the colleges of higher education, on the moving staircase, do not provide in quite the same way.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) referred to unemployment. However, I intend to refer to the most valuable report that has been published today on Westland. I congratulate the Select Committee's chairman and its members upon the lucidity of the report and upon some of the matters that they have devilled through and thought out. They will be important to us all in the months ahead. I look forward to the Government's replies. Indeed, the Government will have given so much thought to these matters in recent months that their replies could almost be written tonight. A great deal of detailed passing around Departments, which happens to most Select Committee reports, will not be required. But that is not to be.

However, there is one aspect of the report to which I wish to refer that will not wait, in my view, until November. I refer to paragraph 240 of the report, upon which I shall hinge my remarks. It says:

"As far as individuals are concerned, we have made our best judgments on the evidence before us. If anyone feels himself or herself to have been traduced by our findings, we are prepared at any stage"—

what does that mean, I wonder?—

"to take oral or written evidence, in public or in private, from anyone involved in the events we have examined. If that evidence leads us to modify our conclusions, we will of course make a further report to the House."

Remarks have been made not only about hon. Members but about civil servants at No. 10, the Attorney-General and the Secretary to the Cabinet that will cause concern. We should not have to wait until November for a reply to be made to those allegations or accusations, or whatever may be the correct word.

We have gone into leaking of the Law Officer's letter on previous occasions. That is not new. The leaking of the Law Officer's letter is against the conventions. Law Officers are not members of the Cabinet. They perform a particular task. Yet members of the Government and civil servants went around one lunchtime trying to find means of leaking and passing information to the Press Assocation.

[Mr. Merlyn Rees]

I became involved in the Ponting case. It was not because I am enamoured of people who leak documents, particularly those who leak serious documents. But there is the allied matter, which is more important, of the Government, or the state. My strong view was that the man should not have had criminal charges brought against him under part II of the Official Secrets Act 1911. In the current case Ministers were aiding civil servants to do what Ponting had done, for which he had been taken to the High Court. That is strange.

I do not wish to offend those who feel that it is wrong to raise these matters on the last evening before the recess, but this is not a party political issue. It is a question of how Government should operate. If we go on in this way, there will be a new phrase about civil servants. We will say that a man is "doing a Ponting". Of others we will say, "Oh, he's doing an official Ponting." The position needs to be clarified.

A delightful story is told about Prime Minister Attlee. He did not read the newspapers, so it was said; he looked at *The Times* only to read the cricket scores and do the crossword. He was not very interested in what the journalists had to say. His officials tried to get him to install one of the machines that we have in the corridor outside the Chamber, but he did not want that new fangled type of stuff. Eventually they persuaded him to have it outside the Cabinet room because they were able to convince him that he could get the cricket scores from it, and it was said that he always referred to it as the "cricketing machine".

We have come a long way since then. Every morning the media go traipsing across to a most important meeting where all the briefing is done. That briefing should of course be done by a civil servant, but the time has come when he should pass on Government information in the same way as information officers in other Government Departments pass on information. Where political implications are involved, the briefing should be done by an employee of whichever political party is in power.

I shall leave on one side for a moment the fact that the Prime Minister said that she had no knowledge of this matter on 6 January. Instead I wish to deal with paragraphs 187 and 188 of the Select Committee's report. Paragraph 187 says:

"It must therefore be the case that Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell were in a position to tell the Prime Minister on 7 January what turned out to be the principal findings of Sir Robert Armstrong's inquiry more than a fortnight later."

But they did not do so, says the report. Should they not have a chance during the recess to put their views to the Select Committee? In the last paragraph of its report, paragraph 240, the Committee said that it was prepared to take oral evidence, either in public or in private. Paragraph 188 says:

"Yet on 7 January Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell did not share their knowledge — not with Mr. Nigel Wicks, the Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary, not with Sir Robert Armstrong and not with the Prime Minister."

That is another serious allegation to make about two civil servants, one of whom, one would have thought, has a long way to go in the Foreign Office. This allegation or criticism will hang over him for a long time.

It was made by a Select Committee of the House of Commons, chaired by an eminent former Secretary of State in a Conservative Government who does not lightly put his signature to such a thing. This is not a party political issue in the narrow sense of the term. It is important that the Leader of the House should explain immediately the report's last section. The matter should not be allowed to hang over the Department.

Will those civil servants be given a chance to clear their names? If the allegations are true, they are a damning indictment on how civil servants operate, but I believe that those civil servants are being traduced.

The allegation made against the Attorney-General, whom I respect, in paragraph 195 of the report is damning. During a previous debate on the Law Officers, I said that neither of them could be faulted for the way in which they had behaved. Now there is this damning indictment of the Attorney-General. I have tried to express my opinion on how leak inquiries are set up. They are few. I believe there is another side to the approach taken against the Attorney-General. The Attorney-General is responsible for the Director of Public Prosecutions, who is appointed by the Home Secretary under legislation of about 1909. The Director of Public Prosecutions is, however, appointed on the advice of the Attorney-General. He is never again involved with the Home Secretary and works very closely with the Attorney-General.

If there had not been an internal inquiry into the Attorney-General's conduct, Scotland Yard would have been involved straight away. It could not have been done in any other way. I have read the report and I have heard the allegations made against the Attorney-General. I would not say such things about him because I respect him.

The Committee that has made the allegations about him should give him the chance to clear his name. The Secretary to the Cabinet was a deputy under-secretary when I was Home Secretary, and then became a permanent under-secretary. I know and respect him but have hon. Members read what is said about him? Those allegations must be considered before the matter is discussed in the House again. We must be fair to civil servants, let alone to a politician who is also the Attorney-General.

That is the reason for my speech tonight. The Government must tell us straight away what they will do about the last recommendation in the report. The Chairman and the members of the Committee are ready to take evidence. We should not wait until November to discover what will be done. The Government must contact the people involved and ask them if they want to give further evidence to the Select Committee. That is the only way in which their names will be cleared.

8.3 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I am especially pleased to follow the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) because, in his remarks about the Select Committee's report, he has put his finger on some key points which must be answered. In some ways the report is profound. It raises questions that must be answered on some occasion other than a summer Adjournment debate. I agree with his profound point that Government information, how it is handled and whether the Lobby system can still survive must be re-examined. We should move to a more open system in which a Government press spokesman gives briefings on the record. It is demeaning for journalists, who should be the detectors of democracy, to behave under the Lobby system

as if they were office boys in on some school secret and not be able to attribute to anyone any remarks they hear. The sooner that we alter the nature of the way in which Government information is handed out, the better.

I do not entirely share the praise that Opposition Members have showered on the report and its quality, or at least parts of it. I take up the point that the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South made about the Attorney-General, who I believe to have been traduced by the report in a very unfair and unjust way.

I quote from paragraph 195 to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, the last statements of which are emphasised by heavy print. It states:

"If 'under no circumstances' would the Attorney have prosecuted Miss Bowe, then he must have known that the disclosure had been authorised."

It is difficult to imagine a more damaging charge against the Attorney-General. I concur with the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South that the way the sentence is phrased is a damning indictment.

To judge by the comments of several members of the Select Committee in the media this morning, they simply do not seem to have understood the implications of the paragraph as it is drafted. They believe that it in no way brings into question the integrity and honour of the Attorney-General. However, one member of the Select Committee understood how damaging the statement was and that was the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) who has been vocal in his criticism of the Attorney-General. He seems to have launched an unjust and unjustifiable one-man crusade against him.

I have two serious criticisms of the way in which the Select Committee has gone about its business in the paragraph containing the accusation against the Attorney-General. First, as a matter of natural justice, the Committee was wrong to assert that the Attorney-General must have known that the leak was authorised, unless it had first put that question to him and asked him for his explanation of the allegation. Secondly, the Committee has drawn the wrong conclusion about the Attorney-General's action and his thinking from the evidence in the report. If the Committee had only thought a little more carefully before it leapt into print with that contentious paragraph, it might have realised that its astonishing conclusion is only one of several possible conclusions that could be drawn from the evidence submitted to it.

Attorneys-General, like anyone else, are entitled to a fair hearing and treatment before a Select Committee before it passes a censorious judgment or writes words which could be, and which have been, interpreted as a censorious judgment. Fair treatment, at the very least, means that the Attorney-General should have been asked about the matter for which he has been criticised. He should have been invited to give oral evidence, or, like the Solicitor-General, he should at least have been invited to submit answers to written questions. However, that did not happen. The Attorney-General was condemned in his absence and the paragraph in the report appeared with total and involuntary silence on his part. I am reliably informed that paragraph 195 came as a complete surprise to him.

The House should recall that, in the past, Select Committees have been severely criticised by the House for censuring people on grounds on which they have never been properly questioned. I remind the House of the Select Committee report on the conduct of hon. Members in the Poulson affair. When we debated that report in 1977, the House clearly believed that the late Mr. Reginald Maudling had been unfairly treated because questions had not been put to him and the grounds on which he was criticised were grounds on which he had never been questioned. For that reason, as much as any other, the House refused to go along with some of the recommendations of that Select Committee.

From the natural justice point of view, the Committee handled paragraph 195 badly. I hope that the Attorney-General will take up the invitation in paragraph 240 to answer that point. I have no doubt that the unfair inferences drawn would have been differently answered had the Attorney-General had the opportunity to do so.

More important than the point about natural justice is the fact that the Select Committee has drawn the wrong conclusion in paragraph 195. The House knows that I have some experience of being a central figure in a leak inquiry which involves the Official Secrets Act. Perhaps because of that, I understand that, when an Attorney-General has to decide whom to prosecute and to whom to give immunity, there are certain considerations on his mind which are not always obvious to the outside world. The main consideration on any prosecutor's mind, when deciding whether to grant immunity, is whether he is likely to get a conviction.

I suggest that the Attorney-General said that in no circumstances would he prosecute Miss Bowe, not because he knew all along that this was an authorised disclosure, but because he realised that he would not get a conviction. I think that because the evidence is set out in the Committee's report. Paragraph 158 makes it quite clear that Miss Bowe believed that she had been instructed by Mr. Ingham to take the action that she did, even though she had grave reservations about it.

In paragraph 174, there is further corroboration of the fact that Miss Bowe did not want to do what she did but that she felt that she had to take orders from two higher civil servants. If the Attorney-General had known that, the doctrine of mens rea being what it is, there was no possibility of his getting a conviction on behalf of the Crown under the Official Secrets Act. It is not that he knew all along that this was an authorised leak, but the simple legal fact that he would not get a conviction. He obviously discussed with the Secretary to the Cabinet the possibility of bringing in the police. That is not the action of an Attorney-General who is part of a cover-up. It is the action of an Attorney-General who is genuinely seeking the truth about who did what, and taking a perfectly realistic decision that there was not a chance of Miss Bowe being convicted. His actions were justified on that basis alone.

I have highlighted two fundamental flaws in the report. I dare say that others may have been traduced in it. I believe that the Attorney-General most certainly has been, and the report is badly flawed for that reason.

8.12 pm

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East): I shall deal later with the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). First, however, I should like to pay tribute to my colleagues on the Select Committee for the extremely amiable atmosphere in which our proceedings were conducted. I congratulate Conservative members of the Committee, for whom certain passages in the proceedings must have been extremely difficult. They

[Dr. John Gilbert]

maintained a magnificent spirit of independence, which is a great tribute to them and this place. I also want to pay tribute to our Chairman, the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins).

The House will know that the report is unanimous. More than that, every line, adjective and comma was agreed without division. I intend to concentrate on only two issues. The first is that which the hon. Member for Thanet, South mentioned. One of the crucial questions which we had to consider was who knew that the selective disclosure of part of the Solicitor-General's letter was authorised. Paragraph 196 says quite unambiguously that that must have been known before the inquiry began by, among others, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), Sir Robert Armstrong, Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell. The Committee's judgment is unambiguous in that respect.

Hon. Members will want to know that, last night, I gave the Attorney-General notice that I would raise the subjct of his involvement and paragraph 195 in today's debate. Paragraph 195 deals solely with the Attorney-General's role in this affair. It does not say that he knew that the disclosure had been authorised by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, but it says that he must have known that the disclosure was authorised.

There was a short list of people who would have been able to authorise the disclosure. There was the person who sent the letter, the person who received it and those to whom it was copied. That is a class of six. I think that we can take it for granted that the Solicitor-General, who wrote the letter, did not leak it. I think that we can take it for granted that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who received it, did not leak it. We are now down to four. Of them, I have yet to hear anybody suggest that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury leaked it. I have yet to hear anybody suggest that the Foreign Secretary leaked it.

We are now down to a class of two. The other two recipients were the Prime Minister and the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The Committee is saying that the Attorney-General knew that the disclosure was authorised, and that he must have been a blithering fool if he did not know that it was one of those two who authorised it. That is the sense of paragraph 195.

The hon. Member for Thanet, South has tried to erect a defence for the Attorney-General. I prefer the Attorney-General's own defence. He was good enough to tell me yesterday that he would today answer a written question tabled by the hon. and learned Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner). The hon. and learned Gentleman

"asked Mr. Attorney-General if he will make a statement on those aspects of the Fourth Report from the Defence Committee on Westland plc, the Government's decision-making, which fall within his responsibilities."

The Attorney-General answered:

"The Select Committee state that if, when I authorised an offer of immunity from prosecution to one of the officials concerned in the Head of the Home Civil Service's inquiry into the circumstances of the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter of 6 January, I was able at that stage to say that under no circumstances would I have prosecuted the official concerned, I must have known, and must have learned from the Head of the Home Civil Service, that the disclosure had been authorised.

I wish to make it absolutely clear that at the time when I advised that an inquiry be instituted, I did not know by whom the disclosure had been made or that it had been authorised by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry or at all.

At the time when I granted immunity to the official concerned, while I had reason to believe that the disclosure had been made by the official concerned and that the official concerned had acted in complete good faith, I was not aware of the full circumstances. It was important that the inquiry should discover as fully as possible the circumstances in which the disclosure came to be made, and should provide those concerned with the opportunity of giving their accounts of their part in the affair. It was clear that the testimony of the official in question would be vital to the inquiry, and I judged it right that possible impediment to full co-operation in the inquiry should be removed. I was and am satisfied that that in no way interfered with the course of justice: the facts as disclosed in the inquiry confirmed my judgment that there would have been no question of proceeding against the official concerned.

As the Select Committee recognise, I was not told of the direct involvement of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry until 22 January."

That was the Attorney-General's opportunity to defend himself. Not one word in the parliamentary reply from the Attorney-General contradicts a syllable in paragraph 195 of our report. I shall demonstrate that later.

We accuse the Attorney-General of knowing that the disclosure had been authorised at the time that he was asked to grant immunity to Miss Bowe. He said that he did not know,

"at the time when I advised that an inquiry be instituted".

That is a very different matter indeed, with a vital time lapse in between.

The Attorney-General is a very able man, but I am beginning to wonder whether one should accuse him of trying to throw sand into the eyes of the House. Naturally, I believe every word that he says, but I think that his answer will bear very close examination. I shall repeat the words of paragraph 240 of the report: if the Attorney-General does not like the judgment—if he feels traduced —let him come along and give evidence to us, in public or in private, orally or in writing. If he does not, it is up to him, but the offer is there. The Committee is willing to have hearings — that is a unanimous view — and, if necessary, issue a further report.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I give notice, so important have been the comments of my right hon. Friend, that in tomorrow's Adjournment debate I shall repeat what he said by referring to *Hansard*, and shall expect the Minister who is replying to the Adjournment debate to respond to the very important statement made by my right hon. Friend.

Dr. Gilbert: The question remains, why is it important that the Attorney-General might have known that the disclosure was authorised? It is important, because if the conclusion was known in advance, the inquiry was a charade. If it did not relate to such a serious matter, one might be tempted to say that the inquiry was a farce. However, it was serious because five named officials went through an ordeal in which, as the head of the Civil Service said, their careers, their reputations and their lives were involved. That is not my language, it is the language of the head of the British Civil Service. He knew, and paragraph 195 says that the Attorney-General knew, that the ordeal of those officials was unnecessary. Our report also shows that the Attorney-General urged that the inquiry be prosecuted and the head of the Civil Service carried it out.

Incidentally, those are the words of the head of the Civil Service, who should have been protecting his officials, and

who compounded his hypocrisy—there is no other word for it—by praying in aid his inquiry as the reason why his officials should not appear before our Committee. That is a piece of cheek which takes some beating.

Finally, in parts of the report, the Committee has used some fairly forceful language about the conduct of the officials who did not appear before us. It is not our fault that they did not do so. We called it discreditable, improper, disreputable and outrageous. Four times today, the Prime Minister endorsed the activities and attitudes of those individuals. That tells me all that I need to know about the atmosphere at No. 10 Downing street which lies behind this sorry tale.

This is not the end of the matter. The Government are under an obligation to reply to the Select Committee. We shall consider that reply and may have further hearings. We may issue a further report and there will be a debate in this House. It will be a long time before this sleazy ghost is finally laid to rest.

8.24 pm

Sir Ian Pervical (Southport): I am glad to have the opportunity of following what I regard as one of the most deplorable speeches that I have heard in this House, which would do well to remind itself that one of its proudest traditions is that the Law Officers of all parties pride their integrity, independence and honour above everthing.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): What about the Prime Minister's integrity?

Sir Ian Percival: I shall ignore that.

It is regrettable that the Committee was not more careful in the language that it used. It is deplorable that the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) has abused this occasion. I shall support those comments quite shortly. The right hon. Gentleman's whole argument is based on the false premise that it can be assumed that "authorisation" means authorisation by a Minister. It means no such thing.

Suppose that, in accordance with all the best traditions, the Attorney-General—I am glad that the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) recognised that to be the case—was considering whether there should be an inquiry and suppose that he was told by the Cabinet Secretary: "I need immunity for Miss Bowe because it is clear to me that she was told to do what she did. I need to find out who told her to do it, and she will not tell me unless she is assured that she will not be prosecuted." Let us suppose that this is what happened—and it is a scenario that I have seen myself as a Law Officer. There is nothing in the evidence to suggest that the scenario was any different from that.

The House must remember that immunity means only an assurance that she will not be prosecuted—*[Interruption.]* I hope that hon. Members will listen to the argument. I am putting it briefly and treating it very seriously because this is a serious point. Immunity means an assurance that there will be no prosecution. Sometimes that is a very difficult assurance to give, because sometimes it means that one is agreeing not to prosecute somebody who is guilty of a very serious offence. In such a case, as in the Blunt case, it is a serious step to take to give an assurance that one will not prosecute somebody who has been guilty of a very serious offence—*[Interruption.]* I wish that hon. Members would stop muttering and listen; they might conceivably learn something from someone who has been in that position.

Supposing the scenario is as I have described. The Attorney-General's position was not difficult in this case because in any event he could not prosecute. If the evidence was that the lady had been told by her superiors to do what she did, then there was no question——

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West) *indicated dissent.*

Sir Ian Percival: It is no good the right hon. Gentleman shaking his head. He should accept what I say just for the moment, because I have been in such positions. The assumption that "authorised" means authorised by a Minister has no substance whatsoever in law; I have checked that today. The right hon. Member for Dudley, East is proceeding to make the most appalling accusations based on a false assumption.

Dr. Gilbert: Nothing would make me happier than if the Attorney-General would come along and tell us that that is precisely what he meant. However, the consequences of that would be very damning indeed for the officials who forced Miss Bowe, if that is the scenario erected by the right hon. and learned Gentleman, to do something thoroughly improper and against her better judgment. In that case, there would be no need for an inquiry.

Sir Ian Percival: The right hon. Gentleman is now trying to escape the point. I am dealing with the right hon. Gentleman's direct accusation of the Attorney-General of disgraceful conduct. He has no grounds on which to make that accusation. He knows perfectly well that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has no opportunity today to defend himself. What he will do later, I do not know. *[Interruption.]* Labour Members do not like what I am saying and I am not surprised because it knocks the bottom out of their case.

The assumption that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General must have known that the leak was authorised by a Minister is wholly without foundation. I wish that hon. Members would stop muttering. I am saying that as a matter of law there is no basis for that assumption. "Authorised" does not mean necessarily authorised by a Minister.

Mr. Williams: I am afraid that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is wrong. Armstrong's revised rules, which he circulated to civil servants recently, make it clear that authorisation of this type of activity needs the approval of a Minister, not of another civil servant. There is an appeal procedure to a senior civil servant if a civil servant thinks she has been wrongly instructed by a Minister, but only a Minister can give the initial approval.

Sir Ian Percival: The right hon. Gentleman is forgetting that what is talked about in paragraph 195 is unauthorised disclosure which amounts to a criminal offence. Those rules about which the right hon. Gentleman is speaking have nothing whatever to do with criminal offences. I am talking about whether it is right to assume that there was a criminal offence here.

Authorisation by a Minister is not necessary to provide the accused with a defence in law. It is sufficient if a person is accused of an offence under the Official Secrets Act 1911 to show that they were authorised by a superior. I have no hesitation in saying that and no fear of anybody being able

[Sir Ian Percival]

to contradict that in law. That is the law and that is why I say that those who, like the right hon. Member for Dudley, East, read more into paragraph 195 than I thought was meant in it by the Committee, are doing so on a completely false hypothesis, and that is a disgraceful thing to do.

On the hypothesis that I have put to the House, and looking at paragraph 195, everything that the Attorney-General said, as quoted there, was perfectly proper, in order, and in accordance with the best traditions of his office, if what he was told was that the lady was authorised by somebody else to do what she did. The right hon. Gentleman is wrong to jump over a gap there and say that that means that she was authorised by a Minister.

Dr. Gilbert: In that case, why did not the Attorney-General avail himself of this opportunity to deny the language of paragraph 195?

Sir Ian Percival: My right hon. and learned Friend will speak for himself. [HON. MEMBERS: "We wish he would."] It is always the last resort of a person who does not want to hear the argument to giggle about it. I hope Labour Members do not think that that casts any doubt on the argument. My right hon. Friend will speak for himself.

In a cooler mood, everybody here, including the right hon. Gentleman, would know that my right hon. and learned Friend has not as yet had the opportunity——

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): He will tomorrow, officially.

Sir Ian Percival: That is for my right hon. and learned Friend. What is deplorable is the apparent complete unwillingness of Labour Members to consider that they might have made a false assumption even though I have put before them a scenario that is not only possible and which they should have thought of, but so probable that most people here would put more money than they can afford to lose on the proposition that that is in fact what happened.

Whether that is or is not right, what is so wrong here is that some right hon. and hon. Gentlemen have put the worst possible interpretation on what my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General did in order to launch a disgraceful personal criticism of him, and that is deplorable.

8.34 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): This place will close down tomorrow for three months, but thousands of ordinary people including Members of the House, will be affected by the growing crisis brought about by the Government's policies within the National Health Service.

In my Liverpool district health authority, we face the prospect of cuts of £2·5 million over the next two years. That will amount to the loss of a further 120 jobs in an already stretched service in our area and a 12·5 per cent. reduction in the hours and pay of those working in the industry.

Redundancy payments for those job losses must come out of the overall budget. That budget should be there to provide nurses, ancillary staff and decent conditions for those in the hospitals dependent on services. Instead, they are using that budget to pay for the redundancy of other workers. In turn, that will mean further cuts in services and the loss of more jobs. Patient care will be affected because of the growing inability to finance the NHS. That is a vicious circle which has been created by the Government, aided and abetted by their placemen, the managers, whose only concept is of cuts. Those cuts, in the name of so-called efficiency, mean that the care of ordinary people is affected.

The conditions prevailing as a result of the cuts are already been seen in the Liverpool area. *[Intervention.]* In the Olive Mount psychiatric hospital, I have spoken to cooks and ancillary staff, some of whom are female and are the sole breadwinners of their families, who are suffering a £32 a week reduction in their wages plus a cut in the hours that they work within that industry. *[Interruption.]* That means that mentally handicapped people reliant on those cooks and ancillary staff——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I am trying very hard to listen to the hon. Gentleman and I hope that the House will give him a proper hearing.

Mr. Fields: Thank your for your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mentally handicapped patients dependent on ancillary staff and cooks are geting their meals half an hour late and a reduced range of meals available. Equipment is not being replaced and that further reduces the range of meals that can be provided for these people in need.

In the Fazakerley hospital, ancillary staff fell for the con of the in-house tender. In effect, they cut their own jobs, reduced their hours of work, and consequently, their take-home pay. They put the lowest bid in but the contract was given to one of cleansing firms which are now so prevalent within the NHS.

It is little wonder that the Government are so supportive of contract cleaning firms in hospitals. The report of the trade union co-ordinating committee says that 15 Conservative Members of Parliament have a declared direct interest in firms hunting for contracts in areas privatised in the NHS — cosmetic, laundry and catering services. Three of those Members are named, and another four act as consultants in the NHS. It is little wonder that they are the dailies on the Conservative Benches out to make a quick buck from the cleansing services, ancillary staff and the decimation of the NHS.

The job descriptions that have been drawn up and the rotas that have been issued are an insult to decent people seeking work in the NHS. On one questionnaire, potential workers were asked whether they were capable of carrying a two gallon bucket of water without straining themselves. For those who do not know, one gallon of water weighs 10 lb, so two gallons weigh 20 lb. A further question asked whether the applicant could work four hours without becoming unduly fatigued. It would be little wonder if someone who carried around one and a half stones in weight for four hours was affected.

A more sinister questionnaire was one which has been withdrawn because it asked women if they were on the pill and if they suffered from period pains. That is the length to which these gangster firms supported by Government Members are prepared to go in recruiting staff to work in areas that were previously staffed by the National Health Service. The tasks being given to these people are impossible, and that is creating low morale which affects patient care. They have no time to spend with patients. In the past they have been used as barrier nurses between

overstretched medical staff and patients. They are now skivvies if not navvies in the hospitals. Their numbers have been reduced and they have been given additional work, and the effect on patients and on standards of cleanliness are there for all to see.

Addenbrooke's hospital has had experience of blood and bones being left in the theatre, and it is no exception. Two years ago Fazakerley hospital lost three cleaners and now its operating theatres have been closed because of steam flies. That is a scandal. In that hospital in-patients who are in need of care and medical attention after treatment are having their recuperative period interferred with because clinics are being opened up, having been transferred from other parts of the hospital because of lack of space. That is having a deleterious effect on the patients.

Sefton general hospital in Liverpool increasingly has to rely on agency nurses. There are reported cases of people doing day staff duties in one hospital and reporting as agency nurses in other hospitals to do night shifts. That means they are working virtually 24 hours a day and that is because of the low pay and poor conditions offered by the agencies. The Government pays a great deal of attention to the Royal teaching hospital. It offers low pay and has cut its staff, and those things have a demoralising effect on staff and on the care of patients. People are leaving their jobs and are not being replaced and the health of patients is suffering.

The scandal of our waiting lists needs to be exposed. The College of Health inter-area comparisons show that in 1985 the Liverpool area health authority had on its waiting list for over 12 months 1,822 people. That means 23 per cent. of people treated in hospital have been on a waiting list for over 12 months. In south Sefton where I live, 800 people waited for more than a year, that is 12 per cent., and on the outskirts of Liverpool one health authority reported that it had a 72 per cent. patient waiting list for over a year.

As if that is not bad enough, to compound the crime the Tories and their henchmen are fiddling the figures of people on waiting lists. When a patient goes for his first interview and even before he has any in-patient treatment, his name is removed from the list of those needing hospital treatment. We know that the Tories massage the unemployment figures and now we know that they also massage the figures for hospital waiting lists while patients, many of them in pain, wait for operations and treatment.

We constantly hear from the Prime Minister and from the Ministers in the Department of Health and Social Services the myth that they are spending more "in real terms". That has been exposed by the experiences of those patients and workers at the sharp end of things. I do not know what other people will be doing during the recess, but I shall be campaigning with those hospital workers, introducing them to shop stewards in private industry and acquainting them with the real horrors and the prospects for the future of our National Health Service. We shall campaign for more resources for the Health Service. We will seek to get the Government to change their mind and will fight the proposals by the Government to cut finance to the Health Service.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am listening to this nonsensical diatribe by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields). He may disagree with the priorities decided by the district and regional health authorities, but it is quite undeniable that more funds are being provided by the Government for the Health Service. In the seven years that the Government have been in office a 20 per cent. increase in real terms has been achieved for the Health Service. Perhaps more is required, but the hon. Gentleman should direct more of his criticism to his own regional and district health authorities and give credit to the Government for the additional resources that they have provided.

Mr. Fields: It is fairly obvious that the resources in the constituency of the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) are not too good because he should have treatment for his ears. I have spelt out why the finance that the Government gloat about is not finding its way into the Health Service, and I have detailed the effect of cuts on people in the NHS.

The Opposition and the national executive of the Labour party do not hand down tablets of stone. At last year's annual conference, the Confederation of Health Service Employees tabled a resolution which did not get support and was remitted to the national executive. For my part and on behalf of those who are active and worried about the Health Service, I can only put forward as a solution to the problems of people in need of hospital treatment part of that resolution, which we will fight democratically to have included in Labour's programme. The resolution called for the deprivatisation of all privatised services in the National Health Service and for all lost jobs to be replaced. It also called for the abolition of all charges for health care, the abolition of the private health sector and the nationalisation of the pharmaceutical industry, placing it under democratic control and management with compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need. Those things are the only solution to the problems of the Health Service, and I shall be campaigning for them while Tory Members will be sunning themselves all over the globe.

8.46 pm

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): Before the House adjourns, attention should be focused on the threat to the environment of west London contained in the utterances during the last few days of the newly appointed chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority. Previous Governments have sought to strike a balance between the interests of the aviation industry and the comfort of people living in west London. They have sought to achieve that balance by limiting expansion at Heathrow airport.

When planning permission was given for construction of the fourth terminal, the Government gave two pledges. First, they pledged that when it opened, air transport movements would be limited to 275,000 a year, and secondly that there would be no fifth terminal. When the fourth terminal opened earlier this year the position had changed. The Government had had the benefit of the Eyre report and decided that in place of the balance provided by the limit of 275,000 movements and the pledge about the fifth terminal, there should be a completely new package of protection for people living in west London against the nuisance of noise.

One of the fundamental parts of the package set out in the inspector's report was a recommendation that there should be a complete ban on night movements of aircraft at Heathrow. The Government followed that report by accepting the benefit of additional air movements beyond

[Mr. Patrick Ground]

the limit that had been fixed. They followed the report by recognising the possibility of further expansion by way of a fifth terminal and set in train studies to implement in the best way possible the protection against noise that was recommended in the inspector's report.

Within the last few days the newly elected chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority has recommended that there should be an increase in night movements at Heathrow. He said that it did not matter if there are more movements if there is what he describes as quieter aeroplanes. These recommendations are completely at variance with the Eyre report. They are completely unacceptable to people in west London whose sleep is being disturbed by night flights. It is not too much for people to ask that they should be able to sleep between 11 pm and 6 am without being disturbed by aircraft noise. The new chairman has made a bad start by threatening to shake and disturb the balance which has been recommended between the interests of the air transport industry and those living in the neighbourhood of Heathrow. I hope that someone will explain to him during the recess that that is completely at variance with the spirit in which the Government have acted so far on the basis of the Eyre report.

8.50 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): There are many issues which we should be addressing on behalf of our constituents. Some of us were in the Chamber at 5 o'clock this morning addressing such issues, including Conservative Members.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Some of us were here until 5.30 am.

Mr. Douglas: I accept that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are many issues to be addressed and, with the leave of the House, I shall be speaking in an Adjournment debate tomorrow on an issue that affects my constituency.

There is a link between the important report of the Select Committee on Defence and that which my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) said in her excellent maiden speech. It is the responsibility of us all on both sides of the House to raise the tone of politics and political behaviour. The searchlight of the Select Committee's report casts light on the behaviour of No. 10 Downing street from 3 to 7 January.

I regret that the former Law Officer, the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival), is not in his place. He constructed a scenario of the Attorney-General's behaviour which suited his argument, but that is not what is addressed in paragraph 195 of the Select Committee's report. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman's scenario is correct, it is possible that another official was culpable. Therefore, the Attorney-General would have had to address his mind to what action, if any, should be taken in relation to that official, but I do not want to enter into that argument now.

The Select Committee on Defence has been tested, the House, in its wisdom, having tested its competence. There are pluses and minuses in the report and there are pluses and minuses also in Select Committee procedure. It is not possible to understand the tone or the feel of this from the Select Committee's report, but in my view Sir Robert Armstrong quickly grasped how to manoeuvre a Select Committee.

A Select Committee is not a court and when a witness is before one he is not necessarily subjected to intensive cross-examination. The members of a Select Committee —I have much respect for the able and fair chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins)—try to elicit views and evidence from a witness which they think will aid the inquiry, and Sir Robert appeared to be a competent witness.

I recall the press report that appeared in *The Guardian*, which suggested that the Select Committee had not done its job. Bearing in mind what it was trying to do and the report that appeared before the House, I suggest that it did its job. If nothing else emerges from the report other than the views that are set out in paragraph 214 on the head of the Civil Service, I think it can be said that the Committee has done its job. The paragraph states:

"It is to the Head of the Home Civil Service that all civil servants have to look for example and for a clear lead".

In the Westland instance, that lead was not given.

I am concerned—I trust that this is the concern of the whole House—that if Sir Robert Armstrong remains in his place, supported by the Prime Minister, the morale of the Civil Service will suffer. I know that it is difficult for Conservative Members to grasp. The major reason, however, for debating the Westland issue is to get to the roots of the interrelationship between the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Civil Service. A man who has allowed himself to be used in such a fashion and who has abused his position should not remain in office. If he were a Scot and had a Scottish background — for example, an Armstrong or a Douglas and a man of honour — he would resign.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Alan Williams.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West) *rose*——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) has referred to abuse. Has not this debate been an abuse of the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Winterton: Please let me advance my argument for a moment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot advance an argument when he is raising a point of order.

Mr. Winterton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is this debate not an opportunity for Back Benchers to raise matters which they consider to be of importance prior to the House rising? It is a debate in which they can advance reasons why——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have been in the Chair for one hour and 55 minutes and I have not heard anything said during that period that has been out of order.

Mr. Winterton: This debate has been used as a rehearsal for a debate on the report of the Select Committee on Defence.

8.58 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) on her excellent and succinct maiden speech. I look forward to hearing her when she feels even less constrained than today to be non-controversial. To respond to the point of order for the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), in answering the debate it would be difficult to do anything other than talk about Westland. The debate had been dominated by contributions from Back-Bench Members about Westland.

On that day after the leak, I went to No. 10 Downing street and handed in a letter demanding an inquiry into it. In that letter I congratulated the Prime Minister on turning an industrial relations problem into a constitutional crisis. The Select Committee's report has vindicated that assessment. It is a great pity that during our proceedings this evening we have not had the response of the main parties to the Select Committee's report.

It is a scandal to think that we have to wait three months before we have an opportunity to debate this subject. The Attorney-General should have been here today. In answer to my question he said that the first time he knew of the involvement of the then Secretary of State for Trade of Industry was 22 January. I accepted that. I am still inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt as I do not believe he would give an answer of that sort if he did not believe it to be true. However, I find that hard to reconcile with other things that have been pointed out.

The Attorney-General granted immunity, but he has never told us why. It is not as though the granting of immunity is normal in such a situation. Armstrong said that the only precedent—he has had a lifetime in the Civil Service—that he could recollect was in the case of Blunt. That is the only example which has arisen. In a written answer on 27 January—the Attorney-General had had time to consider it—he said:

"I was"—

not "I am", subsequently—

"also satisfied that there was in any event no possibility that proceedings would be instituted". — [*Official Report*, 27 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. *357*.]

The Attorney-General has not changed his position—he said the same thing in the answer that he released today:

"I had reason to believe that the . . . official concerned had acted in complete good faith,"

What does that mean? After all, this was not an ordinary leak and it was no ordinary letter—it was the Solicitor-General's letter. Law Officers' letters hold a unique position and only a Cabinet Minister could have given the authorisation to enable the official to say that she acted in complete good faith. At the very least, we would say that this peculiar judgment and the absence of a linking piece of evidence means that the Attorney-General should be here to explain his position. Otherwise we will be convinced that the whole leak inquiry was a time-wasting charade.

The former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry should have been here. After all, he knew that the leak inquiry was requested on 7 January, he knew that it was set up a week later and yet 15 days later he still had not owned up. Why did the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) not do the honourable thing? He is an eminent barrister and he should have confessed at that stage and thus avoided all the difficulties which he built up for himself and the Prime Minister.

Today, the Prime Minister has behaved in a typical fashion. She has been faced with questions which she has refused to answer and indeed she has answered in parallel. She has set up blocking positions to enable her to refuse to answer future questions in the House as she did for five months concerning Oman. When the right hon. Lady met her son in Oman she did not ask him why he happened to be there and it seems it never occurred to her to ask her own staff about the leak even though the press was full of stories about it emanating from the press office of the Department of Trade and Industry. The senior press officer of Government is a member of her office staff but it never occurred to her to ask him. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said that they live in commune, but it seems that they live in commune but not in communication. We have been left with a situation wherein we are bound to conclude that what we have had is a conspiracy of silence: Bernard Ingham knowing better than to tell the Prime Minister and she knowing better than to ask. That is the essence of what went on.

The questions still outnumber the answers and the probabilities discredit the protestations. We should not be leaving for three months without this issue being fully debated. Propriety requires explanation and integrity requires a candour that so far has been glaringly absent.

9.1 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I have but a handful of minutes in which to reply to this debate, thanks to characteristic charity on my part ot the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas). Therefore, I cannot deal with all the points as adequately and comprehensively as I would have wished.

However, there is one overwhelming responsibility which has been laid upon me by this debate and which I shall discharge at once.

I wish to congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) on her excellent maiden speech. Like many others, I am privileged to have known her father and her husband. Indeed, I was but a Tory apprentice in the miners room which has now been desecrated into the families room. There, in the early 1960s, Tom Swain and the hon. Lady's father gave me many insights into the practices of Parliament. Above all, I enjoyed the hon. Lady's reminiscence of the by-election. I am sure that there are few in this House who did not feel for her when confronted by those who strike the high moral tone whilst employing techniques which trivialise and demean. We come into this place believing that there is more to public life than that—indeed, the House should be an elevation of debate.

I noted the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice) about overseas aid. I appreciate the anxiety felt by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) regarding trucking charges at Heathrow and the threat to Manchester airport. He will also have heard my reply to the Leader of the Opposition regarding the Stalker affair.

I take note of what my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) said about the

[Mr. John Biffen]

recent acquisition of Distillers Company Limited by Guinness. He will be aware that the matter is now being considered within the context of self-regulation.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), aided by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), asserted the common Cornwall front. They are concerned about how matters will proceed in Cornwall and I am aware that all the hon. Members concerned have made representations to my hon. Friends in Government. I will certainly make sure that this evening's debate is drawn to their attention.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) made a thoughtful speech about unemployment and especially the problems which are implicit in the imbalance in our economy and the unreliability of unemployment statistics in revealing the true nature of the economy.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) gave us a view of the condition of the Health Service in Liverpool, but my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) reminded us that that was a controversial subject.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) has explained the understandable anxieties about aircraft movements in the south-east. All those points will be referred to my hon. Friends in government, as appropriate.

However, this debate was opened by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), who suggested in an amendment that we should perhaps defer the proposed recess arrangements to all intents and purposes to enable an instant debate on the fourth report of the Select Committee on Defence. I note the right hon. Gentleman's speech. It seemed to me that his anxiety was that if we went away this topic would wither — *[Laughter.]* I felt like laughing, but I was not so hostile as the hon. Member whose scornful and derisive comments put the matter exactly in this context. This issue will not wither.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), said that it would be with us in the autumn, and when joined by the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees)—[HON. MEMBERS: "Right hon. Member."] I apologise. I know that the right hon. Gentleman is very keen for status in the autumn of his life, and will get that way. However, there is no remote prospect of this issue sliding into obscurity. Therefore, the question is how we now best proceed to have it properly discussed and considered in a way that is appropriate to the work that has been undertaken by the Select Committee and the customary procedures of this House.

The first challenge must be the Government response when that has been received. The matter can then be further considered, and at questions this afternoon I indicated to the Leader of the Opposition that we would have all the facilities of the usual channels to reflect on how best the House can consider these things in a mature way rather than in that sleazy sense of gimmick whereby the Opposition hope to go off on a reasonably high note to their buckets and spades.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 135, Noes 230.

Division No. 280] **[9.07 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Chris Smith.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*

Batiste, Spencer
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Straf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising on Friday 25th July, do adjourn until Tuesday 21st October and that the House shall not adjourn on Friday 25th July until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses.

Building Societies Bill

Lords amendments considered

9.21 pm

Mr. Speaker: I understand that the Opposition Front Bench would like to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 14, 83, 127, and the amendment to the Lords amendment, and 146.

Lords amendments Nos. 1 to 13 agreed to.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. With the Lords amendments, we have another 200 amendments to the Bill which were considered in another place and now have to be considered by us. I feel that that is excessive in view of the fact that on Report we considered about 700 Government amendments after the Committee stage. This does not strike me as the most competent way in which to frame legislation, especially in view of the fact that the consideration of the amendments we are now dealing with was completed in another place only late last night. That means that the Third Reading debate is not yet available in *Hansard*, so we cannot take that into account as we consider the Lords amendments.

I put firmly on record the fact that the Bill seems to have been incompetently drafted at every conceivable stage. It is disgraceful that we should have another 200 or so amendments before us tonight.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the fact that the hon. Lady, like myself, will have found it difficult to deal with the great number of amendments to the Bill at various stages. However, the amendments mostly result from the Government's response to matters raised during the course of the Bill. Many of them are for the sake of good order in the legislation. For example, 33 of the amendments before the House tonight, as I have advised the hon. lady, are purely a consequence of consolidations of other legislation which has taken place this year. I am sure that she would not want the Bill to be enacted with inconsistencies of that sort. I accept that here have been many amendments and I regret that as much as the hon. Lady does. However, I equally think that it is right to get the Bill in good shape before it passes to the statute book.

Clause 12

CLASS 1 AND CLASS 2 ADVANCES: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS.

Lords amendment: No. 14, in page 19, line 5, leave out subsection (5).

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Dr. McDonald: The amendment focuses our attention again on the issue of the development of the secondary mortgage market. The Minister in the other place made it clear that the Government were not averse to the development of that market, and the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction said in this House that they had set up a study group to look into the implications of the development of that market. Although that announcement was left open ended in the House, it appears that the working party will report in the autumn and take into account as only part of its considerations the protection of consumers.

On Second Reading, in Committee and on Report the Government seemed to express the view that it was extremely important to protect consumers because with the development of this market a mortgagee could find his or her mortgage sold on from the building society to some financial institution or, indeed, a wealthy individual. In the past when a mortgagee has been in difficulties over the payment of his mortgage building societies have always gone out of their way to discuss those difficulties with the mortgagee and to rephase payments so that the mortgagee is not turned out of his or her home and does not find that the mortgage had been foreclosed. Now it appears that the study is more wide ranging than it had first appeared, that the Government have as only one consideration the need to protect consumers, and that they are not averse to the development of the market.

I remind the Minister that in the United States the market has been extremely well developed but not without difficulties, especially for consumers. The announcement was only given in the form of a written answer in this House whereas in the other place more information was given. I hope that the Minister will explain why the consideration of consumers' needs seems to be less important than they appeared to be from the Government's response earlier.

Mr. Ian Stewart: First, amendments Nos. 14 and 225 merely rearrange the text of the Bill and do not relate to the business of a secondary mortgage market.

It was perfectly fair of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) to raise the points. Indeed, she raised them on Second Reading when, because I was hard of hearing, I thought that she was referring to second mortgages. Since then we have discussed the matter extensively.

As the hon. Lady knows, I have had meetings with the Building Societies Association which, in relation to the potential transfer of mortgages granted by building societies, is anxious to arrange for a code of practice which would preserve the rights of existing mortgagors and those who take out mortgages on similar terms in future so that any type of mortgage for which there might be a transfer in the secondary market in future must contain explicit conditions. It must be evident and made clear to borrowers when they take out such a mortgage that the ownership of the right of mortgage might be transferred.

The hon. Lady is right. My hon. Friend the Minister of State announced that he would be instituting a wide-ranging study of this question. One reason for that is that it concerns not just building societies. I think it is quite clear that other lenders in the market are more likely to be providing funds on the basis that there would be an expectation of possible transfer than in the case of building societies, themselves. As she knows, a main reason for that is that, at least for now, most building society mortgages are based on the society's own rate of interest rather than an objectively determined market rate such as something connected with the London inter-bank offered rate or some rate of that kind independent of a particular institution.

She suggested the fact that other considerations needed to be taken into account somehow downgraded the interests of consumers. I would not want her to feel that

that is the case because that is not the Government's purpose. We have to bear in mind the fact that there are market aspects that need to be taken into account in provisions to deal with this area. It may or may not be the case that at some stage legislation would be needed. There is no presumption that it would be. I hope that it may be possible to regulate the market without that because it is often more flexible, but there is an open mind on that. The fact that other matters are taken into account in no way diminishes the concern of the Government to look after the consumer, the borrower, who pledges his or her house, which is often the person's main asset with, therefore, a very proper interest in ensuring that, by having it as security against the loan, the borrower is not in fact entering into a special arrangement with a different lender without being aware of the fact.

I shall direct my hon. Friend's attention to what the hon. Lady has said, and I am glad that she has had another opportunity to discuss it this evening.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 83: In page 84, line 6, at end insert—

"nor does subsection (1) above prohibit further disclosure of the information by the Secretary of State or the Department with the consent of the Commission."

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

9.30 pm

Dr. McDonald: I have selected, I must say somewhat arbitrarily, one of the amendments to clause 53 because the point relates not only to this amendment but to other amendments in the group. I hope that it will be all right for me to comment a little more generally.

Clause 53 is concerned with the disclosure of information by the commission. Since the commission serves as the supervisory or regulatory body for the building societies and since now the building societies will be engaged in other activities besides those of financing house purchase, those other activities will obviously be regulated by other supervisory bodies.

There is some difficulty here in that although some of the bodies referred to in clause 53 and the amendments have already been established—for example, the Bank of England—a number of other supervisory bodies that will have to regulate some of the new activities of building societies have not yet been established since they fall under the Financial Services Bill, which has not yet completed all its stages.

The point that I want to make concerns this problem, that obviously disclosure of information will be possible from the commission to the other bodies that are already in existence. I should like to know exactly what the proposals are, concerning the relationship of the building societies commission to regulatory bodies that have yet to be set up, and what details will be included in the Financial Services Bill. In the other place, concern was expressed about that point in relation to clause 53 and the various amendments that we are now considering. I should like to know exactly how much information will be passed to and fro, from one to the other. Under what sort of confidentiality and rules will it be passed from one such regulatory body to the other?

For example, in certain circumstances such information could be considered defamatory. There are such problems to be considered. Not all the self-regulating organisations that have yet to come properly into existence have been given legal immunity, so there is an enormous range of problems, which are not dealt with adequately in the Lords amendments to clause 53.

The Minister should explain to us how the clause, together with the amendments, is to relate to the Financial Services Bill. This also requires justification, although it is a more general point. Financial institutions now all engage in exactly the same range of financial activities, whether selling insurance, being responsible for the personal equity plan, selling mortgages and so on, yet each of those activities is to be supervised by bodies that are allegedly independent of each other. Now, not surprisingly, that independence is to be broken down by the exchange of information.

Mr. Ian Stewart: What the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) says is right. There will be provisions for the exchange of information between supervisory bodies. She said that she had chosen one amendment out of the group. Let me explain that the group itself consists of amendments Nos. 79, 83, 84, 86, 87, 94, 98, 102 and 104.

Those amendments are designed to provide a framework governing the onward disclosure by one supervisor of information received from another. Following the passage of the Building Societies Bill, the Financial Services Bill and the banking legislation that was foreshadowed in December's White Paper, there will, as the hon. Lady says, be a range of financial supervisors at work, with a range of powers.

In this country, we have chosen to have a supervisory structure that is based on the activity rather than the company or institution being supervised. It is done the other way round in the United States, where there is a supervisory authority in relation to a particular institution, sometimes more than one because they overlap and have both state and federal institutions. The Americans do it by institution whereas in the City of London we are doing it by activity.

It is therefore right to say that there will be a number of supervisors in some cases involved in dealing with the affairs of a particular building society or other institution in the City. As has already been announced, in each case there will be one supervisor who will fulfil the role of lead supervisor to ensure that all the activities of an institution are looked at together. The commission will be responsible for the great bulk of the business of building societies, but other matters will fall to be dealt with by the different supervisory bodies that are to be set up under the financial services legislation, when enacted.

Regulations will be made under clause 53(8) to designate at the appropriate time the Securities and Investments Board and the SROs to receive information as part of this network of supervisory authorities.

The basic principle of the system that these amendments describe is that when one supervisor passes information to another, the second operator should not be inhibited from using if for his own supervisory purposes. In some cases this may involve further disclosure—for example, to an appeal tribunal or to a professional body with which the first supervisor has no dealings in the normal course of events. However, information would have been supplied to the supervisor, on the understanding that it would be subject to strict confidentiality restrictions.

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

A potential problem therefore arises when the second supervisor wishes to disclose the information in a way which would not be open to the first supervisor who originally supplied it. The amendments to clause 53 are designed to deal with this problem by providing that any information supplied by the commission to another supervisor may be disclosed by the recipient, but subject to his own confidentiality restrictions and provided that the commission gives its consent. That is the way in which the matter is designed to be controlled.

This should work out satisfactorily in practice. The amendments to clause 54 provide for a reciprocal arrangement for disclosure by the commission of information obtained by the Bank of England. Further disclosure by the commission would be possible, again with the consent of the Bank of England. The power being framed in general is to allow furtherance of the commission's own functions.

I hope that I have sufficiently explained the points that the hon. Lady raised.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 82

AUDITORS' DUTIES TO COMMISSION AND RELATED RIGHTS

Lords amendment: No. 127, in page 128, line 39, at end insert—

"(9) The Treasury, may by order impose on the auditors of building societies an obligation to furnish to the Commission, in such circumstances as may be prescribed in the order, relevant information available to them of such descriptions as may be prescribed in the order; and it shall be the duty of any auditor to furnish information to which the obligation extends notwithstanding any obligation of confidence incumbent on him.

(10) The power to make an order under subsection (9) above is exercisable by statutory instrument but no such instrument shall be made unless a draft of it has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament."

(11) In subsection (9) above "relevant information" means information relating to the conduct of the business of building societies or their subsidiaries or associated bodies."

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): I want to raise only one point on amendment No. 127, which is another expression of the Government's approach to their attempt to stamp out fraud. That applies to the proposals relating to both banking supervision and the building societies. Amendment No. 127 places a duty on the auditor

"to furnish information to which the obligation extends notwithstanding any obligation of confidence incumbent on him."

The following subsection in amendment No. 127 provides that the power to make an order has to be

"laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament."

That provides us with an opportunity to debate this issue on a future occasion. However, before we reach that stage, I trust that the Government will consider again their approach to auditors. Auditors have a primary responsibility to the institution concerned to inspect the accounts. In the case of a company the obligation is primarily to the shareholders. A conflict of interest could therefore arise between the duty of an auditor to carry out the work that he has been hired to do and this particular duty that the Government seek to impose upon auditors. I refer to the auditors of building societies and to the auditors of other bodies. I stress again that, apart from the most obvious and blatant instances, it is not the duty of an auditor to act as a kind of detective. That should be the job of whichever regulatory agency supervises the financial institution. In this case it is the commission rather than the auditor.

9.45 pm

Therefore, I trust that before the Government introduce an order such as this they will reconsider the matter, since I know that they have been approached by auditors as individuals and companies and by auditors' organisations. It is wrong to expect auditors to be detectives on the cheap for the Government. In their efforts to stamp our fraud, the Government should ensure that proper regulatory bodies are set in place with proper staff to equip them to carry out the task.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) has mentioned another important area of the Bill which is worth further discussion. I remind the hon. Lady of the comments made by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 9 June. He said:

"I have given especially careful consideration to the . . . circumstances in which an auditor should be expected to report on his own initiative to a supervisor." — [*Official Report*, 9 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. 45.]

He went on to say—this was said in the context of the Financial Services Bill—but the general principles apply equally here—

"I have concluded that there should be no general duty placed on auditors in the Bill to report to supervisors. The particular circumstances in which a report should be made need to be carefully defined. I believe that this is best achieved by professional guidance and I look to the professional accountancy bodies, in consultation with the supervisors, to draw up such guidance. But an amendment to the Bill will be brought forward to give the Secretary of State a reserve power to lay down rules obliging auditors to report in certain circumstances to the supervisors. Such a power would be invoked only if suitable professional guidance was not issued."—[*Official Report*, 9 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. 45.]

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State added that a parallel measure for banks and building societies was being considered by Treasury Ministers. That is the case. The Government believe that this same reserve power would be desirable in the Building Societies Bill because of the great importance of effective communication between building society auditors, who must visit their societies regularly and may be the first to detect danger signals, and the commission as the supervisor.

It is not just a question of fraud. The stability of the institution may be at risk and so therefore, may be the funds of depositors. The Government believe that, in the case of building societies and other financial companies, such matters are best dealt with by the auditors and the professional bodies involved. We intend that the power should be exercised only by the Treasury if the profession fails to produce an effective code of practice. It is much better for the whole matter to be dealt with in a more informal fashion. The accountancy profession now recognises that that is our intention and welcomes it.

Equally, we cannot foresee in detail how supervisory needs may develop, as the institutions change in a fast-moving market place, so it is right that the exercise of any power in the Bill should be available, subject to the affirmative resolution procedure. In saying that, I assure the hon. Member for Thurrock and the House that we would give the most careful consideration, before introducing such a measure, to whether to introduce it and in what form. We do not intend to introduce such a measure now. We believe it is right, however, in view of potential uncertanties, that there should be such a power in the Bill. Whether it must be implemented later would have to be considered at the time, but we would think most carefully about it before introducing it, and would not do so without consultation.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 98

REGULATED TERMS ETC.: DISTRIBUTIONS AND SHARE RIGHTS

Lords amendment: No. 146, in page 151, line 18, at end insert—

"(7A) Where, in connection with any transfer, rights are to be conferred on members of the society to acquire shares in priority to other subscribers, the right shall be restricted to those of its members who held shares in the society throughout the period of two years which expired with the qualifying day; and it is unlawful for any right in relation to shares to be conferred in contravention of this subsection.

(7B) Where the successor is an existing company, any distribution of funds to members of the society, except for the distribution required by subsection (2)*(b)* above, shall only be made to those members who held shares in the society throughout the period of two years which expired with the qualifying day; and it is unlawful for any distribution to be made in contravention of the provisions of this subsection.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That this House doth agree, with the Lords in the said amendment.

Dr. McDonald: Fortunately, my comments on both parts of the Lords amendment will be brief. It appears that the amendment is designed to make it even more difficult for building societies to convert into public limited companies. I do not disapprove of that intention because I do not believe that building societies should be able to convert from mutual organisations into plcs. Perhaps the Minister would like to explain why the amendment appears at this late stage and what it is intended to do.

Mr. Stewart: Conversion has been a matter of difference between the two sides of the House, but there has been no difference about how it should be done. We agree that it should not be made easy for people in the market place to move funds from one society to another in the hope of being able to influence the conversion of a society into a limited company. It should not be easy for them to vote for that process and obtain short-term benefit from doing so, while expecting to move their funds off to another society. Such a risk was clear from certain events in the United States and we have been anxious to ensure that it should not be possible when the Bill is enacted.

The hon. Lady asked me why the amendment is needed. It is a technical matter. Lords amendments Nos. 146 to 150 would add an additional limitation on cash distributions in a conversion. They are designed to apply to transfers to existing companies—if an existing deposit taker receives the business of a building society which is undergoing conversion to corporate status. Cash distributions in such circumstances must be limited to members who have held shares throughout the two-year qualifying period.

Like the Opposition, the Government are anxious that there should be adequate safeguards to ensure that conversions happen for proper reasons of commercial development and are not decided by the prospect of possible short-term financial gain such as I have described. We have made it clear all along that we regard it as important that conversion provisions should prevent speculative flows between societies on rumours of an impending conversion.

Clause 98 already contains a considerable number of limitations on cash distributions and other benefits to members at the time of conversion. However, as the Bill stands without these amendments, it does not cover one particular area—it does not put a limit on who may be paid a cash distribution in the event of a transfer of a business to an already existing society or body. It is clearly important that it should. Otherwise, for example, one society could try to tempt investors into it in order to obtain new members who would then vote in favour of a conversion with the promise of an immediate cash bonus. Obviously that would be highly undesirable and the amendments would put it beyond doubt that they would not be able to qualify for a bonus in those circumstances.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Civil Protection

9.55 pm

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): During my many years of service to my constituency in the House this is the first occasion on which I have had the good fortune to be drawn first in the ballot for the Consolidated Fund debate. In fact, it is the first time that I have ever won a ballot since I have been in the House. That is the result of fortune but it certainly is the result not of fortune but of a reasonable, responsible and constructive viewpoint that my deliberate choice of subject, which I commend to the House, is that of civil protection.

This is a subject which has occupied the attention of the House on several occasions recently. I take this opportunity of placing on record a warm and generous tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), who, with such skill, presented the comprehensive measure, the Civil Protection in Peacetime Act 1986. He has been ably supported by Members of all parties. However, if you will allow me, Mr. Speaker, I should like to take the opportunity to pay particular tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) for his dedication to the subject. That reflects the greatest possible credit upon him and the constituency that he serves with such distinction.

In recent years, civil protection, after a period of relative quiet, has become universally acclaimed as an issue which commands support on both sides of the House and among the electorate whom we serve.

I was particularly pleased that the Government's decision to introduce regulations in 1983 was as a result of the failure of several local authorities to take reasonable action to promote this vital service and introduce the training which was required. I notice that my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) is in his seat and he, in particular, has taken great interest in that aspect of civil protection.

It is my considered opinion that the main thrust of the proposals was to place an obligation on local authorities to do a number of things. First, they should establish and keep under review plans for the continuation of essential services in an emergency. There is a genuine need to arrange a comprehensive training schedule. Before I came to this House, I attended several courses on civil defence training. They were useful in all sorts of ways when facing crises such as one might find on a motorway or in a more local difficulty. Such training should be arranged for the staff of local authorities, because in a state of emergency the local authority staff would be the lifeblood in maintaining services.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion for the Adjournment in the name of the Prime Minister may be proceeded with, though opposed, until Eight o'clock in the morning.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

Dr. Blackburn: Local authorities and their staff have a vital role to play, and we have a responsibility to ensure that they are trained in these matters. However, that is not enough, because we have a vital role to play in making arrangements in the organisation, control and assistance of people who come forward as civil protection volunteers. We should have a positive policy of not only providing but designating centres for civil protection.

I would welcome the comments of the Minister of State who is to reply to this debate about the present position. That would be helpful to all hon. Members interested in this subject. I am sure that the entire House will salute the manner in which the Minister of State has undertaken his civil protection duties.

I also place on record my pleasure at the publication this month of a most excellent document entitled "The Planned Programme for the Implementation of Civil Defence, General and Local Authority Function Regulations 1983". I commend this publication to the House because it is saturated with common sense and excellent ideas. If those ideas were implemented it would be a tremendous step forward.

The programme that we wish to see would not come about unless adequate finance were made available. During my research into this subject I was pleased to note that the Government have supported such a programme. I understand that the present commitment to civil protection exceeds £1 million. In addition, some £12 million has been allocated to local authorities to implement these proposals.

I had the privilege to serve as a local councillor for 12 years before I was elected to this House and I am always cautious about local authorities being given grant aid, especially for something like civil protection. I am anxious to learn from the Minister of State that we are getting value for money from this £12 million investment, because I attach great importance to that.

The Government's case for civil protection is overwhelming. I am confident that if they present their arguments to the public boldly and with confidence they will get a wonderful response and that there will be considerable support from all reasonable and responsible people who are anxious to exercise their responsibility to society.

It is with pleasure that I tell the House that the finances are available. Having established beyond question the need for such protection, it would be valuable for the debate if we were to determine what dangers we face as a community for which these services are vital beyond words. One area which could cause concern is a major industrial accident. I speak with some feeling on this aspect because I have the honour to serve a constituency in the heart of the industrial west midlands. Industrial technology continues to probe the frontiers of knowledge. As elected Members of the House, we have a solemn responsibility to take positive action.

Industrial safety techniques often follow in the wake of a disaster. We must not allow that to happen. Far too often a disaster occurs and eventually a report is presented explaining the safety measures that could have been taken. I read too many reports on industrial accidents which are probably written by people with first class honours degrees in hindsight. Hindsight is not good enough when confronting an industrial accident. Within the last few weeks in my constituency a major explosion occurred at a factory.

Hon. Members serving their constituents are responsible for taking positive action. It would be irresponsible in the extreme not to take measures designed for the safety

of us all. My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) feels particularly strongly about this, and his contribution to the debate on the Civil Protection in Peacetime Bill was outstanding. We shall all remember it.

There is also the possibility of a major climatic disaster in which the service of civil protection would be of value. My detailed research of the records available has revealed to me that in the United Kingdom we are not free from major climatic disasters. Our essential services are highly vulnerable to snow, flood and storm damage. Only a few days of blizzard conditions are necessary to disrupt large parts of open country in the north, Wales and the south-west.

Some conclusive evidence was produced when Devon, to its advantage, discovered that the presence of trained and organised civil protection volunteers can be vital in saving lives and reducing suffering. That is the hallmark of a caring society. I seek to promote it through the medium of this debate which I have the privilege of introducing tonight.

Positive planning for disasters involving industry, climate and, dare I say, terrorism is essential. I remember the excellent service following the Birmingham bombings in 1974.

I must now clearly show that a risk exists to a significant part of the United Kingdom's population. Any government or local authority which fails to take adequate measures to protect its people fail in its responsibilities. This, I say with some conviction, I would condemn.

There are councillors, elected by the public, some of whom have perhaps fallen in their standards by the acceptance of one-sided propaganda, and they are failing in their duties. The Government must use their resources simply to ensure that the truth is equally presented.

It would be unfair beyond belief if I did not take a moment to pay a tribute to all the men and women who give their time, services, gifts and talents in support of civil protection in this country. They deserve the commendation of this House, and I salute them for their efforts.

We must not allow a disaster of the magnitude of Bhopal or a terrorist attack to bring home to the Government and the public the reality of the threat which, God forbid, could confront us as a nation. Action now, with the wisdom of experience, could save hundreds of lives and casualties and could reduce considerable suffering. It is my prayer that positive action will be taken, and I look to the Minister for a positive and enthusiastic response to this debate which I have had the honour of promoting. For that fact alone I have discharged my responsibility, because we must reveal the caring attitude that is part of the deep and well-proven philosophy of the party of which I am a member. I commend this debate to the House.

10.11 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The hon. Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) has raised an interesting subject. I want to examine the term that has been used to describe the debate. He refers to civil protection, which I understand to mean protection of the civilian population.

The hon. Gentleman has raised the local authority aspects of civil protection. I want to raise the security services aspects, particularly the activities of MI5 in this area. It, too, would justify its existence on the basis that its function is to pursue policies of protecting the wider population from what it and the Government believe to be external and unreasonable influences.

Much of my case is based on the excesses of the security services, particularly the reported activities of Catherine Massiter. This matter has already been alluded to in a number of articles in the media—certainly last year—and I wish to comment on it, especially in relation to the whole question of protection of the civil population and civil rights.

Miss Massiter tells us that, from 1981 until December 1983, she had the task of conducting the service's investigation into Communist and other forms of so-called subversive influence and activity in the peace movement, including in particular the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. During this period she became concerned that the task that she as an intelligence officer had been called upon to perform, and the use to which the information that she had gathered was being put, were guided by considerations not solely related to the defence of the realm. She felt that the scale and nature of the investigations that were being undertaken into the peace movement, and into the CND in particular, were determined more by the latter's political importance than by the real security significance of subversive elements in it.

Miss Massiter now tells us that, in the gathering of information about movements, contacts and activities of persons classified as subversives, files have been opened on people who came to the attention of the service as subversive.

This information came to hand in a number of ways —for example, through a police report of a meeting of such an organisation, mention in a publication produced by such an organisation in a context which suggested that the person was a supporter, or through a mail or telephone intercept on a known subversive individual or organisation from which it appeared that that person was a supporter. Once a permanent file was opened, notification of that fact was normally sent to the special branch attached to the subject's local police authority. On occasion, but not invariably, the police may have been asked to make an investigation to clarify or supplement available information otherwise they would just be asked to report——

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder if you could clarify the matter? I thought that this debate was on civil protection — that is, protection of the civilian community from peace-time emergencies. The speech of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) appears to be related to the totally different subject of civil liberties. I therefore seek your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is any Member of the House now at liberty to raise matters to do with civil liberties at large or is the debate, as I understood it, to be kept within the narrower confines of civil protection against peace-time emergencies?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): As the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) is aware, the subjects are listed but we are on the Adjournment, as it were, so I am bound to allow a fairly wide debate. I am sure the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will relate what he is saying to the subject that has been chosen for discussion.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is precisely correct. I commenced my speech by commenting on the nature of the short title of the debate. It provided me with the opportunity that I wanted to raise this matter. If the hon. Member for Dudley, West had wished to confine his debate more specifically, I am sure he would have lengthened his short title to ensure that people such as myself could not raise in this debate the matters which I intend to raise.

Unless the police had been asked to make an investigation they would only be asked to report to MI5 if the subject came to their attention. In the normal course of events, the opening of a file would not lead to active investigation of the subject. Information relating to the subject would be recorded on the file if it came to hand through the usual sources available to the service — police and agent reports, intercepts and publications.

The principal reason for assembling information was for the purpose of vetting for employment in Government service which involved regular access to classified information. From the files, the service would also prepare periodic reports, for example on CND, which would be circulated to interested Government Departments and police forces.

During the later 1960s and until the mid-1970s, CND was classified as subversive by virtue of being a Communist-dominated organisation — known members of the Communist party had a large measure of control over CND. In consequence, anyone joining CND was assumed to be a Communist sympathiser and a file would be opened recording them as such.

In the late 1970s it was recognised, within the service, that the leadership of CND was no longer dominated by members of the Communist party and it could no longer be reasonably regarded as subversive in the manner described. From then on it was regarded as a Communist-penetrated organisation. In consequence, MI5 studies should have been limited to those members who are also members of the Communist party or to other persons recognised as subversive. Although existing files were not to be destroyed, action would henceforth be taken on existing files only in respect of people who fell into one of those subversive categories in their own right.

Nevertheless, once CND began to grow in the late 1970s, MI5's study of it increased. Investigation of it virtually became Miss Massiter's whole task — indeed, that was the postion by the time she left the service. Miss Massiter found that, in order to do her job properly, she had to collect information on CND as a whole and be aware of what CND as an organisation was doing. The ostensible purpose for that was that she could analyse what were and were not the effects of subversive influence.

It was suggested to the service that CND had adopted policies which were also espoused by certain subversive organisations. That was itself evidence that the influence of subversives over CND was greater than the number of their members within the organisation might suggest. Miss Massiter's studies of CND and its members had to take account of arguments of this nature.

Similarly, it was felt within the service that officers were likely to be questioned about the true political affiliation of Mrs. Joan Ruddock, who became chair of CND in 1983. It was fully recognised by the service that she had no subversive affiliations and therefore should not be recorded under any of the usual subversive categories. In fact, she was recorded as a contact of a hostile intelligence service after giving an interview to a Soviet journalist based in London who was suspected of being a KGB intelligence officer.

In Joan Ruddock's file, MI5 recorded special branch references to her movements—usually public meetings—and kept press cuttings and the products of mail and telephone intercepts obtained through active investigation of other targets, such as the Communist party and John Cox. There were police reports recording her appearances at demonstrations or public meetings. There were references to her also in reports from agents working, for example, in the Communist party. These would also appear in her file.

Other individuals such as Monsignor Bruce Kent, CND general secretary, and Barbara Eggleston, national organiser of Christian CND, were already recorded as Communist sympathisers when CND was classified as a subversive organisation in the mid-1960s to mid-1970s. MI5 continued to record information on its files. As time went on, MI5 perceived it as more than ever necessary that it should be able to answer precisely whatever questions were asked about CND and its subversive penetration.

One of the means used was the introduction of an agent, Mr. Harry Newton—this has already been made public—who found his way into CND's headquarters. He joined CND in 1982 and his first job for MI5 was to attend CND annual conferences. MI5 regarded it as important to know as soon as possible after a conference who the new people on the national council were so that it could make its usual breakdown of how many subversives were on it and pass the information along to the interested parties in Whitehall. Apart from providing a list of members of the national council, the agent would also give his impressions of people he had met at the conference and notes would be put on their files.

After the 1982 conference, Mr. Newton became a volunteer at CND headquarters. He carried out odd jobs such as addressing envelopes. He would provide MI5 with general information about the activities of CND headquarters and the people he met there. For instance, he had quite a strong opinion that Bruce Kent might be a crypto-Communist. That sort of information would have been noted in Bruce Kent's file, although MI5 had its doubts about its accuracy.

Mr. Newton also provided MI5 with copies of CND literature. On one occasion he provided a diagram of the layout of CND's offices. His brief was to report on the Communists and Trotskyites in CND. He knew very few of them personally, however, because most of them were much younger than he. Despite this, it was still thought valuable to have someone with access to CND headquarters. This was all in the name of civil protection by Britain's security services. They call it civil protection.

When the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) became Secretary of State for Defence——

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I fail to understand how the speech of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) relates to the subject that we are considering. I hope that you can guide me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not understand how the hon. Gentleman's remarks can possibly be within the terms of the Adjournment debate of my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is the usual practice to keep to the subject that is listed. This is an Adjournment debate and, as long as the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) relates his remarks to the subject of the debate, I cannot rule him to be out of order. He should, however, in fairness to the hon. Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn), who was fortunate in the ballot, come a bit closer to the subject that has been listed for debate.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I note closely what you say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am doing precisely that. I am making every effort to keep specifically to the short title, as it were, of the debate, which is civil protection. The hon. Member for Dudley, West approached the matter from the local authority position and I am dealing with it from the security service position, which I think is most relevant to the proceedings.

When the right hon. Member for Henley became Secretary of State for Defence in January 1983, the director-general of MI5 requested a lengthy briefing paper on CND as he, the director-general, anticipated that the Secretary of State would ask him questions about CND when he came to brief him. Such briefing of a new Minister on security matters relevant to his Department takes place as a matter of routine.

In March 1983, the right hon. Member for Henley established a special unit within the Ministry of Defence called the defence secretariat—DS19—whose task was to combat CND propaganda on unilateral nuclear disarmament. Miss Massiter's branch director was approached by a senior official from DS19 who requested information about the subversive, political affiliations of leading members of CND, including members of the national council and people working for CND.

It was decided by the director-general or his deputy that MI5 could not give information from any secret or classified sources. Accordingly, Miss Massiter was instructed by her superiors to go through MI5 files and extract non-classified information from published sources on any extreme Left-wing affiliations of CND leaders. She prepared a report, which was passed to DS19.

The criteria used by successive Home Secretaries governing the interception of telephone communications are set out in the Birkett report of October 1957. I do not intend to go into that. I am sure that hon. Members who are interested in the matters will examine the report, which is in the Library.

In or about February 1983, Miss Massiter received a message via the branch director that the deputy director-general of MI5 was prepared to consider favourably an application for a telephone intercept on a member of the Communist party within CND. John Cox, a vice-president of CND, was selected, since he was well known as a member of the Communist party and had been involved in CND practically since its inception. Also, he lived in Wales and would need to be in frequent telephone contact with CND headquarters.

However, MI5 had absolutely no evidence, as required by the guidelines, that he was concerned in any criminal activity or that he was engaged in any major subversive or espionage activity that was likely to injure the national interest. On the contrary, nothing from MI5's coverage of the Communist party and its peace committee gave Miss Massiter and her colleagues grounds to suspect that they were manipulating CND.

Miss Massiter's application for a warrant to monitor Mr. Cox's telephone communications was made in April 1983. It simply stated that Mr. Cox was a long-term member of the Communist party, and prominent in CND, and that it was desired to investigate his activities to ascertain whether the Communist party was manipulating CND in a clandestine way.

In August 1983, the Home Secretary signed the warrant. It was renewed after one month and was still in force when Miss Massiter left in December 1983. Perhaps the Minister of State, Home Office, in his reply to this important matter of security services and responsibilities for civil protection, can say whether those warrants are still in force. Perhaps the Minister would care to check with the civil servants so that we may have a well-considered reply. I should prefer a reply tonight from the Dispatch Box rather than a letter.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): I do not wish to prolong the hon. Gentleman's speech on that point. I assure him that I shall not be replying to the points that he has made.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That shows those who observe our proceedings what importance the Government give to such matters. Perhaps that is why hon. Members such as myself must raise them in the House of Commons. Very little seems to be happening in this area. It is about time that we in Parliament drew the teeth on the question of MI5 activities. The public demand that some action be taken.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, South): Surely the hon. Gentleman does not suggest that we should not have services that ensure the protection of citizens. The function of MI5 is to ensure that subversives do not spring surprises on us.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right, but with one proviso—within the law.

As I have said, the warrant was renewed after one month and was still in force when Miss Massiter left in December 1983. Pursuant to the warrant, an intercept was placed on Mr. Cox's telephone in about August 1983, and Miss Massiter saw the products of the intercept in the form of transcripts of recorded telephone conversations. As Mr. Cox lived in Wales, there was a fair amount of telephone communication between him and CND headquarters. He would routinely be in contact with the office and, for example, with Bruce Kent and Joan Ruddock. Accordingly, without intercepting their telephone communications, MI5 obtained a fair amount of information about their attitudes on a wide range of topics concerning CND.

MI5 obtained very little information about Mr. Cox that it did not already have, although it was perhaps a little more detailed. Miss Massiter's own assessment before the check would have been that he worked with CND because he was a committed CND member rather than because he wanted to further the interests of the Communist party. Of course, that was not the view expressed by those in the security services who take decisions in these matters and who wish to pursue people in the way that these people have been pursued.

Something is wrong. I have never doubted the need for a security service. We live in a democratic society and we all know that we have a duty to protect that society in

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

every way and that we must use whatever mechanisms will ensure that—but always within the law. I have drawn the attention of the House to a series of incidents which do not fall within the law. MI5 has been involved in excesses. The other day I used parliamentary privilege to break an injunction in one case, which effectively I believe I have done. This case is one of probably many.

Miss Massiter broke ranks. Probably many people in the security services who see illegality every day want to speak but feel that they cannot do so. I put it to the House that we need far more control over these matters. I am no longer confident that the state is carrying out its responsibilities in the way that it should. Civil protection means protecting the civilian population. It does not mean provoking them by interfering with civil rights. That is wrong.

The Minister of State has two options. He can reply to the debate and assure me that all these matters will be looked into, although he refuses to reply in respect of one matter on which I requested a reply. Alternatively, he can say, "I intend to ignore what the hon. Gentleman says." If he does that, he will only create more suspicion. I hope that the hon. Gentleman takes the former option. If he takes the latter, people will know where he stands on the question of civil rights and the excesses of this organisation.

10.31 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) on coming first in the Consolidated Fund ballot and on his sensible and humanitarian attitude in choosing civil defence as his subject. Civil protection is a question which is particularly close to Conservative Members, and in this regard I am talking about the replacement for civil defence.

I listened with interest to the comments of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on his concept of civil protection, which is rather different from that accepted by most of us. The CND's role is of some notoriety.

There is no doubt that it is the public's right and the Government's duty to provide proper civil protection. For the first time since 1945, the public have taken on board the importance of civil protection, especially arising out of the Chernobyl accident. Until then, a number of local authorities were able to bamboozle their electorates into believing that, by erecting notices declaring nuclear-free zones, they would somehow escape such a problem. Of course, the Chernobyl accident has clearly shown what rubbish that concept is.

The local authorities' campaign is not carried out on a shoestring. They go to vast expense to indulge their interest in "nuclear-free" attitudes. The Greater London council—lamented by some—spent over £250,000 on producing "London Under Attack", simply to delay the need to address itself to the civil defence and protection requirements of the London population.

I would like to congratulate the Government on taking a stand in relation to civil protection which is long overdue. Very little had been achieved until 1979 and that we have to thank a previous Government—I hardly need say Labour Government — who set about dismantling civil defence many years ago when they relied upon a policy of mutually assured destruction. They felt that because anyone was able to send nuclear weapons to any part of the world there was no need in future to provide any form of civil protection or civil defence for the population. Therefore, they set about desmantling this important aspect of local government.

The criminal irresponsibility we have had in recent years in the way in which local authorities have quite blatantly tried to push their obligations to one side has cost the Government a good deal of time and expense in trying to redress the balance. Of course, the balance has to be redressed, because if one part of the country conscientiously disharges its duty by providing adequate civil defence, that it is all very well. It costs the local ratepayers money. However, if the need to use it arises, what would happen to all the people living in areas where no provision had been made? Would they stay where they were or would they pack their bags and flood into the areas that had made provision demanding that they should be looked after? I think that the latter would be the case. They certainly would not stay at home and say, "We did not pay for this in days gone by so it would be wrong for us to take advantage of the preparations sensibly entered into by others". For that good reason the Government have to take the matter up and ensure that there is an even level of provision throughout the country, I was pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West say this evening that the figure for investment now exceeds £100 million.

One of the first major milestones achieved by the Government was in 1983 with the civil defence regulations. A large measure of responsiblity was placed on local authorities. It was made absolutely clear what was required of them and why they were required to make preparations. The skeleton staff of officials that local authorities had carried forward over the previous 17 years desperately needed the boost that the Government gave in 1983 to show that their efforts were appreciated and that they were an integral part of the community.

The question of the adequacy of civil defence has been of particular interest to me over the past four years. Over those years I have had the honour to be the chairman of the National Council for Civil Defence. During that time we have had a list of 16 objectives. I am pleased to say that most of them have been achieved by the Government. I shall go through them.

We asked the Government to support openly and positively the case for civil defence. That was done in the manifesto for the previous election and gave rise to the support given to my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) in preparing and achieving the Civil Protection in Peacetime Act 1986.

We asked that more information be given to the public on the effects of nuclear and chemical weapons and protective measures, and that the code of secrecy be lifted from civil defence. Since then, no fewer than six sets of publications have been issued which is a major advance.

We asked for additional funding to be made available for civil defence. I have already said that the figure now exceeds £100 million a year, and I hope that it will rise further. We should compare our expenditure on civil defence with that on defence, on which £17,000 million a year is spent. I always remind colleagues that, when we ask our service men to fight on our behalf, we retain responsibility for their wives and families. If we are to provide adequately for their dependants we should take

greater care of them than we have in the past. We must ensure that the type of facilities made available to service men to deal with problems likely to arise abroad should certainly be provided for their families. We cannot possibly expect them happily to fight on our behalf, if we do not look after their families who are left behind. That is an important issue which we should emphasise to those who believe that civil defence can make do with the funds at present made available.

We asked that local authorities be given a statutory duty to raise, organise and train civil defence volunteers at community level. That was provided for in the 1983 regulations. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will encourage expansion in that sphere. He will remember that in the past I have suggested that deputy lieutenants should be enrolled to that end. He knows, as I do, that there is no one like a volunteer to bring pressure on his elected representatives to take due note of what he is doing. It would be a major advance in the interests of civil protection if we were to encourage a considerable expansion in the recruitment of civil defence volunteers.

We asked that modern radiation monitoring equipment be made available for issue down to community level and for training civil defence worthies. Much improved equipment has recently been issued, and today at question time my hon. Friend the Minister promised to consider the possibility of making available to the public an easy comparison of the type of radiation doses from x-rays, aeroplane travel, the sun, living in a granite house, eating ordinary food, and from many other sources. That has been done effectively by the Japanese and I commend it to him. It can be illustrated extremely effectively in pictorial form to show exactly what levels of radiation are inclined to emanate from an accident of the Chernobyl type and how that compares with everyday life.

We asked that centralised guidance be given on training civil defence volunteers and the production of training materials. That is being prepared at the civil defence college at Easingwold.

We asked that planning assumptions be revised to take account of a substantially reduced warning time for the outbreak of hostilities. That has been reduced from three weeks to seven days.

We said that planning for peacetime emergencies should be included in local authority civil defence responsibilities and that the all-hazards rationale for civil defence should be accepted. The latter is a main platform of Government policy. We asked that the name of the Home Defence college be changed to Civil Defence college, and that was conceded. We said that civil defence resources should be concentrated on planning for survival at community level, a major start has been made in that area.

We asked for the wartime home defence executive to be re-established. We have not yet succeeded in persuading the Government to take action on that, but we remain hopeful. We asked for a comprehensive and effective shelter and evacuation policy to be adopted. Again, that is subject to a survey. We hope that, as a result of the survey, the Government will see the wisdom of and need for such a policy. We said that the Government should make advances in the propaganda war on civil defence by presenting their case better. Among other measures, we said that they should consider changing the name of civil defence to civil protection. That has been answered with a new, major programme which will begin in October. Of course, the term "civil protection" is moving towards general acceptance.

We said that it should be assumed that chemical weapons would be used against the United Kingdom and we contended that measures should be taken to protect the civil population. That has been conceded. We also asked that the international civil defence emblem, as approved in the Geneva convention, be adopted in the United Kingdom, and that has been accepted. We asked that the 100 per cent. grant, outside the rate support grant, be approved for local authority civil defence expenditure. That has been conceded for some items. We shall continue to press the Government for that concession, which is an essential ingredient in an effective, nationwide civil defence plan.

Therefore, we have some reason to be satisfied with our work during the past four years and with the positive response, not only from this Minister of State, but from his two predecessors. We are delighted with that response.

Several items remain outstanding, one of which is the introduction of a civil defence inspectorate. To have a proper and effective overall system, we must have an inspectorate that can say who measures up to the Government's requirements and who does not. Such a system is readily accepted in the Territorial Army, which used to be funded at local level but it is now funded nationally. The Territorial Army expects uniform standards and has its own inspectorate.

Whatever happens, this important subject must be taken seriously. The Government have taken some major steps along the right road. We shall press them to continue in that direction. In doing so, we hope to carry with us not only the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), who supports the need for civil defence, but some Labour Members. One can have an effective system only if one has all-party support. I am sorry that civil protection is considered by some in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament as an area in which they will take a less than humanitarian role. They are completely misguided, and I hope that they will see sense sooner rather than later.

10.49 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) on introducing this subject for debate. The Government and their agents in the local authorities have a humanitarian duty to provide civil protection for their citizens.

It is significant that in the last few years we have seen a distinct change of attitude towards civil defence. It is also interesting to see the way in which in the past civil defence has been the target or focus for protests of the CND whereas nowadays it is seen in its all hazards approach as a way of dealing with problems that arise not just from nuclear threat but from other hazards that occur in the community. This has made it a matter of some public interest and generates more public confidence in the approach. In this way civil defence can in future be directed towards all hazards, thus depoliticising it from the party political line that is drawn round it.

I recognise that the threat is wider that we have hitherto accepted. It is sad that we have had to experience the disaster of Chernobyl to draw our attention to the need to make this provision.

[Mr. Gerald Bowden]

It is a matter of great irresponsibility, I think, that certain local authorities have pretended to be able to declare themselves to be nuclear-free zones. In this way they seek to bamboozle those whom they exist to serve. In pretending that the threat does not exist, they hope that it will go away. However, I think that this has now been rumbled, and that in future there will be a more positive approach.

In this respect, one welcomes the approach on which my hon. Friend the Minister has given a lead. We need a positive approach to the threats and disasters facing the community and a way of presenting what is being done in a credible and positive fashion so that those who need to be protected can have faith in what is being done for them. This requires not only that there should be an inspectorate such as that mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) but also a wider range of discussion and research into the whole question of the threat and how it might be avoided.

I believe that we are still technically unaware of the impact of NEMP, and the way in which electricity throughout Europe could be killed off at one throw and the consequent disaster. These are areas of technicality that need to be researched with a greater understanding of how to deal with the threat that will arise.

We should approach this matter from an all hazards aspect rather than limiting consideration merely to the threat of nuclear war. We should recognise also that in future the threat of terrorism may involve the use of such instruments of destruction as nuclear weaponry. We should accept too that climatic and other natural disasters may occur. It is part of the duty of a local authority to be concerned, and to take care of the citizens in its charge. In my view the all hazards approach has taken the question of civil protection away from the CND protest area. I hope that it will also be depoliticised so that all parties can come together in a common approach. I commend the Opposition to view this from an all party position rather than to focus on party political division. I trust that this approach will have the full confidence of all hon. Members.

10.53 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) on raising the important topic of civil protection.

I was rather saddened when I heard the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) reading from lengthy documents. I think that he tested us a little because there is no doubt that, when the subject was tabled for debate as civil protection, one did not expect to have that type of liberty taken. However, it was within the rules and, therefore, it was in order for him to do so. It is unfortunate, nevertheless, that he decided to do it in that way. Although the hon. Gentleman is not in his place, I hope that he will read my remarks and will note that I know Monsignor Bruce Kent extremely well, that I have debated with him on many occasions, that I have never doubted his integrity and that I am sure he has not doubted mine.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will agree that when people from the peace camps near our submarine bases take part in public debates and one finds that the spokesperson for the peace campers is not a Scot — indeed, is not even from the United Kingdom — one is bound to wonder what such people are doing here. I should be greatly concerned if we were not being properly protected by, for example, such individuals — who should have to explain what they are doing in that part of the United Kingdom, a country which allows such freedom — being examined in depth by the security services.

I do not doubt the integrity of local authorities which declare areas to be nuclear-free zones. If they oppose the presence of nuclear weapons, they are entitled to hold that view. But Scotland is the last place where such a view should be held.

Before the 1939-45 war, Clydebank council thought that Anderson shelters were not necessary because the council, being against war, said that it would not be involved in war. As we know, many of our citizens survived the blitz because of the protection provided by Anderson shelters. Because Clydebank was a major seaport area which received many of the American provisions which kept Britain going during the difficult early war years, it was blitzed and thousands of people lost their lives unnecessarily — unnecessarily because people in areas outside Clydebank with Anderson shelters survived.

Often well-intentioned, but in fact irresponsible, action must be seen for what it is. People in power who ignore threats that could make disaster a reality act irresponsibly. We must make adequate provision to respond to natural as well as man-originated disasters, and the latter include any type of threat that could result in a real problem for our people.

We in Scotland have a number of petrochemical complexes. On a ratio of risk, they are likely to present more of a problem than nuclear installations, first, because there are more of them, and, secondly, because the likelihood of a man-made error at one of them is greater.

Volunteers play a vital part in the rescue services. Most people are aware of the activities in Scotland of the mountain rescue teams. They are comprised of part-time volunteers co-ordinated by the emergency services—the police, fire and ambulance services. The lifeboats, of which we have a substantial number in Scotland, are manned by volunteers. There is no end of volunteer potential available, but it needs managing and co-ordinating, so providing people with the opportunity to serve the nation. There is no shortage of willingness. Civil protection embraces much more than protection against nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, adequate provision must be made to protect ourselves against such an attack.

That does not mean that we want to become involved in a nuclear war. I hope that I never have to witness such an event. But we must organise our defence, in just the same way as we organise our mountain rescue services and our lifeboat services. No real cost is involved, other than when the rescue services have to go into action; and plenty of people will do it for nothing. All they want is the opportunity to be trained and properly equipped and the necessary organisation to back them up. That calls for proper nerve centres and headquarters and adequate and effective communications. But that is now being attacked.

There are those who, for political reasons, suggest that this is a ghastly attempt to fight a war. That is nonsense. It provides sensible protection. I commend the Government for the action that they have taken so far. I

know that they plan to do more, and I look forward to that. The Government will continue to have my support, and I hope that what has been said this evening will spur them on to do even more.

11.1 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): In any approach to civil protection or civil defence it is important to distinguish between myth or propaganda on the one hand and reality on the other. Some of this evening's contributions have not made that distinction clear.

Underlying the Government's approach is the view that civil defence is an integral part of their defence strategy. That is where the Opposition part company with the Government. I distinguish clearly and firmly between protecting our population from peacetime accidents and disasters, some of which have been enumerated by Conservative Members, and civil defence that is intended —or which purports, according to the Government—to defend our population, should there be a nuclear war. The distinction between the two will form the main part of my speech.

It is a snare and a delusion to say to our people that a nuclear war can be survived. The belief that it might be possible to survive a nuclear war is a factor which could make people less keen to prevent nuclear war. It is a very dangerous myth. A large proportion of the population could not survive a nuclear war. Civil defence against a nuclear war is a delusion, because it would not work. However, it might lull people into a false sense of security.

Some years ago I was shown an advertisement for fall-out shelters. I do not know in which publication the advertisement appeared, but it contained a series of questions and answers. The question was asked by the individual and the reply was given by the firm. The question was:

"Can I honestly survive a NBC war?"

I believe that "NBC" means a nuclear biological chemical war. The answer was:

"Yes — you can, given the correct advice and protection."

The next question was:

"Can" the firm in question "do anything else for me?" to which the firm replied "Yes". The firm in question "are committed to a superb after sales service, including ancillary equipment."

If that advertisement is a reflection of the Government's attitude to fall-out shelters and the possibility of nuclear war, we are a long way from giving our people sensible protection. Instead we are giving them the impression that they can be defended when that is not possible.

I also have a Home Office circular which says something about the information in it not being communicated directly or indirectly to the press or to any person who is not specifically authorised to receive it. It is some years out of date, so I am sure that that does not apply. Under the heading "Collapse of the Monetary Economy" it says — we should remember that it is intended as a briefing manual for wartime controllers:

"A large scale nuclear attack on this country would completely disrupt the banking system on which the whole monetary economy is based . . . It will be an essential part of the policy for national recovery to re-establish a new monetary system as soon as possible. This might take a year or more."

Is that the basis of the Government's policy? I am sure that the present Minister is not responsible for that document, but does it represent the type of policy and protection that we are trying to provide, for such protection is a snare and a delusion? That is why several local authorities have developed nuclear-free zones. That is their way of saying that they will not connive in persuading people that they might be safe when they are not.

Dr. Blackburn: As the hon. Gentleman has mentioned a document which he suggests represents Government policy to protect the banking system in the event of a nuclear war, will he have the courtesy to tell the House where it came from and its date of issue?

Mr. Dubs: Yes. I said that it was issued some years ago. It came from the Home Office about 10 years ago. The hon. Gentleman is at liberty to have a look at it if he wants. I was talking about the type of thinking that underlies the approach that some Conservative Members have displayed tonight.

One of the difficulties about the Government's approach to defending the population in the event of a nuclear war is that we are never told of the assumptions on which they work. We are never told, for example, about likely targets and what areas must be protected. We are never told anything about the size of bombs and the scale of likely damage, all of which information is necessary if local authorities are to do anything in terms of the Government's policy.

Without some planning assumptions, it is hard to know how to develop a defence policy for a nuclear war. We have such assumptions regarding civil accidents. I emphatically support any action to protect the population against peacetime disasters. We must have a range of contingency arrangements. Some have been mentioned. Potential disasters included major oil spillages off coasts and accidents involving aircraft, trains and on motorways. There might be accidents where explosives are stored. There have been some dreadful chemical accidents. Bhopal was only one. People must be protected from them. Trains which carry nuclear waste go through our cities. A regular train service goes through my constituency from Balham and Clapham junction up to Sellafield. Only recently, anxiety was expressed in the press about the danger of a train carrying casks of nuclear waste having an accident in a tunnel. There is a possibility of accidents at nuclear power stations. Britain is not well protected. We have only to think of the confusion that overtook us following the fall-out from Chernobyl. We were told that water supply from rainfall might not be safe in some parts. Then we were told something about our milk supplies. Then, several weeks after the event, we were told about the dangers of eating lamb from certain areas.

If we are to have any protection for our people, one of the things that we should have is a decent monitoring system which should be made public so that our people know early on what is happening. If rumours overtake events, that gives rise to much greater fears.

The National Radiological Protection Board, in its bulletin in June, said that it had less cash year after year to provide the safety measures that are necessary. Of course we need adequate protection nationally—where the Government have fallen short of protecting our people in the case of nuclear fall-out from peacetime catastrophes in power stations in any country—and we need a system of monitoring that; and locally with a policy to provide adequate protection for other peacetime accidents.

[Mr. Dubs]

That is where the main thrust of the debate should be, and that is where we demand more action from the Government. Despite their words about civil defence in wartime, the Government have not provided our people with adequate civil protection measures in times of peace.

11.10 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to support my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn), and I congratulate him on raising this topic, which I fully support. I also support the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) and those of my other hon. Friends.

However, in some ways, they have been a little kind to the Government, because, although I welcome the initiatives that have been taken, if I had more time I would speak passionately for a much more radical extension of our civil protection effort. Unfortunately, time does not permit me to do that, but I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister of State replies he will give a more positive commitment to the whole concept of civil protection, particularly with the new all-hazards approach which has been discussed this evening. We can do a lot more to encourage the concept of service among our people through this medium.

It is rather sad to see the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) adopting the usual approach of trying to rubbish the whole concept of civil protection or civil defence, by implying that in some way all this activity is a waste of time. That negative approach has occurred over and over again, promulgated by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and others, and has led to the confrontation between many local authorities and the Government over the issue.

It is particularly sad in my constituency where one district council is taking a positive attitude and is trying, with Government encouragement, to provide training for volunteers and for people who want to help to provide good civil protection measures, and, the other, Norwich city council, under its Left-wing leadership, has adopted the nonsensical approach of a nuclear-free zone, which has been spoken about over and over again this evening. Everyone knows that that is nonsense. To use the words of the hon. Gentleman, it is a snare and delusion. That is not the right approach. The right approach is that which has been put over tonight by my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West; and that is why I am pleased to support his remarks and those of my other hon. Friends.

11.13 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): I join my hon. Friends in thanking my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) for introducing the debate and congratulating him not only on winning the ballot for the Consolidated Fund but on winning the first place in the ballot. That is an achievement which I would relish. I am very pleased that he was successful.

The discussion of civil protection is highly timely because, as all hon. Members will know—I see the hon. Member for Birmingham Erdington (Mr. Corbett) in his place and he will know particularly well—this has been a week in which the Government have announced a further move in the requirement to be placed on local authorities to implement the civil defence regulations of 1983. It is based upon the essential need for all those who have responsibility for civil defence to take it seriously.

I shall shortly return to the implementation programme, but first I should like to take up the challenge put to me by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) to strengthen the claim for the all hazards approach. I unreservedly accept that challenge, recognising that during this year we passed a Bill, thanks to the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), which will allow the civil defence grant that the Home Office administers to deal with the capital staff and training costs in relation to civil defence preparations also to be used for peacetime purposes. That is a dual approach and the right approach and is increasingly commending itself to local authorities.

In answer to a question this afternoon from the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields) I inadvertently said that 100 per cent. grant would be available for the construction of civil defence emergency headquarters. That is not the case, because that grant applies to communications equipment. I shall write to the hon. Lady to correct that. The grant for construction is 75 per cent. Grant at the rate of 100 per cent. is available for a wide range of items, and grant expenditure now is treble what it was when the Government came to office in 1979.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West said, expenditure generally on civil defence is now £100 million. Grants are important and, as I said in previous debates, we are still reviewing the prospect of increasing the 75 per cent. grant. My hon. Friend rightly stressed the importance of training and of getting value for money. With the grant aid that we have at our disposal, it is our intention to see that plans are properly drawn up within which the expenditure can be made. My hon. Friend was quite right to say that we must ensure that grant aid is correctly spent.

Part of the programme that we introduced this week will provide for a rolling targeted programme agreed between local authorities and the Home Office. That will ensure that not only are the plans correctly laid, but that they are implemented by a given date. By 1 April 1987, there should be clear specification of objectives and organisation; by 1 October 1987 resources and implementation details of plans for collection and distribution of information on the results of attack should be ready; the target date for resources and implementation details of plans for accommodation and the prevention of disease and matters of that character is 1 April 1988; by 1 October 1988, resources and implementation details of plans for rescue should be ready; and 1 April 1989 is the target date for resources and implementation details and plans for shelter and other essential services.

I give those examples to the House to dramatise the fact that we intend to see that those plans and target dates are met. In order to earn the civil defence grant, local civil defence authorities and joint civil defence authorities will have to lay plans in that degree of detail.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) chided me for the paucity of planning assumptions. I say to him that, first, the original planning assumptions are being updated and in the documentation issued this week he will find a further resumé on planning assumptions for the guidance of local authorities. Second, it is impossible to deploy in logical argument every eventuality which a local authority

might come across. We are suggesting that local authorities should make preparations not just for the nuclear option that he seems to favour as the most likely thing, but for the range of disasters, military and civil, that could occur.

The conventional risk is infinitely greater now than the nuclear risk and after 40 years of peace and a committed NATO Alliance based upon our nuclear deterrent, there is little doubt that the risk of a nuclear option has substantially receded under this Government. Long may that remain the case.

My hon. Friends the Members for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) and for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) spoke about a nuclear-free zone. Surely a nuclear-free zone is the tattiest argument in the Opposition repertoire. It is not only irresponsible but illogical to believe that somehow or other a wish to deploy a protection argument which says, "Do not touch us, we are free," is a sufficient insurance policy with which to protect their citizens.

If the Opposition were logical, every nuclear-free authority would have to deploy arguments against nuclear energy, which is of great importance to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) because the Sellafield plant is in Cumbria. Between 17 per cent. and 19 per cent. of our energy is generated from that source. We might also have to consider shutting the radiography departments in hospitals to avoid the use of the most concentrated and professionally handled form of nuclear device—X-rays.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South asked about volunteers. That will be part of the planned implementation programme which we announced this week. The public information campaign based upon a new film and new written material which will be available in the autumn will deal with civil protection. That is why I welcomed the choice of this topic by my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West. This will be the platform and persuasion within which we shall work.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) said, many questions have still to be researched. The electro-magnetic pulse is one such matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North referred to major industrial problems and the complexes which could create a hazard. Emergency planning officers must have that problem within their competence. Already, adequate provision is made under the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations to deal with industrial consequences. I can assure hon. Members that the new implementation plans will apply to Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be making similar provision for Scotland's civil defence authorities.

The intentions that we have announced this week are the second phase in forcing local authorities, somewhat reluctantly, to operate the 1983 regulations. The assessment made at the beginning of this year in response to the questionnaires was that the majority of local civil defence authorities have provided some returns — although three have not. However, the majority of returns were not adequate in planning for this vital public service. So we think it right not only to update and refine objectives for local authorities, but to set a targeting programme. We shall do that through consultation and by regular inspection, checking each civil defence authority's progress each year against the targeted dates which I have disclosed. We shall not hesitate to whithold civil defence grant from those authorities which fail to keep pace with the implementation programme.

Three authorities failed to produce any plans in relation to the civil defence regulations—Avon, Mid-Glamorgan and South Glamorgan—and they are in danger of their grant being held back this year. No final decison has been taken, but it is possible that Avon risks the loss of £38,900 in grant; Mid-Glamorgan £31,700 and South Glamorgan £45,500. Those local authorities face penalties for failing to carry out their duties in relation to the civil defence programme.

We regard civil protection as a humanitarian response to what could be a disaster within a community. It could be on a small or large scale. It could be of military origination or of civil or industrial origination. It is clear that, post-Chernobyl, authorities should take seriously the need to protect their citizens. I can conceive of nothing more important than to ensure civil protection in emergency. For that reason, the Government are determined not only to put civil protection firmly on the map but to ensure that regulations are implemented according to a time scale and to a quality which will lift the standard of protection throughout the land.

Housing

11.25 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Everyone knows that there is a crisis in housing. The Church of England's report "Faith in our Cities" said that, and the Commission chaired by Prince Philip said the same. Hundreds of thousands of homeless and badly housed people say that and know that.

I said that everyone knows that there is a crisis. There is one exception, and that is this Government. Since they took office, they have cut spending on housing by 47p in the pound since 1979-80. This week the Institute of Housing reports that only 39,000 houses and flats were built by councils and housing associations in 1985, against 162,000 10 years earlier. Over both sectors there has been a drop of 40 per cent. in the decade from 1975, from 313,000 to 188,000 last year—not because new homes are not needed but simply because this Government seem to prefer to leave £3·5 billion washing around the banks and 400,000 building workers jobless instead of putting both money and manpower to work.

The crisis in housing is the worst in 20 years and growing. It is evidence of the lack of freedom and fairness under this destructive Government. Millions of people are denied real choice over where and how they shall live. For those with cash there is a chance of private housing in pleasant well-laid-out areas, increasingly around the far edges of Birmingham and our other great cities. For those without cash, because of unemployment or low pay, there is the squalor of many of our crumbling run-down estates and tower blocks with almost non-existent repairs and little real hope of a move.

That is easy to say. It is harder to appreciate, because that misery is there hour by hour, day by wretched day. It does not go away. It gets worse as vandalism and unsolved crime are piled on top to produce hopelessness and despair among people who feel abandoned, unheard, neglected and forgotten. In the public sector there is both the squalor of many board and lodging houses and the insults and mysteries of the so-called private rest homes where some unscrupulous owners make money out of the age an infirmity of those whom councils are prevented from properly helping because the cash has been stolen from them by this Government.

A Government cannot cut rate support grant, for example, from 61p in the pound to 46p in the pound, have rate-capping multipliers and the rest and be surprised at the growing squalor in private and public housing.

Ten years ago, 44 tenants in every 100 in Birmingham got help with their rent and rates because of low pay or joblessness. Now that number is a staggering 77 in every 100. In recognition of that fact, housing benefit is now to be cut, and people in poverty are to be forced to pay 20p in the pound of their rates, having then to choose between food, heat, light and so on, or face the miseries of a summons for non-payment of rates. That is housing in Tory Britain 1986.

As the Institute of Housing argues, the present level of restriction of publichousing investment is not simply mean; it is short-sighted. Without more money for essential repair work next year, the deterioration will accelerate and soon we may truly be unable to afford the kind of housing standards that we expect in a civilised society.

Nowhere is that more true than in the city of Birmingham. Last year's return on the repair and improvement of local authority housing stock showed a need—not a wish—to spend £715 million on repairing and improving the council's present stock. At the present rate of tackling that job, it will take more than 600 years to achieve.

In July, a housing committee report to the council showed that housing need is outstripping supply in Birmingham, despite a falling population. It argued that a minimum of 1,270 new homes were needed each year for the next five years. These should be built by the council and housing associations in an attempt to cope with the demand. Yet, not one new family home has been built in Birmingham in the past four years because of Government cash cuts.

It is the same with improvement grants, but this, in many ways, is the greater idiocy. The Government encouraged thousands to apply for improvement grants, but a few months after the 1983 general election they suddenly switched off the funds. The housing committee considers that because of this neglect an extra 26,000 sub-standard homes will get too bad for repair and the bulldozers will have to be called in. We have been this way before, but we and the Government seemingly learn nothing.

There are also the infamous tower blocks. We have 492 in Birmingham. I am delighted to say that eight in my constituency must come down within the next 10 years, I wish it was in the next 10 months. It is only a start. There are 1,400 Boswell system built homes in Pype Hayes in my constituency. About 400 of them have been sold to former tenants. People scraped together to find the cash to buy these places at discounted rates, but now there is a question mark over their future. Until the Minister decides to designate them under the Housing Defects Act 1984, the whole area is blighted. These people have an urgent right to know what will happen and I appeal to the Minister to speed a decision to designate.

Birmingham, along with other cities and towns, has paid the price of the neglect of housing because of having cash stolen from it by the Government. It matters in ordinary and everyday ways. Some 30,000 low and medium rise blocks and maisonettes in the city are without an adequate cleaning and caretaker service. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) had a hand in this matter during her benign days as chairman of the city housing committee.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Malign.

Mr. Corbett: Yes, indeed. If the caretakers are taken out, the vandals are allowed in. Lifts are fouled, graffiti blossoms and security locks are smashed as fast as they can be replaced. In many blocks in the giant Castle Vale estate in my constituency, doors and door frames, let alone the security locks, have long since disappeared. The vandals are joined by vagrants and dogs.

In 1986 people should not have to live like this. It insults their self-respect. It adds to the misery of life on low pay or on the dole. It also denies others work and in turn costs more and more in the direct and indirect taxes paid by people at work.

Yet there is an answer. It is to unlock the cash in town hall vaults derived from the sale of former council homes. It is to find ways to use the £3·5 billion in the banks to get

the 400,000 jobless building workers back to work. That turn will stimulate further work in the industries which supply the building industry.

The answer is obvious. The trouble with it is that it collides with the Government's dogma. They do not care a damn about wretched and worsening housing conditions. It is sad to say that it is no good appealing to the Government to change course and do what is suggested. Our appeal must be to the voters to change the Government and allow the next Labour Government to start rebuilding Britain and ensure a real and wide choice of housing for all our people. It is a job that will not wait.

11.35 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on his luck in the draw and on being able to raise such a vast subject. I hope that my constituents and those of other hon. Members will not have to wait for the return of a Labour Government; many houses will have fallen down long before that happens.

It should be understood that there is a difference between houses and homes. It is unfortunate that over the past 40 years the distinction has not always been clearly delineated in the minds of administrators in local government and central Government. In housing there is immense variation — possibly more than in any other service that is provided by local government and central Government — between what people want, what people are provided with, and what people perceive as being progress.

There is immense variation between what is perceived to be good housing and good houses that make good homes. What was once thought to be progress is now seen not to be. I do not subscribe to the malign school of politics that suggests that certain things are done with evil motives and with intent. I believe that things are done with the right motives and from idealistic concern. If they turn out to be wrong, the wrong was not intended. That is my view. Unfortunately, we have malign politics now, and it is all too easy to attack previous Governments and say that they should have known better, should have acted differently, or should have tackled something in an entirely different way. That approach serves no useful purpose when we address ourselves to housing.

If we were to go along that road, we would succeed only in placing a smokescreen between ourselves and the problem, and perhaps even inhibit some of the help that our constituents and constituencies require. The supposed answers to the provision of housing in the past are now the problems. All of us, especially those who represent city seats, are well aware of the problem of deck-access housing. We were all shown marvellous pictures of streets in the sky and told how wonderful it would be, but we are aware of the problems of those who are still condemned to live in deck-access housing. The problems are illustrated vividly in my constituency. A block that is known to some as Hunslet Grange is known as Alcatraz to others. Leek street is known as Bleak street. The block was demolished some years ago, but the Leeds city council will be paying £590,000 a year until 2028 for those dwellings. That is the sort of problem that we face. The properties were thought to constitute an improvement on the housing in which people were then living, but they turned out to be a nightmare.

I am not anxious to attack others left, right and centre, and I acknowledge that hindsight makes the problems and the answers more obvious, but with foresight we could have seen things differently. Perhaps it would have been possible to have initiated different housing policies. The right decisions were not always made when houses were demolished. Some were fit and others were not. I shall quote a Liberal chairman of what was called in 1906 the Unhealthy Areas Committee, perhaps accurately if somewhat unfeelingly. He reported that high multi-storey dwellings in Leeds would be bad for people because young children would be imprisoned in them as would the elderly. It seems that no note was taken of that opinion during the "progress" that was made later in the century.

It is all too easy to attack councils and Governments. In so many of our cities the housing problem is self-caused. In the past two decades about 10,000 more houses have been demolished than built. There is pressure on housing waiting lists and a lack of choice for people. That has come about, to a large extent, because there are fewer housing units.

I have stood with a public health inspector — no doubt other hon. Members have done so — at the top of a hill and have seen the rows of terraced, back-to-back houses. I have seen the inspector wave his arms imperiously over those houses and say that they must be demolished. Hundreds of homes were demolished simply because some public health inspector believed that they were slums.

The folksiness of people in those dwellings came through to me. One man told me that his home had to be demolished because it was a back-to-back house and, therefore, in the view of the inspector, a slum. He was put in a flat that he said was not only back-to-back but also top-to-bottom. He could not understand that, and rightly so. We have destroyed, we have built, and we have not improved.

I had hoped that the hon. Member for Erdington would have covered the more practical problems. How do we cope with the vast problems we face, which are peculiarly capital problems? The Government have a narrow-minded accountancy attitude. They want to stifle local authorities from doing what they perceive will remedy the problems. The Government have limited the amount of capital receipts that local authorities can use. They cannot spend those receipts in ways that they consider beneficial. While that narrow-minded accountancy attitude continues, the problems get worse.

There are a number of Reema blocks in my constituency. Recently the tenants of those blocks were told that, even though the flats were safe, they must not use the balconies. At a recent meeting of those tenants — a representative from the housing department attended — a woman said:

"If balconies won't stand 8½ stones shouldn't we be moved out immediately?"

The official replied:

"They could be unsafe. We won't know until each one is inspected.

The housing department does not wish to alarm people unnecessarily, partly because it has nowhere else to put people. On the other hand, it does not want to be liable if someone falls through a balcony. It is ludicrous that people were told not to use part of the flats although they were still safe. That is intolerable.

[Mr. Michael Meadowcroft]

Another tenant said that a crack had appeared in the wall. The council filled it in. Eventually, after it had been filled in a number of times, the tenant refused to have it filled in again. She employed her own structural engineer who said that there were no angle irons and no fire stop. The council said that it was unaware of that and that it would, rightly, check the reports.

People who have bought Reema and low-rise dwellings cannot afford to undertake the necessary renovations. They could cost between £18,000 and £21,000 — considerably more than the dwellings are worth. Yet they cannot sell them. Leeds council has interpreted the Act concerning buying back extremely strictly.

I mean no disrespect to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who is present in the Chamber, when I say that I am sorry that the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction is not here. The Minister visited Leeds recently. As a member of an all-party group, he looked at some houses. He took lumps of concrete off the walls of inhabited Duo Slab flats with his own hands.

Mr. Corbett: Vandals.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I would not mind t. .it if it led to a positive result, but it did not in this case. Yet, two months later, the Minister has refused to designate those houses under the Act. That is ridiculous.

The DOE's survey came to the conclusion that Leeds needed upwards of £400 million to solve its housing problems. When the local authority submitted a claim for a £68 million grant, it was allocated £24 million, which was less than it received the previous year. The problems get worse. That was not a high enough capital allocation to cover normal or programmed housing stock maintenance. In addition to the ordinary stock maintenance problem, we have a system-built housing problem. More problems are coming to light week by week and month by month, and that is bound to place an extra burden on local authority expenditure. No additional allowance is coming from central Government to meet that.

The Government should note that capital investment in housing could lessen unemployment. Many schemes which have much lower costs than the cost of simply letting buildings deteriorate have a beneficial effect as well. Voluntary bodies, such as Anchor Housing, and building societies, such as the Abbey National, are involved in "staying put" schemes. Mortgages available to those in council houses or on waiting lists provide three loans for the amount needed for one new build; yet again we cannot switch resources to that aspect of housing because of the cost of covering emergencies. There is a lack of money for repair grants, but people will happily repair their own homes, given some incentive. Some years ago, when the grant for housing improvements in Leeds decreased from 75 per cent. to 50 per cent., there was an immediate decline in the numbers taking it up. Housing stock continues to decline.

We face an exceptionally serious problem. I am deeply concerned about the problem in my city and my constituency. Unless the problem is attacked within the next few months, the social and economic consequences will be immense. The Government do not appear to realise the scale of the problem. There is no doubt that it is worsening. There is no point in expecting local authorities to cope within their present capital allowance limits. People cannot sell; the council will not buy back; and people cannot improve their properties. The Housing Defects Act 1984 has many good points, but it does not cover nearly enough properties. So far as I am aware, only one new type of system-built house has been added to the list. Other houses, such as Caspon houses, are not covered by the Act. People face the same situation with those types of houses as they would with PRC houses.

I beg the Government to take note of the problems and to be aware that, unless something is done to resolve the problems this year, they will increase next year and people will be living not only in squalor but in fear. We should not tolerate that in this century in this country.

11.46 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): It is a shame that a debate on such an important topic can produce only one Tory Back Bencher sitting at the back of the Chamber, the Minister and his minder to represent the Government.

Six weeks ago, a survey was published by researchers who spent three years analysing data and statistics and examining all the major towns and cities in Europe. They drew up a league table of the least attractive towns and cities. Coventry came 93rd in that league of 102. Nine other British towns and cities were in the bottom 15 on the list, Liverpool being at the bottom. The list was based on employment figures, the numbers leaving the city and those wanting to make it their home—that is why this is relevant to the debate—the demand for travel to the area, and so on.

The environment and the condition and quality of housing are central points. Cities such as Liverpool and Coventry share the housing problems which have played a major role in inspiring the politics of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) and me.

The researcher from Reading university responsible for collating those statistics used this quote:

> "Coventry is one of the British cities that have deteriorated the most since 1970".

I know that for a fact because, for 15 of the 16 years since 1970 Coventry has been my home, and I have seen that decay take place. For most of this century, Coventry has been seen as a prosperous, working-class city with high wages, low unemployment, an increasing population and award-winning estates. For many Coventry people, that was always a myth, but it was the reputation. Thirty years ago 2,000 private houses and 2,000 council houses were built each year. This year, not a single family house is being built by the city council. In fact, in Coventry, for the past five years, we have not had the money for the council to build a single family house. The only spending on specialist accommodation — sheltered housing for the elderly—finishes next year.

We have been unable to find the money necessary for repairs and modernisation and, unfortunately, the city council has chosen a strategy which I strongly disagree with for the privatisation of parts of estates, including the Pondfield within the constituency of Coventry, South-East. Plans for such privatisation have been extended to other areas of the city such as Wood End, Stoke Aldermoor, Henley Green, Willenhall and Hillfields. I cannot see that being the solution to the crushing problems of housing facing working people in Coventry.

One in six of all the houses in Coventry, public and private, requires major attention. Most of the 20,000 or 21,000 houses — 15,000, according to statistics of a couple of weeks ago—require at least £5,000 to be spent on repairs and modernisation. Nine hundred and forty-four houses are officially classed as unfit for human habitation and almost 5,000—4,935 to be precise—lack one of the five basic amenities such as an inside toilet, hot and cold running water, a shower or a bath and so on. There are 327 people officially classed as homeless. That figure was "only" 76 when the Government took office in 1979, so it has increased almost five times. There are 9,644 families and individuals on the waiting list.

Those are cold statistics. What do they mean? My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Park) and I have been dealing with the case over the past couple of days of a young lass, a single parent with a three-year-old daughter, living in a bedsit. She is on the housing waiting list and hopes to be moved into a one or two-bedroomed flat by the council when one becomes available. However, she telephoned me and I telephoned my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East. What fear or panic made her do that? It was the announcement last night that by 11 August the provision of household equipment and furniture from the Department of Health and Social Security for those moving out of furnished into unfurnished accommodation will end. The only thing she owns in the single room is a bed. If she does not get her claim in by 11 August, she runs the risk of not being able to afford the basic requirements when she moves.

I am glad to see that the Minister for Social Security has arrived. Perhaps he can contribute to the debate on the subject of supplementary benefit needs grants affecting one-parent families in furnished accommodation transferring to unfurnished council accommodation. Coventry has an urban renewal programme to try to repair and improve the sub-standard council and private housing in the city. It is no surprise that the areas the council is trying to tackle with the urban renewal programme, the poorest areas for housing in Coventry, are the areas of highest unemployment such as Hillfields, Foleshill, Willenhall and Stoke Aldermoor to give just a few examples. In Hillfields, an area I represent, official male unemployment is 45 per cent. Add the fiddles to that, such as the lads over 60 who do not count in the figures, the kids on the schemes and the women who are not allowed to claim and we are talking about 50 or 60 per cent. unemployment rates.

The council say they cannot do much about repairs and modernisation because of the cuts over the past seven years. It is clear that the majority of owner-occupiers who are unemployed do not have sufficient cash in their pockets to improve their homes without grant aid. Where do they get the grants from? The present rate of distribution of grants in Coventry means that it will take more than 30 years to deal with known owner-occupied housing problems. We have residents who will not live long enough to see their houses repaired at the present rate of grants from the Tory Government.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the hon. Gentleman going to comment on the inadequacy of the Housing Defects Act 1984, because, as far as I am aware, in Coventry only about 358 houses are designated under that Act whereas in Leeds there are 7,000? The way in which the hon. Gentleman is speaking suggests that there is a huge problem which is not even touched by the Act.

Mr. Nellist: I suspect that I will not have enough time to develop the major problem which is "No fines" construction. It relates to the mix of concrete used in the 1950s and 1960s for the construction of council estates. Damp soaks up it like up loo paper or, if *Hansard* prefers it, blotting paper.

The other major problem is that some council estates are built on shale from closed pits in areas such as Binley. With the shifting and settling of foundations cracks appear. Those problems will not go away because the grants are inadequate and are often given not for full improvements, but only partial improvements, and further treatment will be needed in future on houses that receive grants.

I am tempted to offer the Minister a chance to visit Coventry and see the problems that I have already outlined, but the offer is a bit tempered because the last Minister who came, the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), came four years ago and graced Wood End estate, which has major problems, with his presence for only 12 minutes. After his great investigation, he said that the housing was some of the worst he had ever seen, yet he returned to London and cut housing grants to Coventry, as the Tory Government have done in every year of their seven-year term of office.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): I visited Coventry two months ago at the invitation of the city council and saw one such estate. I was able to announce a grant to finance some badly needed improvements which was welcomed by the local authority.

Mr. Nellist: The Minister came to Hillfields in south-east Coventry, and I received a letter to say that he was coming. He provided an additional £1·8 million to renovate the lifts in the tower blocks and for double glazing. If he wants to read through the council documents I have with me tonight, but which I shall not have time to deal with, he will find that that is not even 1 per cent. of the money we need to begin to tackle the problems. It is all very well being featured on the front page of the *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, for that £1·8 million grant, but when on 12 July housing improvement submissions came through we put in for £27 million for this year, as we have done for the past three years. In the past three years we have received £7 million or less, and this year it is predicted that we shall receive £5·8 million. In other words, the Minister gives with his left hand the £1·8 million which gave him his publicity for caring capitalism, which he then takes with his Right-wing monetarist hand from our housing improvement programme application.

Mr. Corbett: Beware of Ministers bearing gifts.

Mr. Nellist: My hon. Friend is right.

Unless we receive the full £27 million, rents are predicted to rise by £1·70 a week later this year. The rent for a run-down council flat in a hard-to-let area in Coventry is £33 a week, which is equivalent to a £17,000 mortgage. Tenants and owner-occupiers in Coventry alike need help, not further grant cuts. The longer renovation and repairs are left undone, the worse they become. Obviously, that is not a problem to be found in a Prime

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Ministerial retirement home in Dulwich costing £400,000 and built by Barratt, but it is a horrific problem in the areas I represent.

I now wish to deal with the Tory's hoary old solution of home ownership. That is seen as a sick joke among the unemployed of Coventry. The Government plan to cut by half for the first six months the housing benefit to pay the mortgage interest of unemployed people, and 90,000 families throughout the country will be affected. I estimate that between 700 and 1,000 families in Coventry will be affected from this autumn. Since 1979, 50,000 families nationally have been evicted and had their homes repossessed by banks or building societies. It is now running at 16,500 families a year. If the mortgage interest benefit for unemployed workers is cut, that figure will rocket. In 1985, 50,000 families were in that pipeline, being more than six months behind with their mortgage payments, and the number will rise if that proposal goes through.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): If the hon. Gentleman is being fair, will he also give the House the figures for the families who are in arrears with their council house rent? Are not his comments a gross distortion of the facts? Are there not many thousands of families in the east midlands who welcome the opportunity to buy their home provided by the Government?

Mr. Nellist: Given the level of council house rents, many families would rather take out mortgages. The Government have cut so much money from the rate support grant during the past seven years that councils, to avoid making cuts in services, have had to increase the rents and rates charged to those who live in council accommodation. On the surface, people welcome the change, but the 50,000 families who are already six months behind in their mortgage repayments and who face eviction and repossession do not welcome the change.

As for rent arrears, about £11,000 million has been cut from supplementary benefit during the past seven years, which has forced many workers to choose between feeding the kids and paying the bills. The increase in rent arrears was caused by that. Where rents are paid directly by the DHSS, the staff cuts in that Department have led to rent arrears not from tenants, but from the DHSS offices. They canot pay the rents because of the problems caused by the changes in housing benefit during the past three years.

The Tory vision of a nation of individual capitalist homeowners was nonsense from the start. They eased lending restrictions and pioneered early loans, but they have also been responsible for mass unemployment and declining living standards. In the immortal words of the chairman of the Tory party, the solution to unemployment is, "Get on your bike. There are plenty of job vacancies in the south-east." The average sale price of houses in the west midlands is about £34,000. The average sale price of houses in greater London, where all the jobs are supposed to be, is £61,000.

That is the beauty of a market economy. The Government tell people to get on their bikes and find jobs, but they cannot afford somewhere to live when they get there. One sees advertisements for one-bedroomed, pre-1914 flats in "cheaper" areas of London which sell for more than £28,000. In *The House Magazine*, Members of Parliament see advertisements for houses priced at £100,000 or £150,000. The spiral of low housebuilding and high interest rates will be stopped, and we shall finally have enough places in which working people can live and work, only with radical Socialist solutions, such as the public ownership of banks and building societies and the cancellation of the debts of millions of workers who are caught in the mortgage web.

Indeed, we should go so far as cancelling the debts of local authorities. The city of Coventry owes £284 million to the banks; that is £910 for every man, women and child in the city. The figure has increased by about £22 million since last year. The reason is that, mainly to finance building programmes, councils borrow from banks on 60-year loans, but, no matter how they try to pay off those loans, interest rates increase the total debt at the end of the year, even though they may have paid off £20 million or £25 million. If we cancelled that debt, we could halve all the domestic rents and rates in Coventry and have more than £10 million extra a year for repairs, modernisation, central heating and other environmental improvements.

Of course, the Minister will say, "What a utopian this bloke is. It is absolutely impossible to talk about the restructuring or cancellation of debts." But he should have a word with the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the Department of Trade and Industry. It is not impossible to restructure the debts of industries before privatisation. When they talked about privatising the water industry, they began the discussion with the restructuring and cancellation of the industry's large debts. When we have a Labour Government who are prepared to consider the public ownership of banks and the cancellation of local authority debts, that drain on local authority resources will be ended once and for all.

I shall end now, because other comrades may wish to speak in the debate. I have used many statistics in my speech, but housing is not a question of cold statistics. I regularly visit the homes of my constituents, personally witnessing the mould, the wallpaper hanging off, the kids with constant coughs and colds, families with damp clothes and furniture, the generally deteriorating health, the bronchial diseases and the depression that comes from living in overcrowded, inadequate accommodation in Coventry. The same is true of other major cities.

Not many of the people who live in council or private homes in Coventry, South-East which desperately need modernisation and improvement could have afforded £35,000 to buy a wedding dress, as the Duchess of York managed to do yesterday. They could not afford £600 a metre to buy the cloth to make that dress. If they had £600, they could do their own decorating to bring their houses up to scratch.

There are 6 million people in this country living in damp accommodation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Erdington said, match that with the 400,000 building workers who under this Government are lying idle at home, denied the chance to use their skills to build, or improve, housing and accommodation.

What the country needs is a crash national housebuilding programme of repairs and modernisation. I believe that that will come only when we get a Socialist Labour Government who are prepared to pursue a programme firmly embedded in public ownership of construction and finance firms.

The Government's own figures show that £19,000 million would crack the problems of repairs and modernisation in the country. Is that too much to ask—

what is £19,000 million between friends? Cancel Trident and stop the stupid torpedo programme. The Government are spending £5,000 million to develop three types of torpedo; only two of them have been fired, in the Falklands and they both missed. Withdraw for two years the tax concessions given to company directors for their company cars, and there is £19,000 million at the drop of a hat. If the will were there, the finance could be found.

The Tories pretend to be the party of caring, particularly one or two of the Ministers who turn up at these debates, above all in the run-up to general elections. They talk about promoting democracy. They define it sometimes as a share-owning democracy when they want a fig leaf to cover privatisation — or, more accurately, privatisation exercises. Sometimes they define it as a home-owning democracy. That is a callous confidence trick. The largest percentage of public expenditure cuts in the last seven years has come in housing. The number of new home starts in the country is 33 per cent. less than in the last year of the Labour Government. Council building has been slashed by 70 per cent. under this Government, and is down to 39,000 new council houses according to last year's statistics.

I want to see a country that gives a guarantee of a well constructed family home with a garden to every family in the country, not for them to be trapped on the 15th floor of a tower block, such as the Minister visited in Hillfields a couple of years ago. These people are trying to bring up families who will never see a garden or swing in a swing. We will never get that under this Government. For that we need a change of Government and the transformation of society along Socialist lines.

This has not been the best attended of debates, but, when workers outside the House read some of the speeches made from the Labour Benches, they will understand that the best hope that they have of changing housing conditions is to chuck out the Tory Government as soon as possible and return Labour to office.

12.7 am

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): I am pleased to have an opportunity to contribute to the debate, and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on raising this extremely important issue tonight.

There is, without doubt, a severe housing crisis in the country at present, one which has been deepening in recent years and which the present Government show little or no sign of even recognising, let along taking the necessary steps to tackle.

There are acute problems of shortage of housing in many areas of the country, hitting particularly those people on low incomes who cannot afford to buy homes but depend upon the supply of rented housing. Many people in many inner-city areas, not just London, are desperate for homes and have no prospect of finding them. They cannot afford to buy, and there are no homes for them to rent in their price range.

Secondly, there are the problems of bad conditions in all sectors of the housing market, not just in the private rented sector, which used to be the area in which the worst conditions were concentrated. Indeed, they still are, although the private rented sector has much declined and there are now fewer homes in that sector. However, many are still in appalling condition and in need of some action.

There are problems in the other sectors. We have growing problems of structural decay and lack of maintenance and repair in the public sector. Let us not be too pessimistic about this. There has been a tendency recently to take the view that everything in the public sector is wrong. That is not so. Council housing provides the prospect of a decent home and an escape from the slums for many millions of families. Without it, they would be living lives substantially worse than they are. The achievements of the public sector should be recognised.

The public sector, which has been denigrated in recent years, starved of funds and not given the encouragement and assistance to tackle its worst problems, is in some ways falling short, and there are problems.

There are problems in the owner-occupied sector, traditionally an area thought to have relatively few problems. More elderly and poor home owners do not have the means to maintain their houses and are finding increasing difficulty in meeting their mortgage repayments.

So in all sectors we have problems, and the symptoms of those problems are obvious to anyone who takes an intelligent interest in housing conditions in Britain. We see the evidence of decaying homes and estates, of overcrowded waiting lists, of people with a desperate need for housing — hon. Members witness this problem in their surgeries — who have been told that they have no prospect of being housed because their local authorities and housing associations cannot afford to provide homes.

We also have the evidence of empty homes, many of them empty because the authorities and housing associations do not have the money to put them into decent condition or because private owners keep them empty for speculative reasons.

We have record levels of homelessness. More people were recorded as being homeless in the last year than at any time since records began shortly after the last war. That is a chilling fact, of which the Government should be deeply ashamed. About 94,000 households were last year accepted as homeless.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the definition of "homeless" has been restricted still further? More people are being regarded as intentionally homeless, which was never the intention of the measure introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross). In other words, many of the homeless would not be recognised as being homeless under the present legal definition.

Mr. Raynsford: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that helpful intervention. I was talking this morning to the Minister who will reply to this debate about the unfortunate result of legal definitions following the Pulhoffer judgment. That has created a restrictive interpretation of "homelessness" and has had the effect of penalising homeless people, but I shall not pursue that matter now.

Perhaps the most shameful of all the Government's actions is to be found when we consider where the homeless people are going. It is the symbol by which the Government's housing policy will be judged.

The homeless are going into bed and breakfast hotels. They have become the homes for many thousands of people, whether they are placed in such establishments because the authorities have nowhere else to place them or

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because they are young, single people on supplementary benefit who end up there because they do not have proper homes.

We have seen the rise of squalid, expensive board and lodging accommodation instead of proper, decent homes. It is a tragedy that so many people are having to live in such places. The cost is enormous. I am pleased to see the Minister of Social Security here. He often quotes the huge escalation in social security payments to people in board and lodging accommodation.

Consider the cost to local authorities which place people in such establishments. Figures placed recently in the Library by the Department of the Environment showed that the net cost of such accommodation—after recovering money from families, housing benefit and so on—had risen from £8 million in 1982-83 to £15 million in 1984-85. We do not have the figures for 1985-86, but I suspect that they will show a further enormous increase, with a further escalation in the current year.

This money is being poured down the drain. Worse, it is being poured into the hands of private hotel and bed and breakfast owners who are providing a shoddy, nasty product and are charging far too much for it, and the state is subsidising it. If people had their own homes, they could live in them at substantially less cost to the state.

We are seeing the economics of the madhouse—the result of capital cuts leading to Revenue expenditure escalation. Any economist examining the DHSS and Department of the Envionment expenditure on bed and breakfast and board and lodging would agree that madness lies this way and that there is no logic in what is happening.

It is not just a question of bed and breakfast and board and lodging. The Government's policy is to promote home ownership. They have sought to increase the home ownership option for many people. They have encouraged council tenants to buy their council homes. However, when problems have arisen, the Government have shown extraordinary insensitivity, with the result that an increasing number of home owners have found themselves in trouble.

During the lifetime of this Government the number of mortgage arrears has risen dramatically. According to the Building Society Association's figures, in 1979 about 8,000 households were more than six months in arrears with their mortgages. By 1985, that figure had risen to 60,000—an enormous increase—and it is escalating very fast. In the last two years the figure has doubled. That is the result of the promotion of owner-occupation, coupled with an economic recession. Many people have lost their job, or have suffered a cut in income and have therefore been unable to meet their mortgage repayments.

Has this problem resulted in co-ordination between Government Departments? Has a positive approach been adopted? Not in the least. The Department of Health and Social Security says once again, "Oh, the cost of meeting these debts through supplementary benefit is going up so much that we must cut it." Therefore we witness the appalling spectacle of the Department of the Environment encouraging home ownership and the Department of Health and Social Security saying that if people are in difficulties over their repayments the benefit will be reduced, thereby removing the safety net that is necessary to help low-income home owners or others who are in difficulties. Homelessness is the inevitable result.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Did my hon. Friend see the recent television programme in which the Minister for Social Security, whom I applaud for being here, castigated local authorities for lending money to people who were not good mortgage risks, although Government legislation requires local authorities to be lenders of last resort who cannot take into account the fact that somebody had been a bad rent payer?

Mr. Raynsford: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his extremely helpful intervention. We see once again the inconsistency of the Government's policy, the lack of co-ordination between Government Departments and the sheer hypocrisy of encouraging people to get into this position and then cutting off the option that would save them from falling into difficulties.

Housing benefit is another example. During the early years of this Government we heard again and again that rent levels were not high enough, that they should be increased and that the poor would be protected by means-tested benefits. However, as rents rose, there was an inevitable increase in the cost of housing benefit. The DHSS responded again in exactly the same way. Instead of realising that the logical result of a cut of more than £1 billion in general subsidies to council tenants would be an increase in means-tested benefits, for which the DHSS meets the bill, the Department said, "The bill is too high, the benefit must be cut."

Again and again during the last three or four years, we have heard that housing benefit has been increasing too fast and that it must be cut. We heard it again last night. The Government are incapable of co-ordinating the policies of the two Departments, although they have an extraordinary identity of interest, the overlap between housing and social security is so obvious.

Mr. Nellist: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is not so much an inability to co-ordinate the Departments as a perfect ability to co-ordinate? The strategy is to say, "Don't worry, everything will be OK," thus lulling people into a false sense of security, and then, as the bills increase, to cut, since the real aim is to cut benefits? There seem to be no problems at the top end of the scale, in that the top 5 per cent. of the population are given tax cuts and everything is done to ensure that, year after year, their position improves.

Mr. Raynsford: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because I was about to come to that. I should like first to illustrate the extent to which the Government are without a serious and intelligent policy towards housing and how they are floundering. There has been a huge escalation in homelessness. When the Government are asked to give their estimate of the likely level of homelessness this year—they must have such an estimate to plan provision—what is the answer?

> "Since such estimates would depend on individual local authorities' policies, the housing stock position in their areas and other factors, too many assumptions would be involved for them to be reliable."—[*Official Report*, 23 July 1986; Vol. 102, c. *261*.]

That is evidence of a Government who are clearly without a housing policy, who are failing to plan and who are

failing to consider needs. There is a shameful record of massive homelessness and the worst housebuilding record for many years.

Housebuilding is relevant. In 1975, Britain was starting about 174,000 new public sector homes each year. Last year, we managed to start just 33,000—a cut of some 140,000 in 10 years. The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment said yesterday at Question Time that the private sector is expanding its provision and meeting the gap. We should examine that claim.

Ten years ago, there were 149,000 private sector starts. Last year, there were 161,000. I will give the hon. Gentleman the benefit of the doubt and say that there has been an increase—of 12,000 over 10 years. That should be compared, however, with a drop of more than 140,000 public sector starts. Overall, we are talking of a reduction of 128,000 homes. That is a measure of the failure of the Government's policy. The private sector has broadly kept in line with previous performance and even increased it, but the public sector cut has been dramatic and resulted in a drastic overall reduction.

The Government have crowed a lot about increasing improvement grants. That was true, to a degree, until 1984, but what has happened since then? There was a 26 per cent. reduction in improvement grants in 1984-85 because the Treasury turned off the tap, and compared with 1984, there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of improvement grants. What has happened to the much vaunted review of improvement grant policy—the Green Paper that was published a year ago and which was supposed to herald a new policy? Heaven knows, one is needed to bring some order and logic to the chaotic state of improvement grant policy. There are different criteria and different grants, grants do not go to people in greatest need, and there are unmet needs. There has been silence on that. It will be interesting to hear the Minister's response, to learn what will happen to improvement policy. We hope for some new and positive policies which will meet needs more effectively. Why is there silence from the Department?

What a deplorable record! And the Government's response is pretty threadbare. Until the last year, we have consistently heard one line from the Government in defence of their housing policy. It is that they are promoting home ownership. They, too, I suspect, must now know that there are limits to how far home ownership can be extended, and growing problems — increasing mortgage payment arrears, for example. We are therefore beginning to hear a different tack, and we hear it more and more. It is that, if only the Rent Acts were abolished, private dwellings available for rent would burgeon. We should consider that claim.

The history of private renting shows that, for the past 80 years, the private rented sector has been in decline, irrespective of the degree of security afforded to tenants. In 1957, when a Conservative Government reduced security of tenure, there was an acceleration in the decline of the market as landlords took the opportunity to get rid of their tenants to sell their properties. That led to the era that is associated with the name of Peter Rachman. The Government are pursuing exactly the same line, but they have not got the courage of their own convictions and are not prepared to do it before the next election. They are saying that they may do something after the election. If they really believed what they are saying, they would bring in now their proposals to reduce security of tenure for tenants and take the electoral consequences at the next election. There would be a massive reaction against them by tenants.

Against that appalling record, that lack of policy, there is a growing housing crisis and no evidence that the Government are prepared to do anything about it. It gives me great sadness to see the enormous unmet needs, the lack of any coherent Government policy and the lack of co-ordination between Departments. I can only express the same view of other hon. Members who have spoken tonight, that there is a need now for an entirely new approach which will require a change of Government.

12.24 am

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on opening the debate and on getting second place in the ballot for the Consolidated Fund. It is a tribute to his diligence in serving his constituents. I have to take into account the fact that he is also my Member of Parliament.

I want to raise two points that go a little outside the points that have already been raised. Earlier this week I met a delegation of local authorities from the north-west organised by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. They came to see me and my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) as Opposition spokesmen on this subject because Ministers refused to meet them. They were concerned with an argument about the way in which housing investment programme allocations and the general needs index are worked out.

We opened that meeting to all Members of Parliament for the north-west, and the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) turned up, representing one of the few Conservative constituencies in that part of the world. I was extremely grateful to him for his approach and I know that he will have made an approach to the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction if not to the Under-Secretary.

I want it put on record now that the Opposition want the Minister at least to meet Members from both sides of the House from the north-west even if they continue to refuse to meet the local authority representatives. There is a case to be made and Ministers should find the time to listen to the case put by hon. Members from both sides, whether separately or together. I do not expect a response to that tonight, but we shall do so in due course.

The other point that I want to raise concerns what has been going on down in Tower Hamlets since the change of control after the local elections. It has been put to me only in the last couple of days that the local authority is proposing to organise boats moored on the Thames to house homeless people. Yet there are 3,392 empty dwellings in the borough—a figure which has increased since May.

I am not saying that everything was rosy in Tower Hamlets before May, but for a local authority to ring round the London Docklands and the shipping companies to find out what ships are available and what technical difficulties there might be in putting ships on the Thames to house people is a thundering disgrace. Has the Department been contacted about that, and, if so, what is its response?

Mr. Meadowcroft: I do not know the details of this, but the hon. Gentleman is surely not suggesting that local

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authorities should be castigated for putting people in bed and breakfast accommodation, as if that were their fault. Whether one method is an improvement on another is like trying to determine whether someone should be suffering by one method rather than another. Surely the key question is how to house people properly rather than deciding whether they should be in bed and breakfast accommodation, in boats on the Thames, or anywhere else. It is all equally appalling.

Mr. Rooker: I shall come back to that, but I did refer to the number of empty dwellings in the borough, and that point cannot be ignored.

Every hon. Member who has spoken has referred to homelessness. We are talking about people, their families and relatives. Last year the legal figure for the homeless reached over 100,000 for the first time. There seems to be a ratchet effect and the figure goes up every year under the Government. The first quarter's figures this year is over 25,000, so we are on the way to a further increase. That is unacceptable to everybody. I cannot believe that it is part of the Government's policy to create an enormous number of legally homeless families. They will certainly reap the whirlwind from that, although the homeless families are not usually well represented on the electoral register. I warn the Government about the consequences of a policy that is leading to so much homelessness when there are hundreds of thousands of empty dwellings in the country.

In round figures the total is 600,000—some 545,000 in the private sector and 144,000 in the public sector. I was given those figures in an answer to a parliamentary question. We all know that in proportional terms the Government are the worst landlords for keeping the biggest proportion of their property empty—over 6·5 per cent. but at 19,000 the figure is still piffling compared to the other figures for empty properties.

Earlier this year the Audit Commission produced a report on the management of council housing which gave the number of empty dwellings. Empty dwellings are one thing, but empty dwellings available for letting are something else. It is wicked to have empty dwellings available for letting when people are in need of housing. The audit Commission said that at 31 March 1984 there were 27,700 empty dwellings available for letting and it said that of those 1,900 had been empty for more than a year. I do not know where those figures come from, because when I ask parliamentary questions about them I am told by the Minister—the last time on 19 May—that:

> "Information is not collected about how long local authority dwellings vacant at any date have been available for letting."—[*Official Report*, 19 May 1986; Vol. 98, c. *82*.]

Apparently the Audit commission has access to that information. That situation is unacceptable. I do not care which local authorities are to blame or which political party is in control, and I do not care that I am told by housing professionals that parliamentary spokesmen do not understand local housing problems. That is wicked and something ought to be done about it. If something were done about that, it would make a modest impact on the 100,000 families that become homeless each year. We have to get these figures out into the arena a little better than we are doing.

Another point which has to be made and about which we do not need to be defensive is that we need to speed up re-lettings. My hon. Friends are quite right when they talk about private sector landlords sitting on properties which, under the present law, they are not bound to let. They are holding on to those properties to make a speculative gain and at present the Opposition are powerless to do anything about that. However, it is possible to do something about speeding up the letting of public sector properties. The Audit Commission suggests three weeks. I do not understand that and, of course, I am told that I know nothing about the subject.

If it is possible for ower-occupiers to move out in the morning and for someone else to move in in the afternoon or on the next day, why can that not happen in the public sector? *[Interruption.]* They may lose their keys. One of the reasons is the policy of some councils—a policy which crosses party lines—of so-called normalisation. I have raised this before. The councils send in a team or teams of workers to rip out any change the tenant has made so that the dwelling is restored to a normal council dwelling. That takes weeks, and in the meantime properties are vandalised. I see that on a weekly basis in my constituency and so do my hon. Friends. There is no justification for such a policy.

I only have Audit Commission figures to go on, but they show that in the London boroughs the void period between relets is 18·7 weeks, that in the metropolitan districts it is 13·6 weeks and that in the shire counties, whose hon. Members lecture the Opposition, it is 9·8 weeks. Even if we got it down to three weeks, which is three weeks too long, the flow of dwellings available for letting would increase by 20,000 a year. That is a management thing and something could be done about it. I do not accept the argument that only money is necessary to solve the problem: it is an attitude of mind and the Government seem to do nothing about it. In local government these policies transcend the political parties.

The extra cost of repairs because empty dwellings are vandalised is enormous. When we get the HIP returns I have no doubt that we shall see more than two out of nine dwellings in England are unfit, lacking in basic amenities or awaiting substantial repair. That means that 4 million families in all kinds of tenures are living in great unhappiness.

Owner-occupiers, council tenants and private tenants comprise one hell of a coalition of interests. They are people with an axe to grind against policies which are not corrected by the Government. As my hon. Friends say, the Government have one central theme—owner-occupation at all costs.

I shall not repeat my hon. Friend's arguments, but it is fair to say that a local authority cannot refuse a mortgage even if the tenant applicant has a bad rent-paying record. That is a recipe for disaster, both for the tenant and the local authority. The tenants will have to pick up the bill in the end.

We are not spending enough on repairs and maintenance. The Government might argue that more is now being spent on improvements, but, if we do not spend on maintaining dwellings, the nation will lose. Properties will become beyond repair. It does not matter whether the annual shortfall is £700 million, £900 million or £1 billion, we must spend the money. If we do not, we shall hand to the next generation a bill of whopping proportions. That will be grossly unjust for the next generation.

I intended to talk about tenant power and control, but I shall leave that for another day. I was made aware of an example of the importance of repairs when reading in the Housing Centre Trust review last week about the effect of decentralising the repairs of local authority properties. Islington, an authority pilloried by Conservative Members, by using decentralising repair teams, has cut the time taken for repairs from between 10 to 15 weeks to one and a half weeks. The authority has achieved that by the massive decentralisation of repair teams. That achievement should be noted by other authorities.

I should have liked to address my next remarks to the Prime Minister, but in recent weeks questions about social policy would not have gone down too well at Prime Minister's Question Time. General price inflation is 2·5 per cent., wage inflation 7·5 to 8 per cent. and house price inflation between 12 and 30 per cent., depending where one lives, How can first-time buyers gain from that? A plot of land in the home counties costs £20,000 before building starts. We are told that all the jobs are in the home counties. How does that assist first-time buyers?

Many of my hon. Friends referred to the Housing Defects Act. Good intent was behind that legislation, but the necessary resources to make it work are not available. That type of legislation makes people bitter. The Minister has travelled the country, as I do in a modest way. I know of people in my own backyard in my constituency who have bought in good faith and find that they cannot sell their property. No one wants to buy it and no one can get a mortgage for it. This creates unhappiness on an unparalleled scale. The legislation does not even cover the demolition of tower blocks.

Yesterday I asked about the national housebuilding programme. I do not care whether homes are to buy or for rent, as long as they are available, where people want them and at a price that people can afford. In 1983, the best year for national housing construction under this Government, 217,000 starts were made, but that was 49,000 fewer than in 1978, the worst year under the Labour Government, when 264,000 starts were made. Couple that with lack of demolition of older properties that need demolishing—let us make no bones about it, because houses do not last for ever — and add unfit housing, second homes, vacancies and those in disrepair, and it is clear that we should be building more new homes. It is no good saying that we have enough homes for the present and forecast population. That is not so.

The money will not come from thin air. No one says that it will. We may not agree with the examples given by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), but at least he came with a package for equating the figures he used, and that is more than any Conservative Member has done.

The situation on capital receipts is ludicrous, and Conservative Members have voted to ensure that that is so. About £3 billion or £4 billion is locked in local authority bank accounts which everyone except the Treasury says should be recycled back into housing and the social infrastructure that housing constitutes. An enormous amount of capital is locked up in housing.

One of my hon. Friends referred to schemes such as Anchor to unlock capital so that it can be used, particularly for the elderly. We also have the absolute scandal of the housing revenue account being milked by local authorities because it has been manipulated in such a way that it is fictitious rather than notional. Frankly, one day the Public Accounts Committee will call someone before it and we shall have a stronger report on housing revenue account than we have had on the Westland affair.

My hon. Friends have raised some useful and interesting points, and we look forward to hearing the Minister's response.

12.42 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): I join other hon. Members in congratulating the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on giving us an opportunity to debate housing. Many of us saw the recent survey of Members' correspondence, and housing was the most frequently mentioned topic. Therefore, this is a matter of primary importance, and it is right that we should debate it regularly.

I hope that it will not be thought mischevious if I say that I noticed a contrast between the open-minded and pragmatic approach of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and the rather more dogmatic speech of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). The latter indeed had a method of funding the improvements in housing expenditure that he wished to see, but that would involve local authorities defaulting on their debt. He wanted the interest paid by local authorities to banks, institutions and pension funds to be waived. He did not say how the pensions of those who depend on those institutions would be made up if they did not get interest on the money they had invested.

Nor did we hear from the hon. Member for Perry Barr exactly how much the Labour party would spend on the capital side of housing in year one, were it to be elected. I suspect that the hon. Member for Perry Barr is under strict instructions from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) to say absolutely nothing on this subject, but at some point we are entitled to know exactly what increase in public expenditure the Labour party envisages on housing.

Apart from one or two passing references, not enough attention was paid to the role of the private sector in putting right some of the mistakes in the public sector stock. The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) made a passing reference to the role of building societies and institutions, but the emphasis was almost exclusively on the public sector solution.

An impression was given that the problems that have been described have occurred almost miraculously in the last six or seven years, whereas in practice they have grown up over many years. They are due to inadequate expenditure on management and maintenance over a long period. The hon. Member for Leeds, West is correct to say that we have a problem on the capital account and that exists because the problems on the revenue account were not tackled earlier. We have a backlog of repair and maintenance to address.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Sir George Young: Many questions have been put to me, and I would like to make some progress.

I agree entirely with what was said about local management. My Department's urban housing renewal unit is promoting local management and a local repair base on the estates. Through the priority estate project we

[Sir George Young]

have been promoting local management as an important ingredient in putting right some of the problems on the estates.

I was asked a number of questions on the Housing Defects Act 1984. With regard to Reema blocks, we have commissioned the Building Research Establishment to study the large panel system buildings and the research results, which are beginning to come through, should be helpful. Duo slab has not been found to be defective nationally but we are considering carefully Leeds' latest proposals. It may be that local designation or acquisition, with Government sanction, may be the answer.

Last year the hon. Member for Erdington kindly brought a deputation to see me and we have asked the BRE to study the Boswell system. As yet we have not had the report from the BRE, but when we do we undertake to publish it. It is better for the BRE to consider all the evidence, even if it means that it takes a little longer, and to provide the research needed to enable us to reach the right decision rather than to cut corners and reach the wrong one.

It is worth recalling that, before the Housing Defects Act 1984 was put on the statute book, there was no remedy for people. Although it is taking slightly longer to designate approved systems and although we are processing new applicants for designations, the Act has brought relief and peace of mind to many thousands of people, who otherwise would have been told, "Caveat emptor."

I was disappointed to hear the hon. Member for Conventry, South-East criticise his local authority for the approach which it has adopted on a number of estates. In Coventry an entirely pragmatic approach has been adopted—one can make faster progress in putting right some of the defects on these estates if one uses the additional resources of the private sector. If there are blocks which are difficult to let—vacant and vandalised—and the local authority has not got the resources to put them right, what is wrong with asking a private developer to put them right? The blocks can then be offered, in the first instance, to those on the waiting list or to sitting council tenants. Therefore, the local authority gets the benefit of the re-lets or reduced pressure on the waiting list. The local authority receives a capital receipt for disposing of the block. It creates work in the constituency for those who will refurbish the blocks and, at the end of the day, it provides homes for those on the waiting list, or those who want to buy and are sitting council tenants. It is sheer dogma to deny that solution.

Mr. Nellist: I am grateful to the Minister for finally giving way. The reason why I object to the privatisation of estates or parts of estates is that it will not solve the problem of the 9,000 waiting list in Coventry. Over the past seven years the city has lost over £100 million in grants. The Minister asks why we are not spending more time praising the private sector for coming in to put right the problems of the public sector. Those estates, of no fine construction—the Minister said that they are difficult to let because of vandalism—were built in the 1950s and 1960s by private sector constructors. The Wimpeys, Laings and other big construction companies in this country are responsible for building those estates. That is our objection.

Sir George Young: They were built by the private companies, but they were designed and commissioned by the local authorities. It is naive to blame the private sector for defects—many of which are defects of design. If the hon. Gentleman read the publications by Dr. Alice Helman he would see that she attributes—although I do not endorse everything she says—many of the problems on the estates to design rather than construction, management or anything else.

From all that we have heard, it could be thought that the Government's housing policies are unpopular, but that is not so. Many of our housing policies are so popular that Opposition parties are busy trying to adopt them. I am happy to say that the dogmatic opposition to the right to buy has now been abandoned. I am interested that the Labour party's policy is now to put people first. That has not been one of its housing preoccupations in the past.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr asked two specific questions. The first concerned the request from councillors in the north-west to meet Ministers of the Department of the Environment. This is open season for discussions of HIP allocations and, by and large, Ministers resist seeing deputations from local authorities. That is because, if we meet one, we must meet them all. If a deputation led by a Member puts in a request, we will consider it sympathetically. If we agree to see one local authority about its HIP allocation, we have to agree to see all 320. If the hon. Member for Perry Barr aspires to ministerial office, I ask him to exercise a little caution before he urges Ministers to adopt the policy of seeing all deputations.

I was invited to Tower Hamlets in April by the then Labour-controlled council, but it withdrew the invitation shortly before the local elections. I am trying to secure another invitation to visit the Isle of Dogs so that I may see what is happening in the area. We have had no inquiries from Tower Hamlets about housing people in a boat. Responsibility rests with the authority to discharge its obligations under the Act.

The urban housing renewal unit has shown that there are new ways of tackling problems on estates. I have been encouraged by the response from nearly all local authorities that we have approached through the unit. We have announced 40 schemes and many more are coming through. We have allocated £21 million so far and that will have an effect on about 25,000 properties. I am happy to say that the response of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) was untypical of the response of most of the local authorities with which I have been in touch.

I am conscious that many other matters have been raised than those to which I have responded. Unfortunately, I do not have time to deal with the remainder in the time that remains available to me. I shall reply by post to Members who have raised matters with which I have not dealt.

I shall now address myself briefly to homelessness, a subject which has been raised by a number of hon. Members. We have made it clear that the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for the homeless should be considered only as a last resort. Among other things, authorities should ensure that their own property does not lie empty unnecessarily. I commend the robust statement of the hon. Member for Perry Barr on that subject.

Authorities have wide powers to control standards of bed-and-breakfast accommodation. The possibility of any extension to their powers can be considered in the light of research that we are currently conducting.

The homeless stand to benefit from a wide range of general Government housing policies, including measures to encourage the private rented sector. If only we could have some agreement between the two parties on an acceptable regime for the private rented sector, perhaps we could get the 500,000 houses in that sector back into use. We have facilitated the sub-letting of council dwellings and we have instituted a hostels initiative. Recently we have given further advice to local authorities on how to reduce the number of empty dwellings in their area. We have extended the housing association grant to council dwellings that are awaiting major repairs. We have also increased the resources available to voluntary bodies to give housing advice.

It is always useful for the House to have an opportunity to debate housing. I remain convinced that the broad range of policies that is being developed by the Government is the right approach to housing and that the solutions that we have heard offered this evening, especially from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, would replicate some of the problems that we have been discussing.

Sheep (Radioactivity)

12.59 am

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I am glad that we have been given an opportunity—it has been the only one—to debate the effects of the radiation ban on sheep movements since it was announced on 20 June. It is incredible that the Secretary of State for Wales has not made a statement on the Floor of the House in the five weeks since the ban came into force. It is equally incredible that the Secretary of State for Wales has not been to Gwynedd or those parts of Clwyd or Powys that have been affected by the ban, although he has attended many meetings in Wales. If he had visited those areas, he would have known of the feeling of the farmers, as we do.

Hon. Members who represent the area and have had meetings with farmers, the Farmers Union of Wales and the National Farmers Union, know full well the depth of concern. If it had not been for tonight's debate, which we have been fortunate to have, we would have left the House of Commons for the three-month recess without having aired the subject that is causing great concern not only in our part of Wales but in Cumbria and the south of Scotland.

I deliberately ensured that the title of the matter I requested for debate tonight was broad enough to allow hon. Members from Cumbria and the south of Scotland who wished to take part to do so. I know that the matter is of great concern to them also.

I congratulate the Government on their sudden awakening this week to the seriousness of the matter, and on today's announcement. We wonder whether it would have happened had there not been pressure this week from farmers who took part in the Royal Welsh Show, and without the focus that today's debate has provided for people to concentrate their minds.

I shall refer to the details of the announcement earlier today of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in a written reply and the comments made on it. First, I wish to place on record my dissatisfaction that the contents of the Minister's reply were available for press conferences in Wales at 4 o'clock this afternoon when they were not available to hon. Members. That is an abuse of the House and a discourtesy to hon. Members. It makes it difficult for the House to do its work properly.

In reply to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) today, the Welsh Office said that material was available in the Library. I checked a few moments ago, and the material is still not available. That is not good enough from both the Welsh Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The sheep sector in my county of Gwynedd is extremely important. It is the fundamental part of the agricultural scene. It is as critical to Gwynedd as the dairy sector is to Dyfed and the grain sector is to East Anglia. The farms in my area are largely family units, which often have a breadline economy. It is not the sort of economy of the large barley barons in other parts of these islands. It is interesting to note that a greater proportion of the agricultural fraternity receives family income supplement than does any other sector in Gwynedd. That shows how near the bone the industry frequently operates.

The months of June and July are critical months for the sheep sector. That is the time when the cash comes in to pay the bills—or it should. That is the crisis that people

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have faced this year. As a result of the ban, the money has not come in. That is the time when farmers receive compensation for their sleepless nights during the critical lambing season in January and February. Many farmers have no other source of funds. They have no other income to sustain their families.

The Chernobyl accident was a tragedy of many dimensions. It has sown the seeds of early death for thousands of people in Soviet Russia. One must keep things in perspective. It has caused economic and health problems of an enormous dimension in many parts of Europe. No one would argue that the sheep problems in Gwynedd, Cumbria and the south of Scotland are more than a small problem compared with the enormous problems in other areas. None the less, they are major problems for the families whose livelihoods depend on the sheep sector.

The incident brings home the enormous dangers of the nuclear world in which we live, for there are no barriers to the cloud-borne radiation, and the rain falls where it will. The rain that fell during the weekend of 2 and 3 May in Wales, especially north Wales, caused a growth in radiation levels, and that led to the ban on the movement of some 900,000 lambs in north Wales. The ban has hit 4,000 farmers.

I am not criticising the Government for taking safety precautions. It is essential that everyone is aware that safety is of paramount importance. It is necessary for the public good. It is necessary that people, especially customers who buy lamb not only in these islands but abroad, know that the lamb on sale is clean lamb and is not affected by radiation.

The press statement issued by the Welsh Office on 7 May is a little ironic. Referring to radioactivity levels, it stated:

"They present no threat to human or animal health, and although it is at present inadvisable to drink fresh rainwater over long periods, it is entirely safe to drink other water and milk".

There is a certain complacency that, with hindsight, is perhaps regrettable.

A balance must be struck between avoiding panic and fostering complacency. I accept that it is not always easy to strike that balance. I accept also that, although the 1,000 bq/kg level is not a dangerous amount to eat, it was right to raise an alert when that level was discovered. I have been eating lamb in the meantime, as have many other people. We should have confidence in our products. None the less, questions must be answered. The safety mechanism had to be brought in. It is necessary for the good name of Welsh lamb that the world outside should have total confidence in it. We need, however, to learn as much as possible from the tragic experience in recent weeks.

If the ban was necessary, it is important to accept that in no way was its introduction the farmers' fault. They had no control over the fact that the ban was imposed, yet they are the ones who are in danger of suffering enormous losses, as are certain other services relating to agriculture, such as abattoirs, butchers, hauliers and auctioneers. If the ban was introduced as a necessary measure, why was it introduced in a chaotic and haphazard manner? I think that that is the genuine feeling in the industry, and it certainly is in my constituency.

Some difficulties must be cleared up. Will the Under-Secretary of State assure us that there have been no readings of radioactive caesium greater than 1,000 bq/kg in any meat slaughtered before 26 April? It is important that confirmation is given. It has been feared that radioactivity caused by factors other than the Chernobyl incident is being measured. The Irish sea near north Wales has recently been described as the most radioactive sea in the world. Sellafield is involved. It is ironic that south Scotland, Cumbria and north Wales are near that sea. There are two nuclear power plants in Gwynedd. The question is whether radioactivity has been measured in meat killed before the Chernobyl incident. That point must be nailed down firmly.

Why were no readings on radioactivity in lamb taken in north Wales before 2 June? In Cumbria, lambs had been tested on, I believe, 14 May and were found to have levels in excess of 1,000 bq/kg. It only takes three or four days for those readings to be analysed. Was the Welsh Office waiting for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to take readings in Cumbria before taking any initiatives on lamb? Did not the Ministry tell the Welsh Office, or was the Welsh Office supposed to be carrying out the inquiry itself but had not bothered to do so? The delay of between a fortnight and three weeks is incomprehensible in the sort of climate that led to the ban.

Why was there no more consultation in the weeks before 20 June with local authorities and those who were supposed to be in charge of civil defence? If there is no consultation on such an issue, what on earth is the point in having local civil defence functions? The Gwynedd public protection committee met on the Thursday, the day before the ban was announced, but no information had been given to it.

Why have no proper facilities for the monitoring of radioactivity been available? The nearest facility for monitoring carcases, other than the ad hoc facilities at the nuclear power stations and the university, is in Preston. Why is there no equipment available to monitor radioactivity in live animals without slaughtering? I understand that now, at last, one unit is available in north Wales and that animals can be put through and instant readings are produced. If such equipment had been brought in much sooner it would have saved a lot of heartache. We would have got results much sooner and statistical samples of greater accuracy would have been available.

Having decided to implement the ban on 20 June, very little information was available. The statement made by the Minister of Agriculture, and repeated by the Secretary of State for Wales, was very difficult to understand, especially the last sentence where it said:

"the Government will be prepared to discuss cases of compensation for severe loss in particular circumstances to specific farmers."—[*Official Report*, 20 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. 1321.]

It will be interesting to know whether, in the light of today's announcement, the Government have rethought that statement and that we are not talking about "severe loss" now but about all losses. That is fundamental to our understanding of the position. I would like the Minister to clarify that.

There was a meeting on 26 June, the week after the announcement, in Caernarfon with representatives of the Farmers Union of Wales, the National Farmers Union and the Welsh Office. It was not possible for Welsh Office

staff to tell farmers what sort of information they should be keeping and recording on which they could then base claims. I hope that as the claims come in, when the forms are available in three weeks, as I understand they will be, no claims will be rejected because information was not kept at that time. Farmers were begging the Government to give some explanation as to what information was needed and no substantial reply was forthcoming from officers of the Welsh Office. I understand that the same was true in England with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and in Scotland with the Scottish Office. As a result, farmers did not know what was going to happen. They knew that there was no cash coming in from sales, there was great uncertainty, there was destabilisation of the industry and that was worrying the bank managers to whom the farmers were turning for loans to keep them going. That destabilisation was partly because of the lack of information available over the first three or four weeks of the crisis.

Until today there had been no certainty as to who would get compensation and what the basis and procedure would be. It is totally inexcusable and complacent to leave farmers in the lurch. Last weekend at Caernarfon and at Llangefni I found farmers who were seething at the situation. At last the message got through. If we look at one example given to me by a farmer from Anglesey who telephoned on Sunday morning, we get a feeling of the loss. He has about 1,000 lambs which he thinks will soon become too fat to be graded. He estimates a loss of as much as £20 for each lamb. That is a total loss of £20,000 for that one farmer. That sort of money is not easily available to farmers in Gwynedd. The resources they have are the capital assets of their farms such as the animals. The animals also represent the potential working capital on which farmers are totally dependent if they are to get any sort of cash flow.

That one example brought home to me the magnitude of the loss faced by those people. Many of them are facing the loss of a lifetime's work. Farmers were rightly concerned as to whether each farmer would be compensated for individual loss on a case by case basis. They were concerned as to whether the confidence of the bank managers would be ensured to secure loans. They were anxious to ensure that there was confidence in the future of the industry and that markets would not be lost as a result of the radioactivity.

They were concerned that payment should be made to enable sheep to be moved from hills to the lower pastures and that there would be a mechanism for that. I understand that today's announcement does give some lead on that matter, although it is far from clear as to how the mechanism will work. The farmers particularly wanted a maximisation of information to be forthcoming.

The lack of information throughout that period has stood out and added to the aggravation farmers feel, in particular over the lack of detail about the compensation schemes. They wanted the scheme to take into account the long-term losses to the industry and to meet the short-term cash-flow questions. There may appear to be a contradiction in those aims, but both are essential to the farmers. They wanted the scheme to compensate for losses to the store trade, and for compensation to be available to make up for the loss of grading as lambs grew too fat and quality suffered. They wanted compensation for the cost of the extra fodder needed while holding lambs during the ban on movement. They wanted interest payments arising from their failure to get their cash in on time, and to be able to claim compensation for an interim period, if the long-term effects were not altogether clear.

For five weeks farmers were unable to get any clarification from the Government. Last week the problem became particularly acute because, until then, during the first two or three weeks it was possible to let things ride in the hope that lambs would not grow too fat and that perhaps no more than 10 per cent. would pass their grader with a loss of quality or not be graded. But as the weeks passed, the crisis hit home. Moreover, readings of radioactivity over 1,000 bq/kg persisted, when it had been expected that that would disappear much more quickly. That continues to cause considerable worry. There was uncertainty about compensation and the impending problems caused by the period of the ban running into the time when the store sales should take place and, when, traditionally in Wales, sheep are brought down from the mountains to the lowlands for wintering. There was a danger that they could not move from the mountains, but there would be no fodder for them on the mountains. That is why there has been an upsurge of feeling on this matter during the past 10 days.

I welcome today's compensation package, but why on earth was it not possible to announce it sooner? It would have saved many farmers who have been sick to death with considerable worry over the past five weeks. A great deal of detail still remains to be worked out. In a written answer today the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food states:

"So far as compensation is concerned, the Government recognise that farmers who were prevented by the restrictions from marketing finished lambs at the usual time may have a higher proportion than normal rejected for variable premium because they will have become over-fat by the time they are eventually able to be sold; and that these animals may also attract lower than average prices in the markets. Where such losses have been sustained and can be substantiated, the Government will be prepared to meet them." — [*Official Report*, 24 July 1986; Vol. 102, c. *494*.]

How are farmers expected to substantiate their claims? On what information are they expected to do that? Farmers will expect the Minister to spell that out in the debate. Will they depend on last year's grading patterns? Will those facts and figures be acceptable? Without that information the scheme is meaningless to farmers. The Minister must spell that out.

Will interest payments on the additional loans incurred by farmers be met by the Government under the provisions of today's announcement? Is the compensation cash-limited or will all substantiated cases be fully met? Will interim payments be made for farmers with cash-flow problems who may take a long time to prepare detailed answers? Will compensation be payable to cover any significant drop in the market prices caused by a glut when the ban is finally removed? Will there be help for abattoirs, hauliers, auctioneers and other associated services, which have suffered losses and may suffer even greater losses? How long will claims take to be processed and how will the bureaucratic delay be minimised? It seems that there will be a bureaucratic delay and, if farmers have had to wait three weeks for the forms, they cannot afford to wait much longer to get the forms processed and for the money to come in.

Can the Minister confirm that he has ruled out the possibility of buying up lambs, whether for slaughter or otherwise? What compensation will be paid to farmers

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whose sheep have, for the past five weeks, been eating the grass and hay that was meant to be fodder for later in the year? Farmers will incur greater fodder costs because they will have to make up the deficiency. The answers to those questions are not clear from today's statement, but the farmers need answers to them very soon if the statement is to be meaningful.

May I deal with some other general problems that must be tackled. What is the position on radioactivity in fodder? If there is a level of more than 500 bq/kg in dry matter silage, is it safe to use? What tests have been made? Has the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service been asked to monitor the effect of radioactivity in fodder fed to cows? What will be the effect on milk? This must be known, especially since readings of that level have already been taken in Wales.

A parliamentary answer of 15 July showed that in the Arfon and Dwyfor areas of my constituency there were no readings in excess of 1,000 bq/kg for lambs in any of the 102 samples taken. On 16 and 18 July, further readings all showed levels below 1,000 bq/kg, so why are Arfon and Dwyfor still within the restricted area?

Why were not more samples taken more rapidly? Do we now have the capability of taking as many samples as necessary, and do we have the equipment and personnel to ensure that if this happens again we shall not get into a similar mess? What studies are being made into the genetic effects of the radiation? It will have a long-term effect. Serious questions are raised which would affect compensation, and the Minister must answer them. If there are ewes on the mountains with radiation levels of more than 2,000 bq now, and it takes three months for the level of radiation to fall by half, the serious implications are that the level will be 600 bq only by the middle of winter. How will the Government handle those sheep? There is no answer to that question in today's statement.

On the long-term prospects for the industry, will the Government undertake to put money into promoting lamb, which is so important to my area?

The effects of the Chernobyl tragedy have reached Gwynedd, Cumbria and the south of Scotland. We can imagine how much worse it would have been if there had been a similar accident at Trawsfynydd, Wylfa or the other nuclear power stations in Britain. We can imagine how much worse yet it would be if there was a nuclear war. I will not go down that road, but those who say that it would be survivable leave open many questions. There must be a much more open approach to the nuclear industry. Farmers and the entire community must be taken into the confidence of Government, with full information being made available. In six to nine months' time, there should be a review of how the events of this recent period was handled and, if necessary, a formal inquiry into the handling of the matter by different Government agencies.

What is important now is to obtain compensation for those farmers, who face destitution unless they get it. They must know how much they will get, how they will get it and how quickly they will get it. I hope that the Minister will answer many of my questions tonight.

1.18 am

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): I am greatly in accord with much of what the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said. This is a timely debate, and for my constituents the most important debate that we have had this year, because they have suffered greatly. It can be said with common consent that the farmers of Anglesey have been hit the hardest of all by the ban. We are talking about small farmers whose livelihoods have been put at risk because of the ban. If some malign influence had been at work to find a time which would have had the most detrimental effect upon farmers, it would have chosen this month, for it is during this month that Anglesey farmers take their lambs to market. That has caused the most terrible problems for them. My hon. Friend the Minister will know of this, as I have constantly reminded my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales about the situation.

What has caused particular concern for the farmers of Anglesey is the initial statements from the Government about lambs not being ready for market, as though this was a matter that would not have a particularly serious effect upon some farmers. That may have been true in respect of some sheep farmers in some parts of the United Kingdom who were subject to the ban, but it was certainly not true of the sheep farmers of Anglesey who, as I have indicated, were at that very moment expecting to be able to take their lambs to market. At that time, upon the imposition of the ban, farmers were telling me that they were expecting to take their lambs to market that week and for 200 lambs at about £40 a head, that has occasioned a loss of £8,000 or more. That is a lot of money to a small sheep farmer. With the normal expenditure that has to be met at this time, and with banks breathing down their necks and the absence of a reasonable expectation of income from the sale of lambs, their finances have been thrown into turmoil.

It is right to place on record that it is not just a question of compensation; it is also a question of the pride of farmers. They have spent many months rearing these lambs and take a pride in the way they are reared, with the expectation of going to market and achieving good prices in return for all the husbandry that has been put into the rearing; but that has been thrown into jeopardy.

Farming is a profession, a fact that we should acknowledge, and that too has been put into difficulty. South of the A5 on Anglesey and west of the Amlwch to Llangefni line has now been taken out of the ban, but there remains the eastern side of the island within the ban. That is the side where there have been the highest readings of becquerels per kilo in lambs. I have asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales repeatedly whether it is possible now, with all the monitoring that has taken place, to project precisely when that eastern side of the island can come out of the ban. It is not good enough merely to extend the ban with no certainty of when those farmers will know they can take their lambs to market. A trend must surely now be established with the diminution and dissipation of the radiocaesium levels for people to know with a fair degree of certainty when the ban might be lifted.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) might have a point, of course. We live next to the Irish sea, which is radioactive, but the effects may not simply be the effects of Chernobyl; I sincerely hope that they are, but, since there has been a marked absence of sampling techniques hitherto, I do not

think that we can with certainty say that at a particular time we will be able to lift the ban. I hope that we can, but I do not think that there is any certainty.

Mr. Best: I know that the hon. Gentleman is not trying to be mischievous, but there is a great danger of interpreting more from the problems than is actually there. Having looked at this carefully, I am satisfied that the presence of nuclear power stations has had no effect on this crisis and that it is entirely due to Chernobyl. To promote any other idea without its being based on any evidence does grave damage not only to the nuclear power industry but to the farmers and to the Welsh lamb industry. I know that that would be the furthest thing from the hon. Gentleman's mind.

I pay a tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, because he has assiduously taken the problem on board and has investigated it fully. After I had met in my house both farmers' unions and the butchers —and they told me that it was a unique event that the two farmers' unions and the butchers should come together and speak with one voice—I went to Bala for a meeting on 1 July with all the secretaries of the farmers' unions for the whole of the area affected and then came to the House of Commons. I left my right hon. Friend a four-page letter, and that evening he was good enough to discuss the subject with me for an hour and a half. During that discussion I asked him to meet the farmers to discuss the question of compensation.

A great deal of harm occurred because the farmers did not know whether they would even have an opportunity to make representations about compensation. I am glad to say that my right hon. Friend met the farmers' unions on 7 July. They came away feeling that they had been able to put their case to him.

I accept the paramount need to protect the public health, as the hon. Member for Caernarfon said, but I fear that there may have been an over-reaction, as the hon. Gentleman demonstrated by the press release to which he referred. When it is known that one could eat lamb containing 1,000 bq/kg every day for a year and have a total ingestion of radiocaesium of less than half the dosage of one X-ray, the matter begins to come into perspective.

There must be constant monitoring, and I hope that the results of such monitoring will be made available. I agree with the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) that the public must be satisfied that the radiocaesium levels are due entirely to the tragedy of Chernobyl and have nothing to do with the nuclear power industry in this country. It is a coincidence that the ban was imposed in areas where nuclear power stations were sited. Any fears that the public have must be assuaged, and that can be done only by constant monitoring.

Let us consider the losses sustained by the farmers. There is the reduced variable premium, of about 20p per kilo, and on a 16-kilo lamb that comes to £3·20. For a farmer with many lambs to take to market, that represents a great deal of money. There are also the rejects of lambs that are over-fat. That means a loss of about 70p per kilo, which on a 16-kilo lamb is £11·20. There is also the loss of haymaking for winter forage. A farmer in my constituency will have to buy in 80 tonnes of hay at £60 a tonne, representing a loss to him of £4,800.

The Minister should announce not only whether interest will be paid on the loans made necessary and the compensation payments, whenever they are made, but whether the fact that those losses have been sustained over a period of weeks will be taken in account so that the interest payments will be backdated to the time from when the loss was sustained.

Nothing has been said about losses sustained by butchers. I am sufficient of a realist to think it unlikely that butchers will receive any compensation. But a butcher in my constituency reckons that he has been losing about £800 a week as a result of the ban.

Following the natural concern that people expressed and their reluctance to buy Welsh lamb, I am pleased to note that not only have lamb prices been holding up in the markets — a development that might not have been expected—but that there is a good indication that the general public has not been put off Welsh lamb.

I welcome yesterday's statement about compensation. I regret that it was not possible to make it earlier. I fully understand the anger and concern of my farmers about the absence of any conclusive statement about compensation. One accepts entirely that the final basis for compensation could not have been worked out, but a statement could have been made that spelt out the kind of compensation that might be payable. The written answer of today says:

"the Government recognise that farmers who were prevented by the restrictions from marketing finished lambs at the usual time may have a higher proportion than normal rejected for variable premium . . . Where such losses have been sustained and can be substantiated, the Government will be prepared to meet them."

I hope that the written answer means what it says—that all losses that can be substantiated will be met—and that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to confirm that.

Furthermore, what is meant by substantiation? What records will have to be shown? I asked for guidance from the Welsh Office from the very beginning so that farmers could be told by the Welsh Office what records they needed to keep and what documentary evidence would be necessary for the computation of compensation. Sadly, that advice has not been forthcoming. I hope that it will be forthcoming tonight.

The written answer also says that where it is found necessary to continue the restrictions, hopefully it will be overcome by enabling the movement of store lambs and draft and cull ewes off the holdings. The farmers' unions have also drawn the Government's attention to the fact that some of the farmers concerned are already faced with additional expenditure. We know that.

I am also glad to see that the written answer says that urgent discussions will be held

"with the unions about these problems and also about what compensation might be appropriate to cover the direct losses which the farmers concerned may thereby incur."—[*Official Report*, 24 July 1986; Vol. 102, c. *494*.]

However, the statement contains nothing about the cash flow problems that farmers who are still under the ban are being faced with now. That is the gravest crisis. One can compute the losses for the farmers who are able to take their lambs to market. It seems that they will be paid compensation. I hope that that will be made clear tonight. However, I have been pressing consistently, but so far without success, for some form of interim payment for those farmers who are still under the ban, especially if no sign can be given of when the ban might be lifted. Those farmers are suffering severe cash flow problems, because they are trying to pay for items which would normally be paid for by the income from the sale of the lambs. I hope

[Mr. Best]

that something can be done for those farmers, otherwise they will be driven into bankruptcy. If something is not done to assist them, small sheep farmers in Wales will have to go out of business.

The percentage of over-fat lambs that are being rejected is far higher than I had been led to believe. Between 5 and 10 per cent. and sometimes as much as 14 per cent. of Anglesey lambs going to market are being rejected because they are over-fat. I have here a sheaf of letters from farmers which tell a harrowing story of the losses that they have sustained. One letter is a brief note setting out a few details of 100 lambs sold to Halal. Five were not graded; they were over-fat and will realise 146p a kilo, approximately £27. The 95 graded lambs will realise approximately 185p a kilo. Multiplied by 18 kilos a lamb, that is approximately £33. With a subsidy of approximately 33p a kilo, worth approximately £6, the total value is £39. That is £39 compared with £27, or a loss for the over-fat lambs of £12. Some 154 lambs were sold previously at an average price of £43.

This is an immensely grave problem. It has been fully recognised by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and I pay tribute to him for what he has done to try to help the farmers. There has, however, to be instant help now. We have got beyond talking about compensation. It must now start flowing by way of interim payments to farmers who are facing uncertainty and possible bankruptcy because they continue to be in the ban and have no knowledge of when it may be lifted.

1.35 am

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I shall not speak for long, because some hon. Members present are more seriously affected than am I and my constituents. The livestock industry, and especially the sheep industry are, like me, worried for the affected farmers.

Farmers who have had the movement of lambs restricted because of the Chernobyl disaster must receive adequate compensation for losses from that man-made disaster. Sheep producers in north Wales, Cumbria and southern Scotland are the innocent victims. It is clear from what the Minister said today that he is beginning to think in terms of more suitable compensation. The problem with the statement, however, is that it does not spell out in anything like enough detail how he will tackle the problem.

Will all farmers whose normal marketing pattern has been disrupted be compensated? Will all lambs which genuinely fail to qualify for variable premium as a result of over-fatness be compensated for? All such lambs should have the sale price made up, by variable premium, to the guide price at the time that they would have been marketed, not now. Lamb prices slide throughout June and July. There is a tremendous drop which must be taken into account if farmers are to be compensated adequately. Will account be taken of the overall effect on farm cash flow, especially if farmers have to borrow to sustain themselves through a whole month of no sales? Will compensation take account of interest payments which arise through lack of sales?

A farmer might have had 200 lambs to sell at £40 in mid-June. Their value would have fallen to £30 by mid-July. If he had had a stop on all of his movements, he would have lost £2,000. That is a substantial sum of money. If he was running an overdraft of £10,000 on the assumption that he would sell his lambs in mid-June for £8,000, he would have only a £2,000 overdraft by the middle of July. Those are serious figures which the farming community in the affected areas must assess.

Compensation must be paid soon. Interim payments are essential. But we do not know on what basis the record keeping of the farmers concerned will have to be judged. It is essential that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Welsh Office and the Scottish Office take a realistic view if farmers in the affected areas were not instructed to keep records. Indeed, if they sell lambs on live weight rather than dead weight, those farmers will be in a difficult position on record keeping. Those who sell on dead weight will have better records, particularly if they have been selling on dead weight in the previous year.

We must look at 1986 overall. Lambs have been produced late due to the season and they have come on to the market far later in 1986 than they did in 1985 and previous years. That has tended to distort the marketing pattern anyway.

Will the Secretary of State consider assistance for abattoirs which have been having a rough time, not only in those areas where there have been restrictions on lambs, but also outside the restricted areas. In the south-west of England, North Devon Meat has virtually gone under recently and has had to be rescued by Hillsdown Holdings. That has this very week caused the FMC abattoir in my constituency to close because FMC is owned by Hillsdown Holdings and they are obviously having a rationalisation programme.

Dr. Marek: FMC has been having a rationalisation programme for some time and it would not be fair to blame that on the problems caused by the Chernobyl disaster.

Mr. Livsey: I understand the hon. Gentleman's reference to that, but I was merely pointing out that there is a crisis in the meat industry anyway and that has been compounded by the effects of the Chernobyl disaster in the effected areas. In other words, matters are becoming somewhat worse for the industry.

Those areas that are affected, whether they be in Wales, Cumbria or Scotland, to some extent produce store lambs, particularly the upland areas. If the levels of contamination in terms of bq/kg, continue at high levels, they will shortly be evident in lambs sold in the store season. The Secretary of State and the Minister should come up with answers for the marketing of store lambs in the near future.

In some coastal areas of north Wales — I do not know the position in Cumbria or southern Scotland — where silage making took place in mid-May, there is some evidence of contamination of silage. We have the opportunity not to feed that contaminated silage. If there is serious contamination of silage, is the Minister prepared to run a scheme so that the silage is not used for feed, and replacement fodder is brought into those areas? Farmers could be compensated accordingly.

1.44 am

Mr. John Corrie (Cunninghame, North): I thank the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) for raising this debate. It is appropriate that it should be held on the day when the Minister has announced compensation. I look forward to hearing more about that in future.

I hope that hon. Members from Wales will not mind if another Member from a Celtic fringe takes part in the debate. This matter has affected me personally and I have to declare a personal interest in the debate. My farm in the south-west of Scotland is in the worst affected area and we have a large number of lambs running on the farm that should have been marketed some time ago. The Ministry vets were there yesterday checking on our annual dipping, and when we examined the lambs we found that something like 80 per cent. are now far too fat for the market and will suffer a severe drop in price when the time comes to sell.

In an area close to my farm where the ban has been lifted, lambs ready for killing on 23 June at a weight of 1 kg would have made £49·30. They were sold in Stranraer market on Monday and made £29·50. That is simply the price of the lamb, but they have lost the premium payment and, as has been said, they have had a month of extra grazing, and bank interest has to be paid. I plead with my hon. Friend the Minister to ask the banks to take the pressure off farmers within the next week or two. They must know that compensation is coming forward and that the farmers have the capital asset of the lambs for which finance will come in in the near future. It would be an enormous help if something could be said to the major banks.

We are moving into another problem area in that there are many breeding sales, not only of old ewes but of lambs, coming off. In hill areas, certainly in the south of Scotland, farms cannot keep the lambs any longer and they will have to be shifted. I look forward to what the Minister has to say about breeding animals and whether it will be possible to sell them.

There is a strange situation in my constituency in that on the Island of Arran, 17 miles off the coast, there are extremely high readings, and yet on the Mull of Kintyre on the west side and on the east side of the mainland there are no significant readings. There is a nuclear power station on the east side and no lambs in that area have been affected. Arran has been dramatically affected and the farmers there have to get their lambs off the island because they do not have grazing for them. That means that over the next few weeks the animals will have to be slaughtered or moved off the island. They have just been brought down from the hills and, as other hon. Members have said, when that happens lambs eat into the winter grazing.

We have found in Scotland that the smaller the lamb the higher the reading. Is it necessary to go to the lower weights when carrying out these tests? After all, we are worried about lambs coming forward at marketable weight for killing, and if we continue to test the very small lambs, while they are growing it will stretch the time that farmers are affected. Those lambs will never reach the market because they would not be sent there at that age. I suggest that a weight of something like 22 kg should be the cut-off point and that no lamb below that weight should be tested.

Another of our problems is that we have no base norm from which to work. I do not know about the situation in Wales, but we certainly have hard granite mountains on Arran and in Scotland. There is no doubt that those emit a natural high background radiation all the time. I assume that never in the past have we had to do tests of this kind to see whether sheep or cattle running on that sort of ground have a different starting norm on the Becquerel readings during their lifetime. I hope that in future some work can be carried out along those lines.

For the next year or more, will we continue to conduct monitoring tests? I also wonder whether the residue has any effect on breeding sheep. Will it have a long-standing effect on our breeding stock? I understand that in Scotland tests have been conducted on hay and silage and that the readings are extremely low, something like 300-400 bq/kg, so it would appear that that will not be a difficult problem for Scotland. Farmers are having a tough time and in many ways this is the last straw and has broken the camel's back.

We had a viciously bad winter last year, preceded by a viciously bad autumn and summer. We struggled through and came to a reasonably good spring, at long last. But then, this terrible affliction hit us. Many small farmers, and many bigger farmers, will not be farming this time next year because of this last blow.

I hope that the Government accept that this is not just another short-term problem. It will linger because of the store markets and the store lambs still to come. I hope that compensation will be stretched and not simply paid off. This was a horrendously unfortunate accident. It shows how far the rain clouds spread. It would be pointless for us to do away with the nuclear industry at home if we can suffer from an accident 1,600 miles away.

1.50 am

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Experience has taught us that radiation and pollution know no national boundaries, so we need international action to deal with such a crisis. I speak as someone who represents not only an area with a power station, but the people in the Snowdonia national park and a large part of the hill areas north and mid Wales—the area where the highest level of radiation in lambs has been registered.

The whole incident could have been handled differently by the Government. I do not criticise the local officials, who worked extremely hard, within the information available, to reassure farmers. I do not criticise Department officials in Cardiff, who have been helpful to me about all my queries. I direct criticism at the political level. I echo what my hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said.

I do not expect the Minister to respond to every query tonight. I am sure that he will do us the courtesy of writing to us during the recess, since we shall not have the opportunity to question him again for some time—unless he and his colleagues face the farmers in our constituencies. My hon. Friend set out the parameters. We are unanimous in our criticism of the way in which the problem was handled.

I first discovered the effects of Chernobyl indirectly from employees of the CEGB, who will remain anonymous. They provided me with the radiation levels that would have been monitored around the power station in my constituency during the weekend of high rainfall and the cloud.

I am no expert in radiation, although for 13 years I have represented a constituency in which there is a nuclear power station, so I have developed some expertise. It should have been clear to anyone knowing anything about radiation, radiobiology and the half-lives of isotopes that levels of radiation of 4,000 becquerels would be experienced. We should have known that such high levels would be registered within that time.

I admit that this was a new experience. It was new for the agriculture departments. We had never experienced

[Mr. D. E. Thomas]

such an event before. We did not know the need to monitor such an accident. We had always assumed that nuclear accidents would affect only the immediate environs of the power station. We planned for that. We thought that small-scale gaseous discharges would be the main source of radioactive pollution.

It was on those bases that we established our "worst case" scenarios and plans. However, much more serious contamination was spread over a much wider area than we anticipated. I accept that at that stage we did not have the capability of monitoring, but that is a criticism of the way in which we approach the whole issue of the existence of a nuclear power industry and a military nuclear capability. When one has these capabilities, one should plan for the worst possible contingency, and that did not happen.

Given the kind of information that was emerging that weekend, and given our knowledge about radiation, we should have been able to foresee what would follow. Therefore, the Government should have been ready as soon as high levels of iodine and other nucleides were recorded. They should have been ready with a statement saying that if there were—and possibly there would be —readings above the now much reduced margins of alert — the factor of 10 which after Chernobyl was reduced in the levels of becquerels per kg in lamb, for example—we would be able to respond to them. We could have done so in two ways: first, by advising the public of the impact; and, secondly, by explaining the implications of certain becquerels. This is a complicated issue, but there is a need for far better education of the public of the reality of the risks involved in exposure to certain levels of radiation.

The problem is that we do not know exactly what we are talking about in terms of the impact on human health. We do not know how many additional incidents of leukaemia or cancer will be induced. We may be talking of only 20, 30, or 100 at the most, but the facts should be put clearly to the public so that people understand the implications. In a sense, the people of my area understand the technical language more than others because they live close to a nuclear power station, but there is a need for the Government to explain the position much more clearly.

In a situation such as this, the Government should have been ready with a clear statement of their intention to compensate those in agriculture who were affected by the need to restrict. Had they done so, the whole situation would have been different. Had they said from the beginning that there might be a danger to the public and that a trigger level might be reached—in much the same way as they gave warnings about rainwater—the whole atmosphere would have been better.

I discussed this with farmers earlier. We talked about whether people would have panicked more and whether there would have been an over-reaction. I spoke to those farmers as individuals, in committees and at mass meetings in Llanrwst market. They all told me that they would have preferred to have been warned much earlier so that they could have planned. Had the Government indicated from the beginning that there would be compensation in the event of restriction, this crisis — which in a sense has been of the Government's own manufacture during the past six weeks—could have been avoided.

I say that with hindsight on the morning after the anouncement of a compensation scheme. But it still must be said that this could have been handled very differently. There was a basis in law for the payment of compensation. I put this to the Secretary of State at one of my earlier meetings with him, because if a Government impose a safety limit that results in restrictions on agricultural activity, there is a clear responsibility on that Government to take on board the effects of the order that they have introduced. The case is as simple as that, and it could have been accepted.

We have not heard from the Secretary of State for Wales. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary has the privilege of being the first Welsh Office Minister to speak on this subject in the House, and I congratulate him on achieving that honour. It illustrates the failure of the Welsh Office to make statements to Parliament on this subject, although, since the ban was first introduced, we have pestered for them. It was essential for the Government to come clean. If the wording from the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food had been different on the day when the ban had been introduced —if the Ministry had not talked about specific cases, specific circumstances and special hardship, or whatever the precise wording was —but had rather stated, "Where there is, within the designated area, a clear case for compensation, that compensation will be paid", life would have been much easier.

I wish to make a couple of points arising out of the present situation in my constituency and the statement made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food yesterday. I am worried about the potential length of the ban and the effect on the movement of store lambs. Readings were published yesterday from the Aberconwy and Meirionnydd districts. I suspect that I know the farms from which the samples have been taken. Of the samples, 19 are above the level of 1,000 bq/kg in total radiocaesium. That is serious and it suggests that the ban will be effective in those areas for months rather than weeks, to reformulate a quote from Lord Wilson.

It is important for the Department to tell people what are the implications of the present levels and when reductions will occur. I am not asking that the Minister should tell us the precise date when areas will be clear but he must tell us the implications of such levels.

With regard to the statement yesterday by the Minister, we want to know what "substantiated" means. What kind of returns are required? I pay tribute to the members of the farming unions in my constituency and elsewhere who have advised people in the absence of advice from the Minister and the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service. At the meetings that I have attended the ADAS people were in great difficulty because they did not have specific guidelines. They were not able to tell the farmers what was necessary. The Farmers Union of Wales issued a circular in which it called for—I am translating from Welsh, and as it is early in the morning I may slip up— the date and the number of lambs ready for market, the period for which the lambs had been kept back on the farm and the effect of this on the forage, silage and hay production. The reduction in the income compared with a similar period over the past three years.

Those were the guidelines which John Dyer James of the Farmers Union of Wales in Meirionnydd sent out to his members. The Department should have issued such guidelines straightaway when getting the farmers ready for the compensation applications. I agree with the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) that the

level of differentiation on the variable premium should relate to the guide price at the time when these lambs would have been sold. If that is not done, there will be a serious additional loss.

It is important that the Ministry should spell out, as soon as possible, how it will devise arrangements to permit the movement of store lambs and draft and cull ewes. We are reaching a crisis point when there will have to be a mass movement of sheep out of these areas. The Minister must spell out how that will be dealt with.

What is meant by the extra expenditure which it was recognised in the Minister's statement has been incurred by some farmers? What will be the substance of the discussions with the unions about compensation which might be appropriate to cover, as stated in the Minister's statement,

"direct losses which the farmers concerned may thereby incur."[*Official Report*, 24 July 1984; Vol. 102, c. *494*.]

We need to know exactly how the Minister's statement is to be implemented in practice and the nature of the scheme on which the Department is working. The Department has had more than a month to consider these issues and proposals have been made to it directly. I made some proposals to the Minister's advisers on 20 June when I first met them following the imposition of the ban. Proposals were made on 25 June by the NFU in the area of Denbigh and Flint, part of which includes my constituency. Proposals were made—I relayed them—at the meeting at Llandrwst on 25 June. They were direct proposals from NFU and FUW members. Proposals were conveyed from an NFU meeting on 1 July, and from a further meeting of the FUW on 14 July. All these materials have been conveyed directly to the Department, including model schemes of compensation. It is a matter of regret that the Department was not able to respond earlier.

There is an important lesson to be learnt from this experience. If we have a nuclear industry, we have a moral responsibility to cope with the effects of the industry. If we have a defence policy that is based upon a nuclear deterrent, we have a moral obligation to ensure that the basic industry of society is not damaged as a result of any prospect of nuclear fission. We have failed in that moral responsibility.

2.6 am

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): First, I must pay tribute to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) for having raised this important matter at this hour of the morning. It is a fortunate coincidence that the announcement of effective measures of compensation should have been made so shortly before the debate. I pay tribute also to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), who has fought valiantly for the interests of sheep farmers in his constituency and throughout north Wales.

The crisis has moved further along the coast to the east and it affects parts of my constituency and parts of the constituencies of my parliamentary neighbours. There is a serious problem, particularly that of cash flow. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn was right to lay stress on the need for interim payments to tide farmers over a awkward period.

I was rather disappointed when this issue arose during Welsh questions. It is wrong to say that it has not been covered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales because we rushed through Welsh questions so that he could——

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Anthony Meyer: I would rather not give way because I want to bring my remarks to an end as quickly as I can.

The problem has extended geographically to the east and to those who are connected with agriculture, especially to abattoirs, as well as sheep farmers. One of the few EEC standard abbattoirs in the area is the St. Asaph abattoir at Waen, which is run by Mr. Dewi Jones. It has been hit seriously by the dramatic fall in the number of sheep coming forward and the prices which have been paid. I was rather dismayed when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State seemed to imply when I raised this matter at Welsh questions that if I wanted to talk about others being compensated apart from sheep farmers it would be better if I shut up. Undoubtedly, hardship has been extended to butchers and many others. Substantial losses have been incurred and these clearly deserve to be treated seriously.

It is important that the Government make a contribution to promote the sale of lamb. They must convince the public that it is one of the most delicious forms of food and one of the easiest to cook, as well as being one of the most readily available.

2.9 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): I echo the words that have been uttered by several hon. Members in paying tribute to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) for taking this opportunity to allow us to discuss the position of sheep farmers following the introduction of restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep in some parts of Britain. I welcome the participation of my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie), who has given us a salutary reminder that we are discussing a problem that is not confined to Wales. It is one which has affected many parts of the United Kingdom.

The restrictions were imposed as soon as there was evidence of radioactivity levels in sheepmeat high enough to cause concern should they enter the food chain. Ever since the Chernobyl radioactive cloud passed over this country, an intensive monitoring programme has taken place to ensure that there is no danger from eating food as a consequence of any contamination. We have not been slow. I say to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) that we were dealing with an entirely new position. We have a responsibility to strike the right balance to ensure that there was no unnecessary alarm through hasty and ill-informed information or misinformation.

Monitoring of meat samples taken in mid-May showed increasing levels of contamination when the results of the tests became available a few days later. Further tests to varify the results were undertaken on lambs which had yet to enter the food chain. Following consultation with the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology a decision was taken on 20 June to impose the restrictions, using powers in the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985. The effect of our action was to prevent any contaminated meat being on sale in the country's shops which might give rise to concern.

I should say to the hon. Member for Caernarfon that, in terms of the food chain, no samples have been found

[Mr. Mark Robinson]

above 1,000 becquerels. Our action was to prevent any contaminated meat on sale which might give rise to concern. In the circumstances, the action that the Government took was the most expedient that could have been taken. Monitoring of lamb in Wales proceeded alongside that in other parts of the United Kingdom and from the same time.

Mr. Wigley: Will the hon. Gentleman address himself to the question that, although the samples that were taken in Cumbria on 14 May were found radioactive, no samples were taken in Wales until 2 June?

Mr. Robinson: We took samples at the first opportunity. We moved as swiftly as we could to get the results we needed. We do not believe that any action we took has delayed the decisions that it was necessary for us to take.

I turn to the important issue raised tonight — the views of the farmers. The action that the Government have taken in protecting the consumer has had the full backing of the agricultural industry. That is worth recording.

I am sure that the House will wish to acknowledge the co-operation that has been given in these difficult circumstances by the farmers' unions. This was made clear to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales in his meeting with the farming unions on 7 July and again in his meetings with the NFU, the FUW and the Country Landowners Association at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society show on Tuesday this week. I had the opportunity of listening to their representations on my visit to the show yesterday.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) paid tribute to my right hon. Friend for his part in trying to resolve the difficult problems. I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the hard work that he has done on behalf of his constituents in advocating their cause.

Those who represent the agricultural industry have made it clear that the difficulties that their members are experiencing are a direct consequence of the restrictions that were imposed. But never once had the decision to impose the restrictions been queried. The hon. Member for Caernarfon emphasised that.

The suggestions that the unions have made on how to deal with problems which farmers now face have been of great assistance to the Government in clarifying the action that is being taken to minimise any adverse consequences. They have helped my right hon. Friend and his colleagues to reach the decisions which were announced today.

I now turn to the question of the de-restriction of areas. Since the measures were first imposed, every effort has been made to reduce the areas affected. This initially covered 5,100 holdings in north Wales and some 2 million sheep. But we soon decided, on the basis of further test results, that that could be reduced. About 2,610 holdings are included in the areas de-restricted.

I am pleased to report that at midnight tonight — in the House's terms — a new order came into effect to release a further part of Anglesey, which is in my hon. Friend's constituency; part of the Conwy Valley; the coastal strip between Barmouth and Criccieth; part of Gwynedd between the A4085 and the B4418 roads; an area west of Corwen on the boundary between Gwynedd and Clwyd; and a small area north of Montgomery. That represents an additional 630 holdings in north Wales containing some 180,000 sheep. Thus, to date well over half of those holdings and sheep originally affected in Wales have been released.

Much has been said about the availability of information. The farming community and the public at large have been kept fully informed of the results of our testing programme. Farmers whose sheep have been used for testing are informed of the results as quickly as possible. The test results have been published at regular intervals and copies placed in the Library of the House. No one would wish the restrictions on areas to be retained for one day longer than necessary. It will not have escaped the notice of hon. Members that we have amended the area in each of the past four weeks. We will, of course, continue to take every opportunity to contrive to do so, but this can only be done in a manner that is consistent with ensuring that it is safe to remove these restrictions. That has been our guideline all along.

We recognised from the outset that an over-rigid ban on the movement and slaughter of sheep would cause difficulties. That is another point which has been raised by more than one hon. Member. Accordingly, we have established a system whereby farmers can be issued a licence to move their sheep where, for example, the sheep need to be dipped. Farmers who have not already done so and who wish to obtain the necessary movement authority should apply to their local Welsh Office divisional agricultural offices which will consider each case on its merits. I pay tribute to the co-operation that we have received not only from farmers but from those who run livestock markets and slaughterhouses for their help in achieving the objective of the restrictions.

Perhaps the key issue in the debate has been compensation. I understand the strongly held views which have been put forward. The Government recognised at the outset that the restrictions would impose a burden on the farming community. Hon. Members will have welcomed the statement about the terms of compensation for losses that may be incurred, made today by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Before we could make this announcement, we needed firm evidence about the precise nature of the problems posed by over-fat lambs in comparison with those prevailing in normal conditions. Close scrutiny of marketings from areas released from restrictions initially show little increase in the proportion of over-fat lambs being marketed. This is in part due to the lateness of the season and in part to the expert husbandry of affected farmers in retaining the quality of their stock under difficult conditions. The longer the restrictions apply, however, the greater the difficulties likely to be experienced. It is because of this that the Government have now acceped that farmers who were prevented by the restrictions from marketing finished lambs at the usual time may have a higher proportion than normal rejected for variable premium because they have become over-fat, and that these animals may also attract lower than average prices in the market. The Government will be prepared to meet such losses where they have been sustained and can be substantiated.

I should very much like to answer some of the points of detail as to how compensation will be managed, but I am not in a position to do so, for one very good reason — we have taken the decision that we shall consult urgently with the farmers' unions to hear from them how

they think this can best be done. The importance of doing that is illustrated by the comments of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I have, of course, taken careful note of the points raised by the hon. Members for Caernarfon and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) and my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn. I assure them that we shall be coming forward with details as soon as we can.

We believe that that consultation is extremely important.

Mr. Best: Will my hon. Friend assure the House that he will urgently take to his right hon. Friend the Minister the message that there is a need for some interim compensation for those farmers still remaining within the ban who are suffering such severe cash flow problems?

Mr. Robinson: I have listened to that point, which has been made by several hon. Members. I shall, of course, carry it back to my right hon. Friend.

The Government recognise also that farmers could face difficulties if it is found necessary to continue the restrictions to an extent which prevents them from moving store lambs and draft and cull ewes off their holdings at the normal time. We hope that it may prove possible to devise arrangements under which such movements could be permitted, subject to suitable restrictions to ensure that the animals concerned could not enter the food chain until it was wholly safe for them to do so. I am sure that hon. Members will agree that this course is in every way preferable to a slaughter policy which has been urged in some quarters.

Mr. Corrie: Where the main market for the whole region happens to be in an affected area and breeding stock is coming in from surrounding areas, will that stock be able to go in to the market and then go back out again, or will the market be shut?

Mr. Robinson: I shall take note of that point and write to my hon. Friend with the details. It is an important point. Having talked about getting information right, I want to ensure that I do so.

The farmers' unions have drawn our attention to the fact that some of the farmers concerned are already being faced with extra expenditure. We shall be holding urgent discussions with the unions about that problem and about what compensation might be appropriate to cover the direct losses which the farmers concerned may thereby incur.

No one would have wished these restrictions on the sheep farmer, but, faced with the effects of contamination on lambs in particular, there has been general agreement to the restrictions which the Government imposed to protect the public and to ensure that lamb in our shops is safe to eat. The farmers have accepted it. The public have responded to the security which our decision offered and the demand for lamb is now of such buoyancy that I am almost forced to observe, "The proof of the pudding really is in the eating."

Of course concerns have been expressed about the time taken to release areas, but the fact is that the area under restriction in Wales has by today's derestrictions been reduced by over half. I can assure the hon. Member for Caernarfon that we shall continue to test intensively in order to reduce the areas affected further as quickly as possible. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have pledged to publish all information as it becomes available.

There have been some alarmist reports that continued restriction may be necessary for another six months. On the basis of the scientific advice now available, I can say that that seems unlikely.

We shall continue to listen to the views of the industry on how best to impart more flexibility into the controls we have imposed in order to lessen the strains experienced, especially by the producer of fat and store lambs on the hills.

One other point which concerns us, which we are looking into and which has been raised tonight is the difficulty of silage and the testing that needs to be done. I discussed that with the Farmers Union of Wales yesterday.

I believe that we have demonstrated by our announcements today our determination to do all we can to alleviate the immediate difficulties of the sheep farmer while this difficult situation persists.

Gipsies

2.22 am

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): I intend no attack upon true gipsies. In common with other hon. Members I have a great respect and regard for Romanies. I have long thought that if there was any abomination more vile than Hitler's final solution for Jewry, it was the Nazi extermination of gipsies. Alas, they have had few to speak for them or to demand restitution.

The undesirable and resented itinerants now in Chigwell Row in my constituency, for example, are not Romanies. They travel in expensive caravans drawn by expensive cars. They will tarmac one's drive and they may threaten people who will not do business with them. I wonder what taxes and rates they pay and where. Sometimes they obtain milk tokens for their children and other social benefits.

I am speaking for my constituents, but their affliction is similar to that of the constituents of other hon. Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) has asked to be associated with the tenor of my remarks. In Chigwell Row, this summer has been a season of misery and fear. Primary schoolchildren have needed police protection. Some have been assaulted by the children of the itinerants who are as prone to stone-throwing as children in the worst parts of Belfast. Intimidated shopkeepers close when the so-called gipises approach. The proprietor of the Sunnymede garage chased some who stole fuel from his forecourt. The primary school, the shops, the garage and many homes, including my constituency base, abut on the lovely stretch of Hainault forest where they are encamped. It forms part of the ancient common of Lambourne which as incorporated into the statute of 1903 charmingly entitled: The Hainault (Land Fox Burrows and Grange Hill) Act. This created "an open space forever for recreational purposes."

The Act is now a mockery. The intruding caravans are not parked to one side, but sprawled across the open space, denying it to my constituents, their children and to visitors from London and elsewhere. The whole tract is befouled with itinerants' rubbish and worse, and their generators keep children awake until a late hour. They are a lawless, insanitary, frightening, thieving band. No wonder the church hall was crowded on Monday when I attended a meeting of indignation. It was easy to obtain 629 signatures for a petition against the invasion.

So far this year there have been five applications to the county court at Ilford for eviction. Grange Farm has suffered two invasions. It sounds like a war. The Epping Forest district council has barricaded Grange Farm with huge mounds of earth. There have also been two invasions at Chigwell Row recreation ground and it, too, has been fortified with a ditch. But when a group of travellers was evicted in execution of a court order, it moved 200 yards up the road to that part of Hainault forest to which I have referred. To gain access to the forest, it filled in the roadside ditch with rubble and tarmac.

Since the demise of the Greater London council, which used to run it, this part of the forest comes under Essex county council, and today that authority applied in court for an order in its turn. But what guarantee can there be against further trespass on the recreation ground in this nightmare merry-go-round? The itinerants might move a short distance, perhaps to the London borough of Redbridge or Havering, while still threatening and plaguing the people of Chigwell Row.

The byelaws of Hainault Forest lapsed when the GLC was abolished. Now three authorities are concerned, Essex county council, Epping Forest district council and the council of the London borough of Redbridge. This divided responsibility is a gift to the intruders. I have the honour of being president of the Friends of Hainault Forest, and with the support of the Epping Forest district council I took a deputation of Friends of Hainault forest to ask my noble Friend Lord Elton to endeavour to bring about a single unified management under the appropriate body, as it seemed to us, the conservators of Epping Forest, the City of London Corporation. It has the expertise and both Hainault and Epping forest used to form part of the great forest of Essex. Under the Epping Forest Act 1903, there is the great advantage that if one takes a vehicle more than 10 m into the forest, one has committed an offence. I should like to revive with my hon. Friend the Minister the proposal we have made to Lord Elton.

Meanwhile, to add to all the complications, the boundary between the Metropolitan police district and the jurisdiction of the Essex police bisects Hainault forest. I am told that there is no procedure for a county court to provide for a group of travellers to be handed from one police jurisdiction to another, although our local police, to whom I pay tribute, would not be unwilling so to act, if authorised.

I also give credit to Epping Forest district council, which has acted vigorously, but its scope is limited. The district has not yet been designated under the Caravan Sites Act 1968. Essex county council supports its application for designation, and I should be grateful if my hon. Friend will assure me that the Secretary of State will move promptly when he receives the request for designation. A weakness of the Caravan Sites Act—the work of Lord Avebury, a Liberal—is that caravan sites are not only for true gipsies but others of nomadic habits. I do not know whether it would be feasible or desirable, but perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister would consider a form of registration for bona fide travellers.

Epping Forest district council has a gipsy camp site not far away in Stamford Rivers, but it is crowded. If resort to this irresponsible, freebooting life is not checked, there will be new peace convoys and reinforcements for the itinerants of Chigwell Row, who recently received a passing group—it did not stay long, I am glad to say—who were described to me as Algerians. I am informed that such invasions would be impossible in the Federal Republic of Germany, where the law is based on the principle of hausrecht and no one may go into or on to a citizen's property without his permission.

On 23 June, I was glad to hear my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General tell the House that the Home Secretary was,

"discussing with the police and other interested parties whether any strengthening of the law is required, either by extending the proposed powers of the police in the Public Order Bill or by some limited offence of criminal trespass. The Lord Chancellor is considering possible improvements in the civil procedure for the summary repossession of land available under order 113 of the Rules of the Supreme Court."

The Attorney-General was asked:

"Why has not the simple remedy available to owners of residential property to deal with squatters, which was

provided in the Criminal Law Act 1977, been extended to the residential occupation of land?"—[*Official Report*, 23 June 1986; Vol. 100, c. 14.]

He replied that it was being investigated by the Lord Chancellor and the Home Secretary.

Speaking in Bristol earlier this month, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said:

"We have agreed on a proposal which we will be putting to Parliament which will not criminalise trespass in general, but will, I hope, fill the gap."

He said that one option being considered was that it might form part of the Public Order Bill.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, especially since she knows the subject intimately. I am also grateful to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) for listening to the debate. I realise that some of the points I have made are not for the Department of the Environment but for the Home Office, so in conclusion I ask my hon. Friend whether she would be kind enough to ask the Home Secretary to complete the discussions that he described to the House as soon as possible, and announce a programme of firm action early in the new Session of Parliament.

2.33 am

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): I am here at this late hour to contribute briefly to the debate and to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) for raising an important subject which, at one time or other, will have touched on most hon. Members' interests. From time to time, we have all experienced problems with itinerants.

I emphasise the word "itinerants", because, as my hon. Friend said, genuine gipsies rarely cause trouble. In my experience, the true gipsy often does not give cause for offence at all. It is the tinker, the itinerant, the person who has no regard for the property of others, who causes difficulty.

My hon. Friend opened his speech by asking a question. He wondered what taxes these people pay. Perhaps he will forgive me if I answer the question for him. Invariably the answer is that they do not pay any taxes at all. I refer not only to matters like income tax, but many of the vehicles of these itinerant people do not display valid excise licences. In Derby, particularly in the Stores road area, there have been problems with rubbish being deposited and nuisance being caused. What irritates the law-abiding citizen most is to find on examination that many of the vehicles used by these itinerants are, indeed, untaxed and do not display excise licences.

What is to be done about the problem? My hon. Friend touched upon one difficulty. Derby — like his area, I believe — is not designated under the Caravan Sites Act 1968. Clearly the police have inadequate powers to deal with the problems. However, even when an area is designated, I feel that the police do not have sufficient powers to deal with the problem. This has been highlighted in recent months by the case of the hippy convoy, which moved from one area to another. Even when an area was designated, it was found that the police, in many instances, could only look on and wait to see whether any public order offences were committed, but they did not have adequate powers to move the itinerants off the land in question.

The remedy, I think most people would say, is for the police to be given increased powers. I welcome the comment of the Home Secretary that he is looking at ways in the next Session of Parliament to give the police greater powers. I do not share the hesitation of some hon. Members who say that we should not criminalise the law of trespass. I think that a distinction can be made. First, there is the innocent trespasser, the person who is going hiking, a member of a cycling club or a person taking a group of boy scouts into the country. Here every trespass that the landowner finds offensive tends to be transient only. If the person concerned is confronted by the landowner and asked to move on, invariably he and his group will do so without any argument or delay. Problems have arisen with groups of travelling itinerants because they know they are trespassing and have no intention of moving on; the landowner can plead with them to go, but they will remain because they know that the law is inadequate and that no effective sanctions can be taken against them.

I therefore hope that, when the Home Secretary considers the matter, he will decide to frame legislation sufficiently tough to enable the police to ensure that those who deliberately disobey the wishes of the landowner can not only be properly prosecuted but that the police can have an immediate power of arrest and dispossession.

There is a debate going on at present in the city of Derby in which the city council and the county council disagree. The Derbyshire county council wishes to designate a gipsy site in the Chequers lane area of Derby. The Derby city council disagrees with the proposals. I have received many complaints from residents near the Chequers lane area in respect of this matter. I back the city council in its objection to the county council proposals.

I do not wish to enlarge on this now because I understand that in due course the Minister will have to make a decision on the matter. However, will the Minister confirm that when an area is seeking designation a gipsy site does not have to be within that district? In other words, can a district achieve designation by being served by a gipsy site near to its area?

I believe that to be the position. If so, the city of Derby could obtain designation under the Caravan Sites Act without a gipsy site being found within the boundary of the city. Provided that a site is found nearby, that, I gather, is sufficient to enable the city to be designated. That is important for an urban area in which most of the available land is already built on. It is often difficult, perhaps impossible, in such an area to find a suitable place to designate a site for gipsies, whereas nearby there may be a considerable amount of available open land which could be so used for the area.

I will not develop that point further tonight. I hope that the views of the city council and of myself will prevail in Derby and that the Chequers lane area will not be used as a gipsy site. I also hope that during the lifetime of this Parliament steps will be taken to give the police greater power to arrest people who deliberately flout the wishes of landowners and who cause suffering, nuisance and annoyance to ratepayers, taxpayers and residents.

2.42 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) for giving the House the opportunity to debate this subject, which has taken on an even greater importance than it had in the past, partly because of the activities of the so-called peace convoy, and partly because

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

an increasing number of local authorities and hon. Members have experience of the as yet unresolved problem of accommodating gipsies in the manner in which my hon. Friend identified in Hainault forest.

I am aware of the problems in his constituency that my hon. Friend outlined, as he drew my attention to them yesterday. I shall deal in some detail at the outset with the problems to which he referred, particularly as I wish to refer to the action that is to be taken to try to remove that particularly unsightly encampment. I understand that Essex county council, which owns the land, has agreed to take eviction proceedings.

On the abolition of the GLC, Hainault forest was transferred, under the main property transfer order, to Essex county council, Havering borough council and Redbridge borough council, each council receiving a portion of park within its boundary. I understand that good relations exist between the three councils in the management of the park and that there is a one-year operational agreement in force under which the London borough of Redbridge manages the whole park, with financial contributions from the other authorities. I also understand that this management agreement, which is amicable, is likely to be extended for a further year.

In the meantime, those councils are in the process of drawing up a formal management and operating agreement for the long term. To do that, the councils have established a working party, the main task of which will be to draw up a management plan for the forest. My hon. Friend pointed out that he is president of the Friends of Hainault Forest. Members of that group are on the working party.

Essex county council is at present taking proceedings to evict the group of unpleasant people to whom my hon. Friend referred, at the request of Redbridge council, which is the manager. There may have been some difficult initial demarcation problems about which authorities should take action, and it is said that there could be a problem over who should clean up the mess—which I understand would be extensive — after any eviction. Redbridge council assures me that it does not acknowledge that there is a dispute, and Essex county council officials have not mentioned any dispute. When eventually an application is made for a proper designation site, I hope that this will be taken up swiftly by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

In his opening remarks my hon. Friend mentioned that he was not referring to the genuine Romany. There is a very long history in my constituency of Romanies, many of whom are now part of the indigenous population and resident there. Therefore, I know exactly what my hon. Friend is talking about. If these individuals can show that they are truly of the nomadic way of life that is referred to in the Caravan Sites Act 1968 and if they can satisfy the other requirements of residing in or resorting to a particular authority's area, it is for that authority to consider the facts and decide whether an appropriate place can be provided for them on one of its sites.

It is difficult to define a gipsy, and it is often suggested that the definition is too wide. We are looking at the various suggestions and we are trying to keep an open mind about the various definitions. Hon. Members will hardly need to be reminded that this topic has arisen over and over again. It was examined thoroughly in the Cripps study of 1976. More recently it was examined in a booklet that was published by my Department entitled "Defining a Gypsy." In neither case was it found possible to suggest a better or more watertight definition than the one in the Act.

The long-standing problem of the so-called long-distance travellers undoubtedly causes a great deal of complaint. My hon. Friends the Members for Epping Forest and for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) pointed out that these are mostly of the tinker group of gipsies, and the complaints generally related to the fact that they tend to move more widely and in larger groups. This is because they cannot readily avail themselves of vacant pitches on existing sites or because, by reason of the composition and movement patterns of these groups, they do not want such sites and tend to occupy car parks, factory land, amenity open space or any other handy site — very often in locations such as Hainault forest which are entirely unsuitable.

We have tried to solve this problem by inviting suggestions as to how proper transit sites might be provided, but so far we have met with very little response. We shall not give up the search and we shall return to the issue as part of the present policy review. In the meantime, local authorities and communities are having to put up with problems of lawlessness and anti-social behaviour which nobody should have to tolerate. There are great problems, as hon. Members will already know. We have to take on board more than just simple words in our endeavour to alleviate the problems that gipsies create while they are on site and the problems that they leave behind them.

In recent years, a couple of important measures have been taken to help authorities with their responsibilities under the Caravan Sites Act. In 1980 we gave statutory coverage to a system of Exchequer capital grants towards the cost of establishing local authority gipsy sites. In the ordinary way, grant is 100 per cent. of approved cost. In the last few years we have seen a marked improvement in the pace at which sites have been provided, but I regret to say that last year's figures show some slackening of the pace. We believe that we have made adequate Vote provision — £5 million — this year to meet claims from local authorities, and we need to see a sustained effort on the part of authorities to bring suitable projects forward.

We have also recently carried out an internal overhaul of the procedures for dealing with grant applications, which simplified the process of approving grants for worthwhile schemes and set more realistic cost levels. I know that some authorities think, even now, that we have not gone far enough, and that the system of capital allocations still puts a strain on local resources, so lessening their resolve to deal with the problem. We are taking a hard look at that.

Another important change in 1980 was the extension of the system of designation to districts, or groups of districts, instead of just counties or London boroughs. My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North asked whether an area could be designated if it was served by a site in an adjacent area. My right hon. Friend must be satisfied that adequate provision is made in the area to be designated or that it is not necessary or expedient to make such a provision. We will consider any case that is put to us on its merits. The Act requires the county and the district to apply for designation jointly.

We think that the prospect of eventual designation is an important factor in the thinking of local authorities when preparing their gipsy site programmes. It is not popular with all gipsy interests, but the purpose is widely understood. Designation gives local authorities powers to control unauthorised encampments on highway land, unoccupied land or occupied land when the owner's consent is withheld. We know that that is an important incentive to provide adequate sites. The incentive is that, when there is a designated site, the local authority can take out an injunction for early movement from elsewhere. Designation does not deal with all circumstances, but it deals with the most common. Although it is not a completely satisfactory solution, authorities welcome it.

It is always difficult to choose good examples of the system helping to alleviate difficult circumstances. The problems will vary, but perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest would like to reflect on the fact that Kent had a great deal of difficulty some time ago dealing with its gipsies. As a result of the county and district councils jointly tackling the problem and providing sites, and the rewards of designation, there are some 15 sites in the county, which offer 213 pitches for gipsy caravans. Five districts in Kent are designated and others are seeking designation. There are some lessons to be learnt from that experience.

Both my hon. Friends mentioned the measures that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is considering to provide an appropriate means of dealing with such incidents as recently occurred in the Somerset and Hampshire venture of the hippy convoy. He is looking for some method which ensures that proper action is taken against such people. The House knows that the Caravan Sites Act 1968 is about providing authorised accommodation for gipsies, and appropriate and clearly defined measures of control. That represents, in the Government's view, a balanced package of measures and that is the course that we expect local authorities to follow in controlling unauthorised gipsy encampments.

In all other respects, gipsies are subject to the same requirements to be law-abiding as any other member of the community and it is right that they should attract the due attentions of the police and the courts when they flagrantly flout normal standards of behaviour by committing acts of wanton vandalism or threatening behaviour, such as my hon. Friend described, or, indeed, when they refuse to license their vehicles, which my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North mentioned.

It is for that reason that I am particularly pleased that the subject has been brought to the attention of the House this evening. I hope that it will highlight the strong feelings among the general public about the necessity to ensure that the activities of gipsies and travellers are more particularly looked at by the police in order to protect the homes and bodily safety of the general public. We may need to emphasise to the police that they are responsible for caring for the safety of people and their homes in the face of possible attack by itinerants.

Means are already available to deal with some of these acts of violence, damage and tax evasion. Where there is a threat of a breach of the peace or an act of criminal damage, the police have powers to take action, including powers to enter on private land and to make arrests. In the Public Order Bill there is a provision to deal with those who threaten violence or who behave in a disorderly manner likely to cause alarm, harassment or distress. I know that one of the problems is catching the culprits. It is all very well to have the measures, but if people cannot be caught they do not help much.

It is relevant that there are provisions in section 25 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to deal with some of the difficulties. For example, if there has been an offence and the police reasonably believe that a suspect has given a false identity or address, or that the subsequent service of a summons will be impractical, they have power to arrest. That may well be of use in dealing with some of the road traffic offences which are not usually arrestable offences, committed by itinerants.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is responsible for those matters, as well as trespass and he has said that a new power is under consideration which will enable police to act when trespass occurs on land in the sort of circumstances that arose in connection with the land farmed by the unfortunate Mr. Attwell, with whose case I am sure my hon. Friends are familiar.

As many hon. Members may already be aware, the outline of the new power was signalled in a recent debate in another place. It would contain the following elements: entry as a trespasser with a refusal to leave on request, coupled with a risk of causing serious damage to property and harassment or intimidation of the lawful occupier. Such an offence would arise in certain limited circumstances which my right hon. Friend is at present considering. This action takes further the undertaking that was given to the House by my right hon. Friend on 3 June, when he said that, if further changes to the law beyond those then in prospect were needed, they would be introduced. I hope that hon. Members will accept that action is in hand to deal with the problems in a practical fashion and in a way that will not create problems for legitimate users of the countryside and other groups whose interests should be protected.

It will certainly not have escaped my hon. Friend's notice that some suggest that people such as those in the peace convoy should be provided with special sites. However, the Government do not accept that that is either necessary or desirable. We doubt whether such groups would use them. In the summer their habit is usually to attend events such as the summer solstice, and providing a site would not do anything to stop the unlawful camping that usually results. One needs to separate the itinerant tinkers who cause a great deal of damage throughout the year from the special groups who come up from time to time during the summer for a quite different purpose.

I hope that I have managed as adequately as I can to cover the points that have been raised. If I have left points out it is possible that we shall return to the matter at another time. We shall report as soon as we can on the operation of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 in the light of the policy review that we are conducting. If any hon. Members have matters to raise with me or with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, they should write and say what the matters are. I am grateful to have had an opportunity to speak in the debate. I trust that these matters will not lie in abeyance much longer.

British Rail Engineering

4 am

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Before we rise for the recess I am glad to have this opportunity to highlight the serious problems in British Rail engineering workshops. For the assistance of the Minister, I should point out that some of my remarks would be better addressed to the Secretary of State for Scotland and his Under-Secretary of State the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who is responsible for employment in Scotland. I hope that the Minister will pass on those parts of my speech that are appropriate to them.

I recently headed a delegation of councillors, youth leaders and people in tenants' associations in Springburn to the Scottish Office. One of my colleagues on that delegation and the longest-serving councillor on the regional council, Mr. Patrick Trainer, made a valid point. He said that even if the British Railway workshops in Springburn were working at full capacity with some 3,000 workers, the number that they had in the good old days, Springburn would still have a serious unemployment problem.

At present, over 8,000 people in my constituency are out of work. In the Keppochill ward adjacent to the railway workshop 1,800 people are out of work and 59 per cent. of the people unemployed in that ward have been out of work for over a year. Over 50 per cent. of unemployed people in the constituency as a whole have been out of work for over a year. The picture throughout the six district council wards in my constituency is serious.

I know that the Minister will say that which he has said in the past, that he leaves the policy decisions and the day-to-day running of the workshops to BREL. That is too easy an option for any Minister to adopt. The Minister, like me and like every hon. Member, is keen to see an upturn in the economy, and in our different ways we are all trying to achieve that. If there is to be an upturn in the economy—and I hope and pray that there will be—one of the things we shall need is a sound industrial engineering base. We will not be able to cope with such an upturn if we lose our engineering workshops.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman. Is not the main problem in the British Rail engineering workshops the reduction in the maintenance work as British Rail has progressed from diesel traction to electric traction and from Mk 2 to Mk 3 coaches? It is very well for the hon. Gentleman to say that he is worried about jobs. We are all worried about jobs, but if the maintenance required in those workshops is reduced, surely it follows that the number of people required to carry out that maintenance will also be reduced. I am little puzzled about why a number of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues voted against the Channel Tunnel Bill, because that project would provide many hundreds of millions of pounds worth of work, particularly in the midlands, and would give British Rail the greatest opportunity it has had this century.

Mr. Martin: I am not an expert on the Channel tunnel, but if the Channel tunnel is the greatest thing since sliced bread and will bring employment, perhaps there is a case for keeping a railway workshop. If a workshop is capable of repairing and maintaining railways, it is capable of building new railways and of diversifying to other engineering.

It is argued that the Government will bring about an upturn in the economy. We shall be in trouble if workshops are not able to cope with the work that that upturn will create.

It would be false economy to send all the work to Derby, York and Crewe and, for a limited period, to Wolverton. BREL says that the new locomotives and stock will require less maintenance because of the new methods. But the best laid plans of mice and men often go wrong. I know from my engineering background that machinery which manufacturers say will not need major repair does need it.

BREL is making a serious mistake which could have repercussions for the country in terms of a major transport programme if every repair job has to travel at least 300 miles to a workshop.

The Government are looking to the core workshops to put together a package to sell off BREL to the private sector. That is shortsighted. Are the Government serious about looking after the economy? It would be dangerous for stock to have to travel 300 miles for repair and for the Government to sell BREL to a company which, after five minutes, will throw promises into Ministers' faces. The Secretary of State for Scotland can testify to that.

Another shocking indictment of the Government is that they have given approval for Strathclyde regional council to spend money on the refurbishment of urban trains in the Strathclyde passenger executive area. I have no complaint about giving the council that power, but the Government will not give any assurances to Strathclyde that the work will be carried out in the Springburn railway workshops.

The first phase of that repair work has already been carried out, and I understand that it has been done to the satisfaction of the Strathclyde passenger transport executive. It is, therefore, galling that because of the consequences of BREL's decision this local authority will have to cope with increased unemployment and will have to try to bring industry into the area, despite the fact that it wants to place the order with BREL.

Next to British Rail, Strathclyde is BREL's second largest customer, yet it has been told that there is a possibility that the work will go to Wolverton. That is ridiculous because millions of pounds of Strathclyde ratepayers' money—over and above the money that will be put in by Government—will go into this project. Everyone in Strathclyde hoped that the work would go to the Springburn railway workshops, yet BREL has said that it will go to Wolverton, which is not even a main core works. It is similar to Springburn in that the workshops there are being run down. That is ridiculous. The Minister should intervene to do something about this. Surely he will give the Springburn work force the dignity of carrying out work that has been initiated by their own local authority. After all, they are all ratepayers of that authority.

BREL has said that it does not wish to hold on to the Springburn works, and is making arrangements to allow ScotRail to convert those works into a repair depot. I get the feeling that if it were not for the wheel shop and the heavy lifting equipment, we would be talking about the complete closure of those works.

A maximum of 200 jobs will be created as a result of the ScotRail project. I say "maximum" because no one has been specific. All we have been told is that up to 200 jobs will be created. It could be anything from 100 to 200. If the 1,700 jobs at Springburn cannot be saved, surely the

Minister can tell BREL to put on its thinking cap and to create something more than the miserly 200 jobs that have been mentioned. Surely it is not beyond the wit of BREL to provide more than 200 jobs in a community that has given generations of hard work to the railway industry.

BREL has set up a holding company, of which great play has been made. During the Adjournment debate that I initiated, the Minister encouraged the shop stewards to co-operate as much as possible with the initiatives that BREL was introducing—a move that he claimed had been successful in other parts of the country. Although in a PR context, BREL has played this holding company to the hilt, it has produced no jobs except one for the manager, who came from Springburn, anyway. The only other jobs created were that of the manager's secretary and one or two support staff. I may be wrong, but certainly that was the situation two weeks ago, before the workshop broke up for the Glasgow fair holidays. Something may have happened during the holiday period, but I doubt it.

If BREL is serious about its initiative to create a holding company it should come forward and tell us its plans. How many jobs does BREL intend to create with the money it has made available? It is unfair to claim that there is a holding company — the months are ticking away—when nothing seems to be happening other than one member of the staff being lodged in a part of the company's premises.

I have previously mentioned that on 14 July, a delegation met the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. I want to put on record that we were received most courteously by the Minister and his civil servants. Every member of that delegation, including myself, felt it was a constructive meeting, especially since the Minister agreed to a Springburn initiative. Before the first world war Springburn was a borough on its own and the delegation believe that it if it was a town in its own right like Clydebank, Greenock, Port Glasgow or Kilmarnock, Ministers would be more inclined to sit up and consider what is happening in that community. We are proud of belonging to Glasgow, but we are at a disadvantage because we are lost in the Glasgow scene. The serious situation in Springburn is not clear.

The Minister has agreed to a major initiative which will start with a meeting of Strathclyde regional council, Glasgow district council and the Scottish Development Agency. I would be keen for BREL to take part in those meetings. I have not counted the acreage of the Glasgow work site, but it is immense. The acreage is both covered and uncovered. Only a quarter of it will be required by ScotRail. The remaining three quarters of the site will be free, but it will still be in the hands of BREL. It is important for BREL to play a constructive role in the work of a Springburn initiative. I am keen to see it think again about the 200 jobs, but there must be about 600 more jobs even after the announcements. Even if there were a standstill and no further redundancies, there are 600 jobs still to be found, or lost, in the area. I should not like to see BREL, or the holding company that is created, going in one direction and the Government and local government agencies going in another. I want to see every resource that we have available to create work being utilised to the full. I hope that the Minister takes that on board and conveys the message to the Secretary of State for Scotland.

I am proud that I served an engineering apprenticeship. If an employer had not been prepared to take me on as an apprentice, I would not have the skill that I have today. The Government stated that the youth training scheme has been extended and that it will now run for two years. The one-year scheme was the subject of a great deal of exploitation and I do not think that that can be denied. A two-year YTS cannot replace a proper, recognised apprenticeship, but I hope that the Government will take every opportunity to ensure that boys and girls who are involved in the two-year schemes are given the best training possible. If there is an upturn in the economy, at least these people will have a skill that they will be able to use in later years, not, I hope, too many years hence.

A training school at Springburn was opened in 1979. Indeed, I was present when it was opened. It was able to cope with several hundred apprentices who had been taken on by BREL, Springburn. In recent years no apprentices have been taken on. The school has turning lathes, drills, workbenches, welding equipment and all the various pieces of equipment required in the course of training apprentices from start to finish, from first year to fourth year. It is a public scandal that the padlock remains in place and no one is using the school's facilities. There are workshop facilities and proper washing, toilet and changing facilities and lockers.

If the Minister is not prepared to take the responsibility for the school, his colleagues who are responsible for manpower services should do something to ensure that it is used for the purpose for which it was built.

I live in Springburn and it is a proud community. Our spirit is by no means broken because of the redundancies. We do not want to dwell in the past, although we have a proud one in engineering. We were the railway engineering capital of the world at one time. Despite the unemployment problem, we still feel that we have many positive factors in our favour. We have an excellent motorway system. We are to the north end of the city and in 10 minutes by car we can be in the most beautiful countryside in the world. Glasgow offers first-class facilities, such as the Burrell collection, the Scottish National Orchestra, and the Scottish Opera. Most major chain stores have branches in Glasgow.

Springburn must be sold to potential employers, both at home and abroad. Everyone in the community has a responsibility. I can say that tenants' associations, community leaders, clergymen, elected Members, and myself, will give every encouragement to anyone from the Minister's Department or any other Department who considers the area in that respect. We have excellent sites for employment. I hope that the Minister will give a commitment to get initiative into a community that has served railway transport well over many years.

3.25 am

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I am proud to represent the fine railway city of York. Some 8,000 of my electors who live and work in the city of York are employed by British Rail. British Rail Engineering Ltd, employing some 3,000 people, is a major employer in the area. The restructured business groups formed in April this year—York with Crewe, Derby Litchurch Lane, Derby Locomotive and Horwich foundry — will concentrate on new product construction for local and overseas customers, as well as heavy overhaul and component repairs for British Rail.

The work force looks forward to developing its design expertise, rather than adopting a hand-down position as occurred with British Rail. The decision to form a separate

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

business group—the other is for maintenance and light repair of rolling stock—was prompted by the need for British Rail Engineering to respond more effectively to outside markets, as well as British Rail's new build and maintenance requirements.

Many hon. and right hon. Members will have had an opportunity this week of reading British Rail's annual report. That report declared that BREL had responded to the challenge of an independent future by creating programmes for new product development and export activities. It is appropriate that we place on record praise for BREL's deliveries over the past year. I do not see the doom and gloom for that company that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) suggested.

In the past year that the hon. Gentleman tried to gloss over, BREL has meant 100 sprinter vehicles to British Rail and 100 pacer railbus vehicles built in partnership with Leyland Bus for British Rail's provincial sector, as well as 28 first class coaches for intercity Pullman routes.

British Rail orders to BREL total some £165 million —the substantial part won after competitive tendering. That will probably wound the Labour Front Bench, but it tells the lie to those who said that is would not be able to compete.

I draw attention to the real export potential of BREL, because that is the unsung hero of the past and of the future. It is exciting that BREL has won a foothold in the Chinese market after 15 months of talks. Let us hope that the three prototype vehicles, based on its design for the high-tech coach, which I have seen at Derby, will lead to solid orders, especially since the Chinese plan to build 1,500 coaches by the early 1990s.

I know that at York and other BREL sites which I have visited there is high morale and the workers feel that they are, if hon. Members will excuse a pun, on the right tracks, but they are sadly let down by those funeral directors, the union shop stewards. I have to say, because words spoken in this House are clearly monitored by the appropriate ambassadors, that the greatest disservice to BREL has been and continues to be done by one J. Knapp.

Mr. Knapp has been touring the country and whipping up the 40,000 staff. *[Interruption.]* I can well understand that the Opposition wish to drown this point. If they will bear with me and listen for a minute, they will hear the cogency of my argument. But I can understand that they do not want to do so. Mr. Knapp has been going around the country trying to whip up the 40,000 staff employed at the British Rail workshops and at British Rail maintenance depots so that they take strike action. He has suffered a second humiliation within 12 months. Thank goodness for the British Rail engineering work force and for British Rail that they have had the good sense—for their future, for the home base, but especially for the export market and for solid jobs not only in Crewe and Litchurch Lane in Derby but York and the other sites which I have mentioned—to keep this small clique away from the efficiency to which they strive. We have a solid company that can offer goods on competitive terms, not just on the home market but on the international one. I look forward to a global future for BREL. I hope that we shall get common sense and leadership out of the shop stewards and that, in future ballots, the work force will have the opportunity to continue along the right road.

3.31 am

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I take issue with the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory). It is one of the sad facts of life in the United Kingdom that these personal attacks by one side of the industry on the other continue. It does the industry no good for Conservative Members to attack the trade unions, the working people within British Rail and their elected representatives. I could easily attack the chairman of British Rail and many of the board's members for their shortsighted decisions.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): Unless I misunderstood my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory), he was praising the work force for their sound common sense in rejecting strike calls. My hon. Friend can hardly be seen to attack the work force who are exercising their democratic rights in that way.

Dr. Marek: The Minister has got it wrong. The hon. Member for York was attacking the elected representative of the work force, the general secretary of the NUR. It is a pity that Conservative Members can do nothing but make personal attacks. As I said, I could easily mount the same type of attack on many of the decisions of the British Rail board. I shall not do that, because it does not add anything to the argument. It is far better to concentrate on what the policies should be so that we can at least ensure a future for BREL. My worry is that, if we proceed along the lines of the past five or six years, there will no longer be a British Rail Engineering Ltd. The same fate will befall BREL as is now befalling, for example, the shipbuilding industry.

Mr. Gregory: I do not wish to extend this point unduly, because clearly I have hit a raw nerve in the Opposition. I should rather we returned to BREL's efficiency, the work force and its design potential. We cannot get away from the fact that, if an elected union leader goes around the countryside, that demoralises the people working there. Those people at home and abroad who are placing orders say that there is a large question mark over whether the work force can supply on time if a strike threatens. It is important to the future of the work force and the company that we analyse that point.

Dr. Marek: It may be useful to try to analyse that point. However I want to get on to what we can do to improve British Rail. I always thought that democracy was about persuasion and argument. Either one persuades people or one does not. In this case, some people were persuaded, but many other people who were not affected, or for reasons of their own, were not persuaded. It is central to the well-being of any organisation or any country that people are free and able to try to persuade people about a particular view, as we are able to in the House. I do not think that there is any short cut. There is a price to be paid for democracy in some ways but I think that it is a price that all of us want to pay.

The House will know that I am a Member sponsored by the National Union of Railwaymen. I want to make a few comments as a traveller on British Rail. I have not travelled on British Rail quite so much in the past six months because of some of the incompetent decisions of the British Rail board. However, going along the M6 and the M1 by car, trying to compete with heavy lorries doing 70 miles an hour and not being able to do anything about

it without breaking the speed limit, is an even worse fate than having to put up with the inadequate service on our mainlines.

I very much prefer to travel by rail when possible. I know that the Minister travels by rail. Not many Conservative Members do. I know that the hon. Member for York also travels by rail. The next time they travel by rail I ask them to consider whether everything is right on the journey and whether the journey is going as it should. For example, is the train on time? Did it leave on time and did it reach its destination on time? If it did not, there must be a reason. That reason may not be connected with the design, engineering or maintenance of the coaches or the engine, but it could be.

Are all the comforts and advantages that one has when travelling by rail present and working? For example, on a number of mark 2 and mark 3 coaches—this is only a minor matter — I have noticed that the microphone cannot be shut off. There may be a fault in the microphone and it makes a buzzing sound over the seat. The guard says that he cannot do anything about it because he cannot switch it off. About 15 or 20 per cent. of the time there is that rather nasty noise in certain seats, especially on the west coast mainline. That is clearly a maintenance problem. No doubt it has been reported. However, I doubt whether the coaches get checked for that when they go in for maintenance.

Something that is a little more obvious is what the wheels are doing when they go round. Are there square wheels on the coaches? If so, and if as the coach starts to speed up it goes click, click, that does not disappear. It will continue throughout the journey. The coach can go all the way from Euston to Glasgow and back again many times and it is annoying for the customers. I know that that can happen if the coach brakes too hard, but it should be reported and the coach should be taken into maintenance to have the wheels skimmed so that customers have a better ride. That is not being done.

The wheels can do all sorts of other things. At certain speeds coaches can suddenly start juddering violently from one side to another. That fault now appears to have been mainly rectified by British Rail. It may be that hunting by the wheels is a dangerous sport. However, on occasions I still travel on trains on which at certain speeds the coach suddenly starts vibrating and it should not do that. That problem should not occur, passengers should not have to put up with it and the coach should go into maintenance. One should test whether the seat goes back as it should. Many do not. One should ask oneself whether the seats are padded or whether the padding has worn so thin that the seats are extremely hard. One may want a meal on the train or a snack in the buffet car. Does it have everything.

Many of the pipes on the mark 2 boilers seemed to be frozen from 10 January to mid March with the result that nobody managed to get a meal or a hot drink. One should find out whether the food is available in the buffet car. If it is not, perhaps because the boiler is not working, it is an everyday maintenance problem and should not exist.

One should ask oneself whether the windows are clean and one can see out of them. Often one cannot. On almost every other train trip the automatic doors do not work. They either remain open or work irregularly. Sometimes toilets do not work, although I have not often found that on British Rail. In the past three years, I have not travelled more than a handful of times when everything was working. There is always something wrong. Why? There is a lack of maintenance and coaches are not looked after properly. That is true of the mark 2 and mark 3 coaches, some of which are extremely modern.

The Government say that many of the job losses in British Rail Engineering are due to the introduction of sprinters which are new technology, will be built to much higher specifications and will not need much maintenance. I do not believe it. I will apologise to the Minister if they need substantially less maintenance than our present stock, but we shall have to wait until about 1992 before we can tell. It is extremely shortsighted to close works and cut jobs on the basis of a supposition which may well not be borne out in practice.

I think that the class 142s will fall to pieces quickly. Newspapers have already carried stories about how they cannot climb inclines and drivers are kitted out with bags of sand to lay down in front of the engine so that it can make the gradients. They are cheaply built coaches and they may well have a place, but if we were a wealthy country and could afford the best, we would not build class 142 coaches. Basically they are glorified buses with one axle at one end and one at the other. I would not care to sit over the axles, and I recommend everyone to sit in the middle, otherwise the ride will be extremely bumpy.

From my experience I can say categorically and unequivocally that our rolling stock is not sufficiently well maintained and that if we want to serve the public well, we should maintain the coach fleet to a much higher standard than we do now. Engines also break down. How often have hon. Members travelled by train when the engine breaks down and there is a delay of about 40 minutes? The length of delay depends on where the engine breaks down and there are not enough engines. Earlier this year on a journey from Wrexham to Euston two engines broke down. That has happened to me only once, but it says something about the state of our railway system. Statistically, perhaps that is not significant, but it is symptomatic. It would not surprise me if it happened again.

My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) provided me with some information about times. On one day, British Rail tested train times and found that 50 per cent. of express trains were late and that 40 per cent. of those were late because of faults in the engines or wagons. That must be an unacceptably high percentage of delays. Why does it happen? It is simply that the trains are not checked often enough and, when they are checked, there is so much pressure on the people who work on them that they can carry out only cursory checks. It does not happen on the continent. Whenever I have travelled by train on the continent, I have always been on time. In Holland, trains leave and arrive to withing 15 seconds of the stated time. That seems to be impossible on British Rail.

Another important argument as to why the Government are wrong when they say that BREL does not need so many employees because of the new build is that new build accounts for only about 10 per cent. of the coach and wagon stock. If that is the case, the Government's excuse does not wash, because 90 per cent. of stock is old. That will continue to be so, despite the building programme. No doubt the Minister will say that British Rail is building more new trains than ever before, but most of the stock is old and clapped-out. Had there been no new build, the system would have broken down completely.

[Dr. Marek]

Not enough coaches are available. Trains are being shortened, with the result that passengers have a much more uncomfortable ride. British Rail could provide more coaches and give passengers a rather more comfortable ride. To give another example, two passengers travelling together on a fairly full train might be unable to obtain seats together. The British Railways Board follows that policy on purpose. It is more efficient and produces more income, but it serves the public less well. It is possible to fill every seat in a railway carriage, but others will have to stand and parties of two or more will be split up. The Government may say that people should reserve their seats. Of course, they could, but it would diminish the flexibility of travelling by train.

We do not have enough coaches, and engines break down far too often. We do not have enough freight wagons. BREL is capable of building them, but people are being made redundant and the manufacturing capability is being thrown away. It is inconceivable under the present policies that any new slimmed-down BREL will revitalise the manufacturing sector of the United Kingdom in regard to railway equipment. This will not happen. It will grow ever smaller and, if we carry on this way, we will have no manufacturing capacity.

First, we need new build and, secondly, better maintenance. The possibility is there if we want to take it. I understand—although I do not expect the Minister to agree—that the Government's policies are to cut public expenditure. This means that British Rail must lose, in the Government's terminology, as little money as possible. That involves making life as difficult for the passenger as possible or as difficult as the Government can get away with. It is the same with London regional transport. There are complaints in the evening papers every day now about more waiting time for buses and the deteriorating standards of service. Efficiency for the accountant is not the same as efficiency for the passenger and for the public.

Mr. Gregory: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument with interest. When he talks about investment in British Rail, I do not think that he is being entirely fair. If he had done his homework, he would recall that £1,000 million has been invested by British Rail in the last three years. Can he give a comparative figure in real terms in relation to investment of such a sum by Labour?

Dr. Marek: Without immediately using a deflator to take account of inflation, it is very difficult.

When DMUs were built in 1956 to 1958, nothing was done about it for something like 25 to 27 years. Without something being done, the BR service would have collapsed completely. Willy nilly the Government had to invest the £1,000 million, if that is the true figure. I note that the Minister is shaking his head. Whatever the figure was, the Government had to do it. Indeed, I am not accusing the Minister of trying not to invest in British Rail, because I believe that the present Minister is much better than any previous Conservative Minister. But I stand by my point that the present Government had to invest in British Rail, or the service would have collapsed completely.

I have not mentioned exports or the Channel tunnel. Those offer two possibilities for railway manufacturing to increase if the will is there. As to exports, I would not blame this Government particularly because I do not think that the Labour Government did any better than this Government. Either we grasp this nettle and insist that we continue as a manufacturing country in the railways and export, or we do not. I wonder what will happen in China. I think it was the hon. Member for York who mentioned China and the scope there. I would not be surprised if the Germans, the Japanese and the French all have agents in China who can speak Mandarin and are going about trying to get contracts. Meanwhile, our Government are no doubt saying, "It is nothing to do with us, it is purely private industry. It is a self-standing group that will have to look after itself, and there is no way in which we can help". I suspect that that is the truth, and that is why we will not get anything from China. If we do, it will be some small sop.

If we are going to do something for the country, the Government will have to get off their backside and do it, and I have seen no sign of that in the last six years. I suspect that the British public have cottoned on to this and that, after the next general election, we will have different people sitting on the Government Front Bench.

3.55 am

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The House will be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) for his habitual championing of the employees of the BREL factory in his constituency, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), who did well to remind us of the reality of expenditure in this sphere in the last six years.

Perhaps the Minister will comment on the talks between Strathclyde regional council and the Scottish Office. While he may not be directly involved in those talks, they must impinge on the responsibilities of his Department, especially as they could result in additional orders and maintenance work, and a greater number of workers being retained at Springburn. The Minister may find that such information cannot easily be rustled up in the midst of a debate at nearly 4 o'clock in the morning. I hope that he will at least acknowledge the importance of the talks, certainly from the point of view of Springburn.

The remarks of the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) were predictable. I am not a great one for tradition, but it used to be the custom for hon. Members not to attack people who were not in a position to answer back. The hon. Member for York regularly has a go at trade union leaders, who are not here to defend themselves. Conservative Members embrace a strange form of democracy these days. They insist on ballots being forced on people prior to any form of industrial action, but they complain when general secretaries of trade unions tour the country urging the workers they represent to support—unsuccessfully in the case with which we are concerned—the official view of elected trade union executives. I had hoped that that form of democracy would be favoured by the hon. Member for York, but no such luck.

Mr. Gregory: The hon. Gentleman should declare his interest.

Mr. Snape: I need not declare my interest. It is in the Register of Members' Interests. Nor do I need any reminders from the hon. Member for York about the protocol of this place. He has not been here long enough

to instruct me in that matter, and he will not be here after the next election to tell the rest of us to declare our interests.

Mr. Gregory: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not the normal custom and procedure of the House that an hon. Member, when making a major speech, declares his interest?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Yes, it is the normal procedure for hon. Members to declare any interests that they may have.

Mr. Snape: If interests are declared in the Register of Members' Interests, they are there for all to see. I should have thought it was an open secret—if that is the right term to use—that I am sponsored by the National Union of Railwaymen.

Mr. Gregory: Oh?

Mr. Snape: Oh my foot. When I speak from this Dispatch Box I have the honour to do so on behalf of my party, not on behalf of the NUR. The hon. Gentleman's intervention—sadly, typical of him—was about as relevant as much of his speech.

The ballot with which the hon. Gentleman should concern himself is the one that will take him back to full-time wine tasting following the next general election. Then he will be able to join the Minister, who, I am told, peddles the stuff.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): I urge my hon. Friend to deal in some detail with the speech of the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory), because it was highly complacent and expressed an ideology that was peddled by the Conservatives in 1979 and was recycled and peddled again by them in 1983. That ideology has patently failed to expand the nation's manufacturing industry. BREL is suffering from the effects of that ideology and it cannot succeed so long as the Government force it to accept that ideology. That is why my hon. Friend should deal in more detail with the speech of the hon. Member for York, who is in this place, albeit temporarily.

Mr. Snape: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I do not intend to waste any time on what I regard as the contemptible little speech of the hon. Gentleman, the temporary Member for York. He will not be missed when he is replaced by somebody who I hope will know something about the manufacturing industry that he and his Government have helped to destroy during the last six years.

The Government peddle two great myths relating to BREL. The Minister of State repeats, like a ritual incantation, that the new railway rolling stock needs less maintenance and that BREL therefore needs to employ fewer employees. That is not true. If our railway system were modern and up-to-date, there might be some justification for that attitude. It is interesting to note what the £1 billion has bought for the railway industry during the last six years. I hope that the Conservative party, and in particular the hon. Member for York, who has demonstrated his palpable lack of knowledge of these matters, appreciate that it is instructive to consider the procurement policies that have been followed since 1979.

New orders until 1980 were, of course, placed during the period of office of the last Labour Government. Since 1980, 194 locomotives and power cars have entered service with British Rail. That is 7 per cent. of the total fleet size. The other 93 per cent.—I shall do the arithmetic for the hon. Member for York because he is more used to litres and gallons than to the realities of manufacturing industry—is more than six years old.

As for coaches, we hear about sprinters and pacers rushing about the country. Out of a current fleet size of 16,105 coaches, just over 2,000 have entered service since 1979. That is just 13 per cent. of the coach fleet. Only 15 per cent. of the current fleet of 39,866 freight vehicles that are in service with British Rail entered service in the last six years. There is plenty of old rolling stock to maintain. Indeed, there is too much of it. My hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham reminded us of the old slogan that British Rail has got rid of, along with Jimmy Savile. It is the age of the train that causes the problems. It takes more than a beefed-up advertising budget, proclaiming that British Rail is getting there, and a few buckets of red paint on various stations in the south of England, to convince me that the service on British Rail is not worse and that it is not less punctual and reliable than it has ever been during my lifetime.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham regularly and understandably publicises the difficulties he faces in travelling between Westminster and Wrexham. The rest of us could tell a similar tale. I, too, prefer to travel by train. The risk of the train running late on three journeys out of five between Euston and Birmingham is infinitely preferable to one of the many contraflow systems that clutter up the M1 and M6. Travel between London and Birmingham becomes more and more difficult as each year goes by, and the age of the rolling stock is a major contributor to delays and unpunctuality.

When we talk about the attitude of those who work in BREL and those who represent them nationally, it is important to reflect that, since 1980, more than 17,000 employees have lost their jobs. The latest proposals—the ones that led to the ballot that the hon. Member for York complained about so pathetically a few minutes ago—will mean another 7,870 job losses according to our estimates.

If we had a modern railway system, there might be some justification for that champ that we hear from the Dispatch Box that, because of modern rolling stock, fewer people are needed to repair and maintain it. Since 1980, because of the Government's investment policies, the number of freight wagons in service has declined dramatically. That arises directly out of decisions taken by the Government.

As recently as 1980, BR published its rail plan, which identified a need for a programme of investment in new rolling stock. It said that, given investment, the freight business could be made viable. The Government, with this industry as with others, turned logic on its head and stipulated that BR would have to improve its overall financial results before there would be any approval of large-scale investment. BR decided that, being unable to build the replacement wagons that were required to produce a modern, high-capacity wagon fleet, it would withdraw altogether from wagon load traffic and concentrate on the bulk market in an effort to achieve the better financial results that the Government sought.

The second great myth that the Government, and especially the Minister, like to perpetrate is that everything that BR has asked for in investment, it has got. That is true so far as it goes, but, like BR's old-fashioned rolling stock, it does not go very far. The Minister knows that there is

[Mr. Snape]

an investment committee, which looks into these matters, on which representatives of the Department of Transport sit. He also knows that there are certain financial criteria which must be met before the committee approves any proposal, still more before any proposal appears on the Minister's desk in his eyrie in Marsham street. He also knows that many of the long overdue proposals for modernisation never get even to the investment committee because BR knows that they will not meet the financial criteria. It is a vicious circle.

Much the same was true for investment under the last Labour Government. Many of us had some stringent criticisms to make of our Ministers, who were apparently prepared to accept this crazy system of cost-benefit analysis to justify road building schemes, but insisted on strict financial returns on railway matters. I readily concede that, but it is no coincidence that two Ministers in the Labour Administration in the late 1970s were among the first to pack their bags and decamp to the Social Democratic party where, presumably, they advocate a programme of much greater investment in BR in the 1990s than they were ever prepared to authorise back in the 1970s.

The sooner we compare like with like when it comes to investment in different modes of transport, the sooner we shall be able to get back to running a railway system that is a pleasure for passengers to travel on and capable of moving bulk freight.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham said, travelling up and down the motorways these days is not only a nightmare; it is pretty dangerous too. The proportion of heavy goods vehicles on our roads, despite promises, pledges and blandishments offered to the road haulage lobby, increases year by year. Unless we have a railway system capable of moving freight in the way that British Rail used to, 25 or 30 years ago, in modern rolling stock behind modern and, I hope, electrified locomotives, the decline of railway freight traffic will continue and our raod network will become more and more congested, overcrowded and dangerous.

There should be a future for British Rail Engineering Ltd. There is not a future for it under this Government. There will be under the next Labour Government, and, fortunately, for the standard of debate in the House, the hon. Member for York will not be around to see it.

4.10 am

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) on his success in securing a debate tonight on this matter, albeit at such an unpopular hour in the morning. Naturally, he has taken every opportunity to argue for the retention of the British Rail Engineering works at Springburn.

The House will know the main reasons for the job losses in BREL that BR has announced from the statement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, now the Secretary of State for the Environment, made to the House on 20 May. During the hon. Gentleman's Adjournment debate on 4 June I was able to explain some of British Rail's thinking on this, and the steps that it is taking to help those affected by these changes. I welcome the further opportunity tonight to explain the board's position.

May I say, en passant, that the hon. Gentleman referred to the beauty of the countryside just outside Glasgow. I went there last weekend and I concur entirely with what he said.

Mr. Snape: By train?

Mr. Mitchell: By train.

British Rail has been reviewing its policy on the maintenance of railway rolling stock. Its aim is to make maintenance more efficient. Maintenance standards have not declined, as some people have suggested, but British Rail believes that they need to be improved, and that is the Board's objective in bringing forward its current proposals. The review has naturally taken full account of the rapid investment that is taking place in new rolling stock. I shall come back to the point that the hon. Gentleman made in a moment.

British Rail has embarked on the biggest fleet renewal programme for more than 20 years. Since July 1984 alone we have approved 10 major investment projects, worth over £630 million in total, including nearly £400 million of new rolling stock and £200 million of new electrification. Over £700 million of investment in new rolling stock is plannd by BR over the next five years.

It makes no sense for BR to invest in modern vehicles if it cannot ensure that maintenance is done as efficiently as possible and that it gets the maximum availability of the new vehicles. On its annual report, published earlier this week, the board says:

> "The trains being built today replace vehicles built 25 years ago, and they are designed, like modern motor cars, for minimum maintenance. Far greater opportunity exists for exchanging components and avoiding costly time in workshops away from revenue earning service. This brings lower costs and greater reliability, but there is a price to pay in fewer jobs."

That is a very clear summary of the factors that lie behind the Board's proposals.

Mr. Snape: This is the same old brief. It is time it was thrown away.

Mr. Mitchell: I shall come to some of the points that the hon. Gentleman made.

The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), unfortunately, spent a good deal of time attacking BR's management. He will have heard what his hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) had to say about attacking people who are not in the House or in a position to defend themselves. I make no point about that——

Dr. Marek: I said that I could have attacked some of the incompetent decisions taken by the British Railways Board, I did not blame any member of the board and I do not think I described any of those incompetent decisions. I could certainly go on at length if the Minister wanted me to do so.

Mr. Mitchell: It is not realistic for the hon. Member to talk about incompetent decisions and then say that he is not attacking the people responsible for taking those decisions. The people in British Rail management are dedicated and hard working and, with the co-operation of their staff, they are trying to give a good service in a much more complicated operation than many people realise. In the peak hours of the London commuter services, a train arrives every 11 seconds. In an intensive operation of that

nature there is bound to be a ripple effect when any minor thing goes wrong, and that ripple affects subsequent trains and causes difficulties.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about meals on British Rail trains. I spent yesterday with the Inter-City director and the general manager of his catering operation and we looked at the new work which British Rail is doing on its catering facilities. Food of an improved standard is available and there is an improved choice. The hon. Gentleman does not help British Rail or the truth by failing to recognise that the old Aunt Sally of a curled-up British Rail sandwich of years ago has gone and that British Rail has moved into a new generation of better standards. The hon. Gentleman should have the grace to recognise that.

The hon. Gentleman talked about unwashed windows. I do not think he saw such windows on recent journeys. It could well have been in February. I do not know how frequently the hon. Gentleman uses trains, but when there is a freeze-up of washing equipment, trains cannot be washed.

Dr. Marek: Must I keep a count of when the restaurant service was working between October 1985 and January this year? For about 50 per cent. of the time that I travelled it was not working. I travelled about 20 times and on 10 of those trips there was no restaurant car when there should have been. I saw the dirty windows yesterday on the Southern region when I took a trip just to see what was going on in the region.

Mr. Mitchell: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will supply me with the time of the train, because I certainly want to draw the matter to the attention of those responsible who have now set themselves a standard of washing the trains every 24 hours. The south-eastern network is seeking to achieve that standard and I have been promised that by September there will be a discernible improvement to the standards in the south-eastern network. I hope that when that happens the hon. Gentleman will give credit where it is due instead of indulging in constant carping criticism which does no one any good.

I should like to return to the matter of maintenance. First, new vehicles need less maintenance than the ones they replace. The new Sprinter is a good example of that. Secondly, as soon British Rail takes the decision to order new rolling stock, heavy maintenance ceases on the old stock that is to be replaced. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East failed to appreciate that point when he talked about what he called two great myths. One of his myths was that no new rolling stock is in service. New rolling stock is on order and there is no point in continuing to carry out heavy maintenance on rolling stock that is about to be thrown out because a massive amount of new rolling stock is on order.

All the necessary day-to-day maintenance continues to be done and British Rail handles that in its local depots and not at BREL. The building of new vehicles calls for fewer men than are required for a programme of heavy maintenance on old vehicles. I regret that British Rail considers that this means 4,200 to 5,000 fewer jobs in BREL over the next three years. But we cannot turn back the clock. If British Rail is to compete successfully with road, air and coach, and if it is to secure custom from travellers, it has to provide modern, efficient and attractive rolling stock. If it does that, it will not keep the old rolling stock and it will not need the old heavy maintenance.

My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) rightly referred to the potential for exports by BREL. That must be encouraged. But I regret to say that the hon. Member for Wrexham irresponsibly condemned the 142 vehicle just when BREL was doing its damnedest to sell it around the world. It is a pity that he should seek to damage a major export drive just as it is getting under way.

The hon. Member for Wrexham also talked about his experiences. I hope that he will regret his miserable and curmudgeonly approach to British Rail. He said that British Rail had to invest. There was no question—for example, on the east coast main line—but that it could have gone on with a second generation of HSTs. British Rail put to the Government its decision to invest in electrification and the Government approved. Even the hon. Gentleman was heard to say some good words about that investment.

Mr. Gregory: Will my hon. Friend confirm that British Rail has not taken up all its external financing limits and that it is an indictment of the Opposition that they are unable to produce any comparative figures for when the Labour party was in power and influenced British Rail?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is, as always, very perceptive. I must correct again the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East, because he believes in a second myth. He was wrong to say that representatives of the Department of Transport sit on the BR investment committee. They do not. That is a myth.

Mr. Snape: Is the Minister saying that at no time before these matters arrive on his desk is there direct consultation between the British Railways Board and representatives from his Department?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman knows well what happens. The board considers an investment proposal. If it agrees to it, and if it involves more than £5 million, it is sent to the Department. My officials will ask questions before they send the proposal to me so that I have a full report. Often I then ask further questions. That frequently means going back to the board and asking for further information. But the decision about that investment is taken by British Rail. The Department does not participate.

Having killed both the myths of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East, perhaps I can return to the problems of Springburn. Scotland is particularly affected by these changes because British Rail is improving services there through major fleet changes. In a few years a high proportion of Scottish services will be operated by modern, low-maintenance vehicles. There is the new electrification, with the east coast main line and the Ayrshire schemes. Sprinter-type vehicles will appear on many services that currently use loco-hauled coaching stock. There are also likely to be more HST-type services.

Well over a year ago BREL told its trade unions that the work force at Springburn would need to be reduced substantially by March 1987, and it was clear then that Springburn's future beyond that date was uncertain, and no assurances were given on that. In May this year, British Rail announced details of the new BREL organisation. Without a change in strategy, BREL was in no doubt that that reduced maintenance workload would lead to the complete closure of Springburn in 1987. Its new strategy offers a new role for Springburn as a regional maintenance depot, offering work for up to 200 people.

[Mr. Mitchell]

I must stress that these are British Rail's proposals. The board's future maintenance arrangements are essentially matters for it to decide in consultation with its work force. Following the clear decision by the work force in the recent ballot against industrial action, I am glad that the unions are coming back to discussing the proposals with BR and BREL at a meeting next week.

I know that the substantial job losses proposed by BR, especially at Springburn, Doncaster and Wolverton, are causing deep concern in the areas, and I need hardly add that it is a concern that I share. I can assure hon. Members that BR will be doing all that it can to soften the impact of these changes and to manage the problem as sympathetically as it can. It will have my full support on this.

Mr. Martin: I asked the Minister to ensure that BREL, which is a substantial property owner in the community, got involved with the Springburn initiative. Will the Minister assure me that he will encourage BREL to do so?

Mr. Mitchell: Perhaps I can come back to that point in a moment.

British Rail has announced plans for a senior BR director to co-ordinate measures to help those affected, heading a special directorate to look at alternative employment prospects and to develop retraining programmes. BR will be working with BREL to find alternative jobs both within BR and outside the railway industry. In particular, BR will—as it mentions in its annual report — try wherever possible to match the recruitment needs of railway departments in the next three years with the employment needs of those displaced in BREL.

At Springburn, BREL has set up Springburn Holdings to support the efforts to create new jobs. There is a job creation package on similar lines to that offered at other sites affected by works closures, with £1 million available from BREL. I gather that in the next few weeks BREL will be seeking to build on these initial steps and expects to be giving its development proposals wider publicity.

BREL has been seeking to enlist the co-operation of local authorities in the Glasgow area, but with mixed results so far. I urge hon. Members to recognise the inevitability of change and modernisation on the railway. We must do all that we can to press local interests to work with BR and the Scottish Development Agency on finding ways to promote alternative jobs to replace those which, it is clear, will be lost.

The hon. Member for Springburn knows that I am personally committed to helping in job creation. Last month I invited him to join me in going to see what has been achieved at Shildon—and what might be achieved in Glasgow. I hope that he will take up that offer. Then we can study in more detail some of the opportunities which have been seized and which may be suitable for transplanting to Glasgow. Nothing will be achieved unless there is the fullest co-operation from the local authorities; the work force and the Scottish Development Agency. All must be involved in a team effort to achieve what has proved to be most successful at Shildon.

It is for British Rail to decide how to put forward its proposals in consultation with the work force. I am sure that if that co-operation is available much can be done in the constituency of the hon. Member for Springburn.

Debt (Government's Voluntary Code)

4.30 am

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): Like most things in life there is some good news and some bad. The good news is that we are able to have this debate. The bad news is that it is taking place at half past four in the morning.

I wish to congratulate my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment on his efforts in producing the booklet "Payment on time, Guidance for Suppliers and Buyers". I also congratulate him on the fact that the booklet has received the endorsement of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, the Institute of Directors, the Confederation of British Industry and the Institute of Purchasing and Supply. It is a well-written booklet and, indeed, I have no criticism of the booklet except that it does not go far enough. The Minister and I have had differences of opinion on this matter in the past, but I do not, in any sense, criticise his efforts. I simply believe that more can be done.

The guide formally recognises, for the first time, what many of us have identified as a growing problem—that people are not paying their bills on time. This problem was recognised long before the Minister or myself studied it. In 1978, the Law Commission report on interest identified the problem of the bad payer who uses the system to his personal advantage. The commission concluded that:

> "The existing laws do not provide adequate means of redress for the creditor who is kept out of his money by his debtor"

The Law Commission responded, as did my hon. Friend the Minister this summer, to the cries of business men who complained about their cash flows and the difficulty they have in getting bills paid.

When I visit business men in Nottingham I am repeatedly told that their order books are full but that they are crippled by their cash flow because they cannot get their debtors to pay. A recent survey in the east midlands asked firms to state the four factors which most limited their business prospects. Top of the list was interest rates, and cash flow was second. Coupled with this increasing problem is the growing craftiness in delaying payment.

The best excuses that firms come up with concern the electronics industry. They state that the bill is in the computer and that they cannot get it out. Another excuse is that such bills are dealt with only at the end of the month. I know one well-known advertising agency which deliberately has its account section in the west country — 100 miles out of London, where the head office is located. People who are pressing for payment are bounced from one office to the other in a deliberate policy to slow up the payment of the bills.

It is an attractive proposition for anyone to delay the payment of debts for as long as he can get away with it. Money can be made by the large institutions in the short term. We know the nature of the overnight market. Many large firms now employ financial consultants who will advise on how best to capitalise upon short-term money. I do not criticise the firms for making a profit, but the smaller business man, who is waiting for his money is deprived as a result of this activity.

Such situations illustrate the limitation of the guideline. I contemplated saying weakness, but that is unfair. There

is nothing wrong with the principles set out in the guideline, except possibly that there is not a recommended period for payment. It does not suggest that payment should be made in 30, 45 or 60 days, for example. I shall be interested to know whether my hon. Friend has any comment to make about that.

The choice which a business man is faced with at the end of the month as a result of the booklet is simple. If he has a pile of bills in front of him and he has the choice of paying them or responding to the recommendations in the guidelines, and he is a bit tight for cash, I have no doubt that he would receive a pat on the head from my hon. Friend if he complied with the recommendations in the guidelines. But I have no doubt that his head would rule his heart and he would delay payment of the bills if that helped his cash flow.

The parties can protect themselves by including in the terms and conditions of the business provisos that payment shall be made of the sum due and that interest shall accrue if the sum is not paid. That is a sensible precaution which I recommend to anyone. The problem is that not many parties enter into contractual terms of that sort. A CBI survey showed that only 19 per cent. of contracting parties had terms relating to payment and the accrual of interest. There are many who do business with one another who have no contractual terms and operate upon oral agreements. That is frequently the position with professionals and consumers who contract with a business man.

It is my strong belief that legislation should be introduced to sit alongside the guidelines. The only practical legislation is that which provides that interest is payable on the late payment of a debt. It no doubt comes as a surprise to the House to find that that is not the present position. The law provides for the payment of interest in certain circumstances and there are two pieces of legislation that apply that can best be summarised by saying that someone is entitled to interest on the late payment of a debt if he issues a writ before he is paid, a procedure that is hardly likely to lubricate the wheels of industry. It is not helpful to have to issue a writ at the same time as sending out an invoice.

I suggest that the legislation that should sit alongside the voluntary code is that which would give a party the right to sue for interest after payment has been made. Let us suppose that someone has been waiting for £50,000 for three months. At present interest rates, he would be entitled to just over £1,500. I am sure that such a provision would expedite payment.

There are advantages in such a procedure. First, a party can wait until he has been paid before deciding whether he wants to commence proceedings. For various reasons that relate to his contractual relationship with the other party, he may not want to commence legal proceedings. My proposal would give him the option of exercising his entitlement or forgoing it. More draconian measures are found in other European countries such as Denmark, where 2 per cent. a month is added to a bill if there is late payment. That is the result of legislation.

If a party waits until after he has been paid before deciding whether to sue, he is able fully to assess the period over which he has been deprived of his money before commencing proceedings. That is something that he is not able to do under present legislation.

The best reason of all for this proposal is that if someone wants to recover interest on a sum which has been due to him for some time he has, under present legislation, to issue a writ to recover the sum. It is necessary to issue the writ in the sum that is due, and £50,000 plus interest would put the claimant into the High court, with the attendant cost of starting proceedings in that jurisdiction. There would be the additional cost of instructing solicitors.

On the other hand, a claim for interest of £1,500 would fall within the jurisdiction of the county court. In my experience, the county court is one of the easiest organisations with which to deal. A phone call to the county court will lead to a form being sent by post. The payment of £6—I believe that that is the current figure —will ensure that proceedings are started, and in due course judgment will be obtained. There are no lawyers and everything is simple. It is a cheap system to operate. My hon. Friend will rightly tell us that he has a lot of support for the voluntary guidelines that he has produced. At Question Time on Tuesday, I think he said that 130,000 copies have been requested and there are more in the pipeline. I congratulate him on stimulating such interest.

A survey was carried out by the Forum of Private Business in Cheshire. I should be surprised if my hon. Friend did not know about that institution, because its latest publication has no fewer than two photographs of him in it. It considered the topic that I have raised tonight. As is the forum's technique, it conducted a referendum among its members on what they thought of the voluntary code and what they thought of my proposals for legislation.

Opinion on the voluntary code was evenly divided with 44 per cent. in favour of it, 44 per cent. against it, and 12 per cent. having no opinion. However, on the question of establishing a legal, enforceable right to interest on late payment of debts, along the lines of my proposals, no fewer than 77 per cent. were in favour, 17 per cent. were against, and only 6 per cent. had no opinion. That demonstrates that there is a great deal of support for the proposal among representatives of the forum.

I know that my hon. Friend is slightly resistant to the introduction of legislation. However, he is getting on to slightly tricky ground in his resistance. While the Department of Employment may be promoting that line, there is a classic case going on of the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing. As from 1 October this year, Customs and Excise will, by legislation, be empowered to impose statutory penalties of the nature of interest, increasing from 5 per cent. to as much as 30 per cent., for businesses that are late in paying their VAT.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Quite right.

Mr. Ottaway: I am glad to hear that. The Government have resisted the introduction of mandatory interest on the late payment of debts. Yet the Treasury is doing just that. The Treasury does not hide its light under a bushel. Customs and Excise put out a press release claiming that the measure will reduce the outstanding VAT debt from £1 billion to £¾ billion, which is an admirable objective.

That rather establishes the point I am trying to make, that up until now the principle of voluntary guidelines has not resulted in the payment of bills. However, by introducing statutory rights to interest, the Treasury is confident that there will be a reduction of 75 per cent. in the level of outstanding indebtedness. That is a classic example of the pot calling the kettle black. It is said that

[Mr. Ottaway]

this action could be "hazardous". The Labour party in Government in the 1960s, introduced little-used legislation which became the Uniform Laws on International Sales Act. That legislation provides for the mandatory use of interest on late payment of bills when there is a breach of contract.

It is not just me and a number of business men who are calling for the introduction of legislation. In 1978, the Law Commission recommended that

"the introduction of statutory interest is appropriate and necessary."

It also rightly pointed out that, with the exception of Ireland, it would have the support of every country in Europe. I mentioned Denmark earlier. The list even includes Scotland in certain circumstances. It would be useful if the House could be told why it is hazardous to have legislation for statutory interest in England but not in Scotland. I look forward to having our fears allayed in that respect.

I have always been rather impressed by the quotation on the top of the notepaper of the Association of Bankrupts which states:

"If you lived in the richest, most powerful city it was possible for a man to imagine, that there was no love there, no mercy and no justice for those who met with misfortune, then you would be better off dead than to live in such a place."

It is with that saying in mind that the attitude of large business organisations is to be treated with some scepticism. During the couple of years in which I have analysed the subject, I have spoken to hundreds of business men. Very few were opposed to my proposals. Every time I came up against big business organisations, such as the Confederation of British Industry, I was conscious of the division in their ranks and the way in which power is manipulated within the organisation.

I first took up my proposals with the smaller firms council of the CBI, which was dramatically enthusiastic about my proposals and said that they did not go far enough. It said that an absolute statutory right to interest with no discretions should be introduced. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) — will remember, we both spoke at a conference of the small business council. Afterwards, I found complete support for my proposal. Despite that, the full council of the CBI has never endorsed this proposal. I understand that it still objects and that the big firms which dominate the CBI are resisting this legislation.

The other day I had the chance to have an informal meeting with a leading manufacturer's group which confessed that it was motivated purely out of self-interest on this matter and that it resisted my proposal — the statutory right to interest of some sort or another — because it would cause problems which the group wanted to avoid. Cash flow was the manufacturers' problem. That is the very problem with which we are trying to cope.

In a recent radio broadcast, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State said that he resisted the prospect of immediate legislation on the ground that listeners would be amazed at the number of small firms organisations which had asked him not to introduce such legislation. I raised that point with my hon. Friend and he kindly replied to me in a letter which I received this afternoon. In it, he said that, as a result of the doubts which I had raised, he had asked his officials to take up the matter with some of the small firms organisations when they next met them to raise that point specifically. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his reply. I hope that he will go beyond the sort of front shown by the CBI and will meet the small business men who support the reform of private business and call for this proposal.

I am heartened by the bald statement of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State that he will consider introducing legislation if it can be shown that the voluntary code is not working. While considering the prospect of legislation, it is important to monitor the success of voluntary codes. I should be grateful to my hon. Friend if he will say how he intends to do that and for how long. If his response is that he intends to listen to the small business organisations I hope that he will take on board the findings of a recent CBI survey. Forty-four per cent. of those asked said that, if there was a right to interest, they would use it, but, most significantly of all, 85 per cent. said that, if there was a right to interest, they thought that their customers would pay more promptly. I think that that justifies the introduction of some form of legislation.

I do not knock the voluntary guidelines. They are a step in the right direction. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and I are thinking along the same lines on this issue. However, I genuinely believe that the issue of late payment of bills should be taken a step further and that legislation should be introduced as soon as possible.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): This is my second bite at the cherry this evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I was not aware that the hon. Member had already taken part in the debate. He cannot speak again. Mr. Trippier.

4.47 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Knight: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I spoke on an earlier motion on the Order Paper——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There is only one motion before the House, despite the fact that there are several debates. Under Standing Orders, the hon. Member may speak only once in the Adjournment debate.

Mr. Knight: I am not in any way seeking to challenge your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I thought that, with the leave of the presenter of this topic, it would be in order for me to speak.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have just explained that, under our Standing Orders, the hon. Member may contribute to this debate once. The debate is on the motion to adjourn the House.

Mr. Trippier: I have listened with great interest to the views expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Ottaway) on the difficulties created for small firms by the practice of late payment of their bills. I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate. I am grateful to him for the kind things he has said about me and the document which I issued recently, "Payment on Time". I pay warm tribute to him for his able and vociferous advocacy on behalf of small businesses, especially on this problem. My hon. Friend is right to suggest to the House that there is not much that divides us. I hope to try to develop my case during my speech. I

think that I may surprise him by saying that when I first considered this matter, shortly after becoming the Minister responsible for small firms, there was no one who wanted to introduce legislation on this matter more than me.

I have held the position of Minister responsible for small firms for just over three years now. During that time this subject has occupied my mind more than most, not least because of the heavy mailbag I have received. I happen to think that it is perhaps one of the most important issues currently affecting the small business sector. It is also one of the most difficult nuts there is to crack. I am certainly not labouring under any illusions as to the extent of the task involved in helping to bring about an improvement in commercial payment practice. However, the correspondence I have received during this period and the discussions I have had with small firms and their representative organisations has given me an excellent opportunity to evaluate the extent and different aspects of what is by no means a simple and straightforward issue.

While raising finance for fixed and working capital requirements, it is vital to businesses of all sizes that they should receive prompt payment for outstanding bills. It is no less important to many businesses, particularly in the small firms sector. They inevitably have a much more critical cash flow situation than their larger counterparts and therefore rely heavily on on timely payment. Late payment and bad debts do not simply inhibit growth and development. Their firm control is fundamental to a company's very survival. The severe problems that they create for a small firm's cash flow is exacerbated if it has to fall back on the bank manager and resort to increased borrowing to help it through its cash flow difficulties. The small business man knows only too well that that sort of situation cannot go on indefinitely.

The problem becomes compounded even further when the small businessman, who often has to wear a number of different hats in any case, takes on the additional role of debt collector. Chasing slow payers is a real drain on his time and resources, and those two commodities are usually in short supply at the best of times. To make the most profitable use of his time he needs to be left free to do the things he does best — selling the goods he produces or the service he provides and creating wealth and work.

It is important that we do not look at this problem simply as a large firm versus small firms issue. That is how I started to look at the problem. This is by no means the case. My hon. Friend is aware that the Confederation of British Industry recently carried out the survey among small firms that he referred to. The reason for that was to assess the extent and nature of the late payment problem. My hon. Friend did not develop that in great detail, but the results of the survey showed that for 54 per cent. it is large firms which are generally paying them late. However, 40 per cent. of respondents stated that other small firms are their main source of difficulty in that respect. I was surprised at that, as I am sure my hon. Friend probably was. That is an important point because there will obviously be delayed payment from small firms not paying other small firms on time, small firms not paying medium-sized firms on time and small firms not paying large firms on time.

As I develop my speech, I am anxious to make the point that I fear that, if legislation along the lines suggested by my hon. Friend were to be introduced, there is a grave danger that the legislation would be used more by large firms against small firms than the other way round. My hon. Friend says, "So what". When I had my initial meeting with the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, the Institute of Directors and the CBI, there were a number of people who said that such legislation could mean that many thousands of small firms would be put out of business. That is the danger. It is not a question of saying, "So what?". I believe that it does not matter. I have no figures to show because it is hypothesis and conjecture. The figure I had thought of could reach 250,000. Is that a risk that my hon. Friend is prepared to take? That is the decision that someone in my position must take.

Mr. Ottaway: This is a circular argument. If small firms are to be put under pressure by large firms, they, too, have the right to use this legislation to enhance their cash flow. Just as large firms will press for prompt payment, so will small firms. It is simply a cash flow question. There may be a few teething problems but after some weeks when the cycle speeds up, both sides will be reconciled. There is legislation in every other country in Europe and the Treasury thinks that it is a good idea, so I am not convinced that this will not result in a massive number of bankruptcies, as my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. Trippier: Earlier my hon. Friend referred to the late payment of VAT, and two thirds of individuals liable to pay VAT delay payment. That is a reason for introducing the new measure recommended by the Keith Committee report. In fairness, it must be said that those who will be penalised are given two opportunities for delayed payment before Customs and Excise will act. I am not saying that my hon. Friend is wrong, but there is a danger which is why the Government should not rule out the possibility of introducing legislation.

The Associaton of British Chambers of Commerce expressed the view that it could be hazardous to introduce legislation because it could work against the small firms we are seeking to encourage. My hon. Friend and I are completely at one on that point. I was particularly unnerved by other small firms' organisations, and I am happy to quote their precise position, which told me that they thought it was certainly hazardous and risky to follow that route without first seeing whether the suggested code of practice which I have introduced in the booklet "Payment on Time" would work.

My hon. Friend referred to the smaller firms council of the CBI, and I have in my possession a letter sent to my hon. Friend by Sonia Elkin, director of the CBI smaller firms council, shortly after he had the good fortune to raise his ten-minute Bill on the Floor of the House. It was spelt out to my hon. Friend that he was not quite right in what he had suggested to the House in that speech. The letter dated 17 April states:

> "The CBI Smaller Firms Council, like the CBI as a whole, is not currently committed to any specific policy regarding the law on interest on overdue debts. Whilst it is true to say that in our initial consultations the SFC was inclined to favour some form of right at the discretion of the courts it has put its views on ice pending the outcome of our current detailed review of policy."

I await that as much as my hon. Friend does.

Mr. Ottaway: My hon. Friend is referring to a letter which was written as a result of a misunderstanding by the CBI. Unforuntately, I do not have my files with me, but

[Mr. Ottaway]

I have a letter from the CBI, saying that the smaller firms council endorses the proposal. I have since pointed that out to the CBI, but it has not even bothered to reply.

Mr. Trippier: I am sure that we can resolve this matter, perhaps outside the Chamber at some future date. Only the other evening I was in the company of the present and previous chairmen of the CBI smaller firms council and there is no doubt in my mind that that council is not unanimous on the matter by a long way. The last time that I attended that council, I was impressed to see that the majority of members attending were concerned as to whether legislation should be introduced.

Again trying to narrow the difference between my hon. Friend and myself, may I say that it is important that those people, especially members of the Forum of Private Business — Mr. Stan Mendham's organisation — should understand what they are being asked in the form of a survey. It is important that they understand that if we introduce legislation, they could suffer. My hon. Friend cannot deny that fact. I have no quarrel with the Forum of Private Business. As my hon. Friend said kindly, I enjoy a considerable amount of exposure from the forum, most of it favourable, and I have a great deal of time for Mr. Stan Mendham. Strangely, this is about the only issue in relation to small firms on which he has not consulted me. It is the only subject on which we have never had a discussion. Perhaps he more than anyone else would be interested to read the *Hansard* report of the debate.

My hon. Friend and I share an anxiety — this especially worries me — about large firms deliberately exploiting their market power to derive commercial advantage and gain extended credit from delaying payment of suppliers' bills, usually at the expense of smaller firms.

Mr. Knight: I agree with my hon. Friend's campaign. I know what he is trying to do and I support him. Can he assure the House that he will send a copy of his speech to the Rover Group? I have received numerous complaints from medium-sized companies in my constituency that, despite the fact that in its latest brochure the Rover Group says that it has a reputation to live up to, it does not pay its debts on time.

Mr. Trippier: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information. I have asked hon. Members on both sides of the House several times to let me have any information on overdue payments. I shall be happy to look into that matter for my hon. Friend. I shall write to the chairman of the company on his behalf and on behalf of his constituent firms, which are suffering as a result of delayed payment — if it can be proved that there is delayed payment. I must be careful in what I say about that.

The "late payment disease" is found in large and small firms, and in all sectors of industry and commerce. But the practice to which I referred before the intervention, where a payment can be delayed for about two or three months, is absolutely immoral. Although my hon. Friend and I accept that some small firms do not pay the bills of large firms on time, it would not make as much difference to the latter. However, the delay in payment from the large firms to the small firms can make all the difference between survival and failure. That is why I launched the booklet entitled, "Payment on Time."

The public sector, too, has come in for some criticism. I gain some comfort from the fact that only 5 per cent. of respondents to the CBI survey thought that central and local government bodies are their worst payers. I was pleasantly surprised to read that. I say "surprised", because many right hon. and hon. Members have asked about Departments or public bodies delaying payment to small firms in their constituencies. But 5 per cent. is relatively low. That does not suggest that I am complacent about it. Much more could be done, but I should point out to the House that Departments have instructions to pay on time. I use the opportunity again to say that if an hon. Member can give me an example of where a small firm in his constituency has not been paid on time by the Department, I shall undertake to look into it.

If I may turn to the means at our disposal to help eradicate the practice to which I referred, and which my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North claims is the major problem, he says that the only effective and lasting solution would be to give creditors a right to interest on overdue debts. This would mean, as I understand it, that the courts would be given discretionary powers to award interest to creditors if their bills are paid late.

Mr. Ottaway: They have power.

Mr. Trippier: It is important for me to understand that and to get it absolutely clear.

Others call for statutory powers so that firms would have an automatic right to interest — that has been suggested to me also — where all late payers would be charged without exemption. When the Law Commission's report on interest was published in 1978, industry had an opportunity to comment on its recommendation that contract debts should, unless otherwise provided, carry interest at a fixed rate from the date on which payment of the debt became due. Small firms' organisations had serious reservations about the efficacy of this approach and took the opportunity to discuss late payment of bills with me. What is clear to me is that there is a wide range of opinion on the benefits or otherwise of legislation and at this stage there is no consensus on the desirability of pursuing this particular course of action. The serious reservations that were expressed some years ago still exist. Whatever route we take to tackle this problem, I have a responsibility to ensure that I respect the views of those who represent small businesses. I will see that the views of my hon. Friend the views of others continue to be fully taken into account.

The situation in other countries was referred to by my hon. Friend. I am always willing to learn from the experience of others, but, while legislation certainly appears to exist in a number of other countries, what is not clear is how effective it is in practice or as a deterrent to late payment; nor is it clear what part an unwritten code of commercial ethics plays in encouraging firms to pay promptly without the need for legislation or exhortation.

At present the provisions of the Administration of Justice Act 1982 mean that, if a debt is paid after the commencement of proceedings, it is possible to continue to sue for interest alone. I have to say that at the moment I remain to be convinced that further legislation is the best solution. My main fear is that in practical terms legislation may make little difference to a small firm's ability to obtain timely payment of outstanding accounts. Pursuing

reluctant debtors through the courts could represent a considerable drain on a small firm's available time and resources—and debtors know this only too well. As I have already said, large firms would be more likely to want to pursue that line than small firms simply because they do have that kind of resource at their disposal. That has been the experience in other fields also.

There is also the danger that the prospect of legislation could give rise to large firms agreeing to new credit terms which could be particularly disadvantageous to small businesses. The introduction of legislation that my hon. Friend said we should encourage could result in a general move by those with market power, that is, the larger firms, towards standard buying terms of 90 days' credit. Supporters of legislation would respond by saying that payment of all bills within 30 days should be a statutory obligation as well. I am not happy that the Government should be interfering at all in these matters by telling firms how to do business with each other. Firms should be left free to use their commercial judgment and decide whether the terms on which business is offered are acceptable to them.

So there is the near certainty that legislation would encourage major firms to extend the credit terms on which they are willing to do business with small suppliers. Buyers could also show a more pedantic attention to detail in order to delay the presentation date of the invoice. Many other issues also arise, such as the choice of interest rate, the calculation and mechanics of charging it and whether exemptions would be permitted, particularly if the small supplier wished it. All in all, legislation could be a case of the cure being worse than the disease.

I assure my hon. Friend that I shall keep an open mind on legislation, despite its intrinsic drawbacks. But before we contemplate going down that coercive route, we must see what co-operation can achieve. I say that not because I am looking for a soft option—it would not be difficult to introduce a short piece of legislation on a discretionary right to interest—but because of the practical reasons to which I alluded earlier.

If we fail to change attitudes towards the payment of bills, legislation would be likely to bring about a potentially damaging reaction. If we succeed in our objective, it follows that further legislation would be redundant. The key to changing attitudes is to convince managing directors that in the long run it is not smart business practice for their finance directors to try to place the interest burden of work in progress on to suppliers.

If it were smart, why, for example, do large Japanese companies place such emphasis on developing their links with small suppliers, encouraging their development, assisting them to achieve the necessary quality of product, to understand the importance of prompt delivery, and advising them on the development of new, improved products to meet future needs?

We have had an interesting and wide-ranging debate on a subject with which, as I said at the outset, I wrestle on a weekly basis, and my mail bag remains large. My hon. Friend asked how we would monitor the position. I have not yet received replies from a number of chairmen of the top 100 companies to whom I wrote about the payment booklet. I have received replies from the vast majority of them and, in the main, the chairmen of those large companies have welcomed the introduction of the code and are anxious to ensure that their buying departments honour what is suggested in it. I shall publish at a later stage details of what the larger companies are doing on this issue. I give my hon. Friend that assurance.

As an indication of the inreasing awareness of the matter, I have recently authorised the re-printing of the booklet. My hon. Friend rightly said that 130,000 copies had been distributed. Many more will now have to be printed and I welcome the fact that small as well as large firms want to receive it.

There is in the booklet advice and guidance on how to set up a proper contract. It explains the need to set out in the early stages of the document how payment is to be made. My hon. Friend will not be shocked to hear that some firms which have undertaken contracts for larger firms, not knowing that those large companies may not be good payers, should perhaps not have taken on that work. It could in certain circumstances put small firms against the wall.

I am sure that the debate will go on outside the House. I am glad that my hon. Friend and I have had an opportunity to make a contribution to it. I hope that our remarks have helped to clear the air, have helped to inform the forum of private business and have shown that there is an alternative point of view. I congratulate my hon. Friend on having secured the debate and I welcome the opportunity that I have had to reply to it.

Birmingham Public House Bombings

5.13 am

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I wish to raise the serious matter of the six men imprisoned for the Birmingham pub bombings. I have a constituency interest in the matter in that Patsy Power, of 25 Cookes close, Leytonstone, is the sister of Billy Power, one of the men in prison. She wrote to me saying:

"My brother, with five other innocent men, have served 11 years for the Birmingham bombings. We, the families, have worked hard, with the help of many sympathetic people, to clear these men's names, with little result until last year. 'World in Action' broadcast a special programme in September of last year about this case. Let me give you the position at the moment and tell you my fears. Following the 'World in Action' programme, Sir John Farr MP passed some papers to the Home Secretary and called for a retrial. That was six months ago and we have heard nothing, except that an investigation will be held. We fear that because of the nature of the case, it will fade from the public eye and nothing will be done. Please help us."

In addition, new evidence is now available in the form of Mr. Chris Mullin's book "Error of Judgement: The truth about the Birmingham bombings." I pay tribute to Mr. Chris Mullin. He has shown that investigative journalism is not yet dead. He has produced startling new information.

The bombings took place on the evening of 21 November 1974. The IRA placed bombs in two Birmingham pubs, "The Mulberry Bush" and "The Tavern in the Town." The bombs exploded, killing 21 people and injuring 160. It was the biggest murder in British history. Such was the strength of public horror that within a few weeks the Prevention of Terrorism Act was on the statute book.

Within three hours of the explosions, five Irishmen had been arrested at Heysham in Lancashire where they were about to board the ferry for Ireland. They had left Birmingham's New Street station on a train that departed 20 minutes before the first explosion. The five Irishmen were Paddy Hill, Robert Hunter, Noel McIlkenny, Billy Power and Johnnie Walker. A sixth man, Hugh Callaghan, was arrested at his Birmingham home the following night. All the men had families in Birmingham, where they had lived for between 10 and 25 years.

After three days in the custody of the west midlands police, four of the men had signed confessions describing how they had carried out the bombings. In the case of two of them, forensic tests on their hands were said to have proved positive. In August 1975, after a trial lasting 45 days, they were convicted, and each was given a life sentence of 21 years.

In his summing up the trial judge, the then Mr. Justice Bridge stated that the prosecution's case had two absolutely critical planks — the confessions, and the forensic evidence. As for the confessions, it was apparent from the start that they were gravely flawed. The passages dealing with the planting of the bombs were extremely thin and riddled with contradictions.

In each of the confessions the bombs were said to have been placed in plastic bags. In his reply to the letter that I sent to the Minister from Patsy Power the Minister said that the case for the prosecution was that the six defendants who foregathered in the area of New Street station on the evening of 21 November 1974 had with them white plastic bags and a number of explosive devices, yet at the trial the Home Office forensic scientists were adamant that the bombs had been either in briefcases or in holdalls, not in plastic bags.

The reason for the discrepancy is that the confessions were obtained before the wreckage had been sifted and before the presence there of the briefcases and the holdall was known. It was thought that the plastic bags were the answer. They were not.

Another discrepancy is that Callaghan confessed to planting his bomb outside "The Mulberry Bush." In fact, it was planted inside, at the rear. Callaghan said that it was he and Hunter who bombed "The Mulberry Bush." Walker says that Hunter was with him bombing the taverns. Hunter cannot have been in two places at the same time. The confessions of McIlkenny and Walker refer to three bombs carried to New street station. Billy Power's confession refers to six bombs carried by Hunter, Walker and Callaghan.

The confessions do not mention where the bombs came from. No trace of explosives was ever found in the homes of the men, and no explanation of the origin of the bombs was offered to the court. All the men who signed confessions say that they were beaten out of them. They described to the court a horrifying catalogue of violence which lasted for the best part of three days and two nights. It was intense physical and psychological violence. Hill tells how the barrel of a pistol was put in his mouth and the trigger was pulled three times.

Chris Mullin's book says of Hill:

"they talked about shooting him and dumping him on the motorway on the way back to Birmingham. 'They said nobody would know, as nobody knew I was in police custody'."

His legs are still covered in scars where he says policemen stubbed out lighted cigarettes.

Billy Power is reported as saying in Mr. Mullin's book:

" 'Then they started telling me there was a mob outside my home ready to lynch my wife and children. All that was saving them was the police who were searching it. They said the police would not stay for ever and that the only way to save my wife and children was to tell them what they wanted to know.' . . . Someone said, 'Throw him through the—"

expletive deletive, using Richard Nixon's terms—

"window.' At this they started clearing the chairs away from the window and dragged him towards it. Power was not to know, that the windows were sealed shut and could not be opened. Someone said, 'If the fall doesn't kill him, the crowd will.' "

I want the House to get a picture of the appalling violence. McIlkenny alleged that he was the subject of a mock execution in which a gun with blanks was fired at him. There is an explicit description of that on pages 94 and 95 of the book.

Most of the men have not seen their trial papers for 10 years, and most have not met for 11, but the story that they tell today of those three days and two nights is the same as that which they have told since they left police custody. Nobody disputes that they were severly beaten during their first few days in custody. Photographs taken at the time show injuries to most of their faces. Dr. David Paul, the coroner of the City of London, is prepared to say on the basis of the photographs taken in police custody that all of the men showed signs of injuries on their faces. A medical examination shortly after their admission to Winson Green prison showed their bodies to be covered in injuries.

The police say that the injuries were inflicted by the prison officers on admission to prison, and the prison

officers say that the men were injured before being admitted. The men say that they were beaten by the police and by the prison officers. As *The Times* put it at the time,

"Who beat up the bombers?"

The question demanded an answer, and an inquiry was set up to determine the cause of their injuries. The inquiry was a cover-up. It was headed by Mr. Davis Owen, who is now the chief constable of north Wales. He spent his whole time investigating prison officers and pinned all of the blame on them.

A year and a half later 14 prison officers were eventually placed on trial charged with inflicting the injuries. They all declined to testify and were all acquitted. Although all 14 declined to go into the witness box to give evidence, the majority of them had given statements to their solicitor before their trial. They are truthful and admit to the beatings up. Copies of those statements have been obtained, together with the solicitor's note written before the trial, which in effect, states:

"If these statements are available to the court all our clients will be convicted."

But that does not get the police off the hook because they do not absolve the police. Three of the warders—Mr. Patrick Murtagh, Mr. Brian Sharp and Mr. Gordon Willingham—in their statements to their solicitors point out that the men had bruises before they reached their custody and that is explained in detail in Mr. Chris Mullin's book.

"In their statements several prison officers also say they saw signs of injuries which appeared to have been inflicted before the men arrived at the prison. Patrick Murtagh . . . saw Johnny Walker stripped immediately after his arrival. Mr. Murtagh says, 'As he stripped, I noticed there were a number of marks on his body. I believe it was Walker who had a long and discoloured bruise from the waist up and across the front of his ribs . . . It was yellow and green.'

Brian Sharp was with Murtagh when Walker stripped off. He said, 'I saw bruises on many parts of his body and his torso was more or less covered. They were all colours, black, blue, yellow, purple and most of them looked oldish.' Gordon Willingham, one of the officers who two hours later supervised the bathing, saw all the men naked.

'From the marks I saw on them, I would say that their facial markings were recent, but their bodily marks were . . . at least one or more days old. These were consistent with a systematic beating below the neck while in police custody'."

That is what the prison warders put in their statement.

In the eyes of the law there is still a mystery. Apparently the prison department was persuaded to accept responsibility for the injuries although no one has even been convicted of inflicting the injuries. The Home Office is extremely anxious that the question should not be reopened. If it could ever be proved that the police were responsible for any of the violence the confessions would be invalid.

Lord Denning summed it up when he said:

"'Just consider the course of events if this action is allowed to proceed to trial . . . If the six men fail it would mean that much time and money will have been expended by many people for no good purpose. If the six men win, it will mean that the police were guilty of perjury, that they were guilty of violence and threats, that the confessions were involuntary and were improperly admitted in evidence and that the convictions were erroneous. That would mean the Home Secretary would either have to recommend they be pardoned or he would have to remit the case to the Court of Appeal. This is such an appalling vista that every sensible person in the land would say: It cannot be right these actions should go any further.'"

It would also mean that the police were guilty of a world record quantity of perjury at the trial. More than 20 officers ranging in rank from detective constable to assistant chief constable testified at the trial that no policeman had laid a finger on the men. The trial judge, then Mr. Justice Bridge, in his summing up said that if the police were lying it would be

"a conspiracy unprecedented in the annals of British criminal history."

He went on to say that if the defendants were telling the truth the careers of many senior police officers would be blighted and some may well end up in doubt. There is a problem for the police and the Home Office because many of the police officers involved have since been promoted and are now senior officers,—apart from one of them, Detective Sergeant Brian Morton, who has just served a gaol sentence for beating up suspects.

That deals with the doubts about the confessions. The other key aspect of the trial was the forensic evidence. Dr. Frank Skuse, of the Home Office forensic science laboratory at Chorley, gave the most important evidence in the trial. He tested the men's hands in Morecambe police station a few hours after their arrest. He used the Greiss test and it proved positive in the case of Hill and Power. It was this positive test that set the police off on their beatings of all the men, and to this day the police claim that they were convinced that they had the guilty men because they had forensic proof. They said to the prisoners that they were going round with jelly on their hands, meaning gelignite.

At the trial Dr. Skuse claimed that his Greiss test made him 99 per cent. certain that the two men had recently handled explosives, that they had been in contact with nitroglycerine. He was repeatedly pressed to say if any other innocent substance could give a positive Greiss test and he said no. The defence called Dr. Hugh Black, a former chief inspector of explosives at the Home Office, and he testified that nitrocellulose which is to be found in common polishes and varnishes would produce a positive Greiss test. His evidence was rubbished by the judge and disbelieved by the jury.

It was 10 years before anyone put Dr. Skuse's evidence to the test. In May 1985 Granada Television commissioned two distinguished forensic scientists to put the conflicting forensic evidence to the test. The new tests were conducted by Dr. Brian Caddy, the head of the forensic science unit at the university of Strathclyde, and David Baldock, a former senior Home Office forensic scientist. Both showed that nitrocellulose could produce the same result as nitroglycerine. In other words, Dr. Black had been right and Dr. Skuse had been wrong.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): In what way has the hon. Gentleman satisfied himself that the tests conducted by Dr. Skuse were identical to the tests conducted by the experts who were gathered together for Mr. Mullin's book?

Mr. Cohen: I shall come to that in a moment. The samples were provided by the laboratories at Chorley and those samples were of exactly the same nature as those used in the tests conducted by Dr. Skuse. The tests were identical in their format.

Mr. Shepherd: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that Dr. Skuse contends that they were not identical and that that is important? The hon. Gentleman's case hangs on the tests being identical. What inquiries has he made to ascertain that the tests conducted by the later two experts were identical to the tests conducted by Dr. Frank Skuse?

Mr. Cohen: As I have said, Dr. Skuse's formula was provided by the laboratory at Chorley. I understand the point that the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) is making, but I do not think that it is valid. The doubt must be enormous about Dr. Skuse's claim that he was 99 per cent certain.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Dr. Brian Caddy of the forensic department of the university of Strathclyde made the point that the tests had been done by testing nitrocellulose in relation to old playing cards. I treat all this with very great caution and I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman is making, but Dr. Brian Caddy was certainly acting in good faith.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has made a valuable point.

Among the items which gave a positive test were Spectra clear lacquer, a varnished wooden surface, a cigarette packet, a picture postcard covered with nitrocellulose and two packs of old playing cards coated with nitrocellulose. These cards are significant since the men had been playing cards on their train journey from New Street to Heysham immediately before their arrest.

Dr. Caddy then asked Ian MacBride, a Granada television producer, to shuffle one of the packs of playing cards for five minutes. He tested Mr. MacBride's hands and obtained a positive reading. On that basis Dr. Skuse might have said that there was a 99 per cent. chance that the TV producer had handled explosives, when he had not. That Granada experiment destroys Dr. Skuse's evidence and a plank of the prosecution case.

The Granada programme was shown on 28 October 1985 and on 31 October Dr. Skuse took early retirement from his job at the Home Office laboratory in Chorley. He was aged 50—remarkably young. The Home Office has refused to give the reasons for his retirement.

On 22 July the Government told my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow in a written reply that Dr. Skuse's retirement had nothing to do with the "World in Action" programme a week earlier. That is disingenuous because the Granada experiments were conducted five months earlier. Although they were not publicised, they must have been widely known within the forensic community. Certainly the Chorley laboratory was aware of them because they provided Dr. Baldock and Dr. Caddy with the formula used by Dr. Skuse when he swabbed the men's hands.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: The book does not rubbish Dr. Skuse but suggests that, because of the consequences of tests conducted 10 or 11 years after the event, a man should be dismissed. Is that what the hon. Gentleman suggests? That seems to be the drift of the hon. Gentleman's comments. I find them very distasteful.

Mr. Cohen: I do not know whether he was dismissed. I do not know the answer.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): This is the first time that the allegation has been made. Is there not a simple way to clear up the matter? We are told by the Home Office that Dr. Skuse retired on the ground of public interest. But that has never been specified. All the allegations against Dr. Skuse can be cleared up tonight by the Minister telling us why he took early retirement.

Mr. Cohen: I endorse that comment.

The results of the Granada tests have been with the Home Office since last October. It is widely known that it conducted its own tests many months ago, but it has refused to reveal the results. I suspect that the Government are waiting for the recess so that they can avoid questioning by the House. That is hard luck because they have to face the questions. When were the tests conducted? When were they completed? What was the outcome? Why has there been such a delay in announcing the outcome? It is now 10 months since the Granada programme and 14 months since the Granada tests.

There is a third and crucial aspect of the case.

Mr. Dalyell: I understand that further tests are being carried out at the forensic laboratories in London by Dr. Margaret Pereira and her colleagues. Some information might help.

Mr. Cohen: The Minister is shaking his head, but we want the answers to these serious questions because men are languishing in gaol.

In his book, Mr. Mullin asks, "If these men were not responsible for the bombings, who was?" He says that he has identified all four who were actually responsible. He has interviewed three of them, and two have given him what he believes to have been an accurate account of what happened. That is covered in chapters 39 and 40 of his book.

The draft of those last two chapters was forwarded to the Home Secretary by the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) on 12 May, and I give full praise to the hon. Gentleman for trying to get justice in this case. On 20 May the Home Secretary replied to the hon. Member, stating: "the material and claims in the extract from Mr. Mullin's book raise . . . matters which are wholly new and which present a completely different approach to the whole question of whether the six men may have been wrongfully convicted". He continued:

"You will understand that I shall need to consider the implication of what Mr. Mullin has to say very carefully",

and he concluded by urging the hon. Gentleman to

"encourage Mr. Mullin to make available as quickly as possible any relevant material which he may have."

The hon. Member for Harborough and Mr. Mullin got together and agreed that they should ask for a meeting with the Home Secretary to present this evidence. A letter to that effect was sent by the hon. Gentleman to the Home Secretary on 26 May. There was then a long silence, but eventually on 9 July the hon. Gentleman arranged for both himself and Mr. Mullin to see the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. Two days before the meeting, the Minister's office contacted the hon. Gentleman and told him that he was to come alone. In effect, the Minister did not want to see Mr. Mullin. A few days later Mr. Mullin received a letter dated 10 July from a civil servant, a Mr. B. M. Caffarey, who was careful to emphasise that he was writing at the suggestion of the hon. Member for Harborough. That in itself is surprising. The letter stated:

"No doubt, if you have any material evidence, documentary or otherwise, of which you feel the Home Secretary should be aware, you will make it available so that it can be taken fully into account".

Mr. Mullin informs me that he has replied repeating his offer to meet the Home Secretary. Why, then, does the Home Office Minister refuse to meet him? After all, the Minister will have to take the final decision. He should therefore satisfy himself about whether Mr. Mullin has interviewed the people who carried out the bombing. Why

did it take six weeks before the junior Minister could even be persuaded to see the hon. Member for Harborough? What was the Home Office afraid of?

Incidentally, the Home Secretary also sent the last two chapters of the book to the west midlands police, and in a parliamentary answer on 26 June he asked them to report on this aspect in particular. They too have made no attempt to contact Mr. Mullin. The chief constable replied with a long letter that poured scorn on the book, and I understand that he even questioned Mr. Mullin's motives.

Will the Minister make public the contents of that letter from the chief constable? If he says that it is private, why has Superintendent Martin Burton, spokesman for the west midlands police, read extracts of it to the media? The implication must be that they have a vested interest in debunking Mr. Mullin's case and in continuing the cover-up.

It should be remembered that six innocent men have so far spent 12 years in prison apiece for a crime of which they are wholly innocent, and they have no prospect of being released. The Minister should be prepared to cut through that cover-up and see Mr. Mullin.

There is some evidence to suggest that up to a certain level the Home Office and the prison department know that the men inside are innocent. In the prisons in which these men have been held for any time, they are widely regarded as innocent. They are not regarded as IRA prisoners either by the staff or by other genuine IRA prisoners. Three of the men receive normal, unsupervised visits alongside the ordinary criminal prisoners.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will my hon. Friend confirm the prison category of the prisoners we are speaking of?

Mr. Cohen: They are supposed to be category A, the most serious.

Mr. Corbyn: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is unusual, if not unprecedented, for a category A prisoner to be allowed to receive unsupervised visits?

Mr. Cohen: Yes, indeed; yet the Birmingham six are supposed to be the biggest murderers in British history.

Walker, at his trial, was described as a brigadier in the IRA and the brains behind the bombings. He is allowed unsupervised visits, but in the same prison, Long Lartin, an IRA man with a record nowhere near that of Walker and who is within one month of release from a 14-year sentence is still given the category A status. Nearly all the staff at the prisons, probably up to the governor and probably at the Home Office, know that they have got the wrong people.

There are many serious questions for the Minister to answer frankly. Why is the inquiry process proceeding at such a snail's pace? When were the Home Office's forensic tests carried out? Was it at least six months ago? Is the Minister planning to announce the results of the inquiry in the depths of the recess when there is no opportunity for Members to question the decision? Will that further extend the cover-up and provide reasons for not reopening the case? Has anyone been found to take responsibility for the beatings which were administered during the men's first week in custody? Is it not true that the original inquiry by Davis Owen, now the chief constable of north Wales, was a whitewash designed to pin responsibility on the prison warders and so take the heat off the police?

A most important question is why Dr. Skuse resigned. Can the Minister categorically say that there is no connection between this case and Dr. Skuse's sudden retirement at the age of 50? If there is no connection, what is the reason for his retirement? Why is the Minister so reluctant to meet Mr. Mullin and discuss the case? Why did it take the Home Office six weeks even to see the hon. Member for Harborough? Is it that the Home Office is reluctant to face awkward questions?

Mr. Richard Shepherd: The speech of the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) is almost like a panegyric for a book. I appreciate this is a serious subject and raises great matters of question. The last two chapters of the book are flawed for an ordinary citizen like myself. To state that one has talked with the perpetrators of the crime and name then as X, Y and Z is an unsatisfactory procedure. Has the hon. Gentleman satisfied himself that this is no more than a gimmick to heighten the serious charges which Mr. Mullin makes in terms of the individuals whom he claims are the biggest mass murderers other than the ones presently serving sentences in prison?

Mr. Cohen: I do not think it is a gimmick. There is one way in which the charges can be tested and that is by the Minister and the police. They should meet Mr. Mullin and discover what evidence he has in respect of those interviewed. That should have been done a long time ago.

If these men are supposed to be the biggest murderers in British history, why are they treated so differently from other IRA prisoners? Why do three of them receive visits alongside ordinary prisoners? Most people in the prisons know that they are innocent men.

During questions to the Home Office yesterday the Minister came up with another excuse for the delay. Apparently, investigations were now in an advanced state, but they now had to investigate the new claims in Mr. Mullin's book. That is not a good enough excuse for further delay. Since October, the Minister and the police have been in possession of the new evidence — the "World in Action" programme and the evidence from Home Office tests. It is not a good enough excuse for avoiding seeing Mr. Mullin.

The Minister impugned the motives of hon. Members who asked questions about the case during Question Time today by accusing them of mounting an "orchestrated campaign". There is nothing wrong with that when swift action to right an obvious injustice is demanded. Those involved in the so-called orchestrated campaign, according to the Minister's answer on 7 July, include the Government of the Republic of Ireland, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishops of Westminster and Armagh, the Bishops of Down, Connaught and Derry, many organisations, 40 hon. Members on both sides of the House, two Lords and members of the prisoners' families. It is certainly an orchestrated campaign, and one which covers a wide selection of the community.

Mr. Corbyn: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way again. I think that he has done a great service to the House in delivering his speech. Does he accept that for a long time many people have been asking searching questions about all the issues surrounding the Birmingham pub bombings? A long time has had to pass and there have had to be television programmes and now a book for there to be any degree of open debate. Responsibility lies with the Minister to agree to meet Mr. Mullin to discuss what he

[Mr. Corbyn]

has written and to ensure that there is a full and open Home Office inquiry into what could well be an enormous travesty of justice.

Mr. Cohen: I endorse my hon. Friend's comments.

The Minister wrote to me on 17 July in response to the Patsy Power letter which I forwarded to him. He wrote that he was

"empowered by section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 to refer a case to the Court of Appeal for review . . . if significant new facts, material to the rightness of the conviction, had come to light which had not previously been before the courts".

The "World in Action" programme that was shown in October 1985 certainly produced material new facts.

I urge the Minister to show courage and to face the fact that an injustice has been done, regardless of the consequences which might flow for those involved. Stop delaying and refer the case to the Court of Appeal forthwith. Show the necessary courage in the interests of justice.

5.52 am

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on raising this extremely important matter. From what we have heard already, and from the many parliamentary answers that there have been from the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department and the Home Secretary, we must ask why there has been such an incredible delay in the review that the Home Office has been conducting into the case. There are two possible explanations. First, the matter is grave—it obviously is—and the inquiries that are being conducted are so meticulous, thorough and careful that a long period has been necessary. Unfortunately, the other explanation is that there is a cover-up.

It seems that I have to reject the first explanation, which is that the inquiries are taking place with meticulous care and thoroughness. That cannot be so, for the following reasons. It is clear that there is a lack of will or enthusiasm on the part of Home Office Ministers to talk to the author of the book which has re-awakened interest in the case, who is Mr. Chris Mullin. The sorry history of that has been outlined by my hon. Friend. The forensic tests that were carried out by Dr. Brian Caddy took place some considerable time ago and the Home Office is well aware of the results. It is clear from its own answers that the Home Office undertook its own tests on the grease tests some time ago, and we would like to know precisely when. As that is a specific matter, it does not take months to evaluate the results of the tests. Even if there are other things about which the Home Office is not certain, why have not we been told what its conclusions are on the tests?

The fact that the police have not spoken to Chris Mullin is extraordinary. The Home Secretary stated in a written reply that he had received the book. He referred to Mr. Mullin's claim to have identified the four men who took part in the bombing and said that he had asked the police to report on that. Apart from the general review, he has asked the police to investigate the claims made by Mr. Mullin. The answer came four weeks ago. Yet, to date, no attempt has been made by the police who are meant to be conducting the investigation to contact Mr. Mullin. I cannot believe that that is a serious or thorough investigation.

It took the west midlands police three days to decide that they had the guilty men. If they could reach that conclusion, shabby as it was, so quickly, why has it taken the Home Office nine months to consider, without reaching a conclusion, whether the west midlands police force was right? Furthermore—it is a familiar complaint that Labour Members make about the procedures—is it appropriate that the west midlands police should conduct the inquiry into whether they had got the right people in the first place? I cannot believe that the delay is because of the thoroughness and meticulousness of the Home Office or the police. Therefore, I must ask whether it is a cover-up. Unfortunately, there are some indications in that direction.

It is beyond dispute that the men were beaten. The argument is about where they were beaten. Were they beaten by the police, in which case their confessions would be invalidated, or were they beaten in Winson Green prison alone? We know that they were beaten in Winson Green prison. The question is whether they were beaten before they arrived there. No serious attempt has been made to answer that question. Despite the fact that 14 warders were acquitted of the charge, the Home Office has made no serious attempt to look into it. I have said that both the Home Office and the police refused to talk to Chris Mullin. That shows a cover-up.

We do not have any serious explanation of Dr. Skuse's retirement. It took weeks of evasive answers by the Home Office to parliamentary questions before the Home Secretary finally wrote to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and assured him that it was not as a result of the "World in Action" programme. That leaves the main question unanswered. Was it as a result of the exposure of his inadequate work on the original tests?

One Conservative Member has questioned the doubts that have been cast on Dr. Skuse. I am afraid that I should like to add to those doubts. I think we know for certain that Dr. Skuse had never met the west midlands police officer in charge of the original inquiry until the case of the Birmingham pub bombings. The forensic scientist living in Lancashire and the policeman living in the Midlands never met again, as far as we know, after the trial of the Birmingham pub bombers.

Nevertheless, early in 1975, when work was starting on the Granada Television programme, for some extraordinary reason Dr. Skuse travelled from his present home in Wigan down to ex-Chief Superintendent Reade's present home in Rugely, Staffordshire, to have a discussion about the fact that Granada Television was undertaking investigations into the case. One wonders why on earth Dr. Skuse had to make that journey so many years later. That underlines even more the need for an explanation as to why Dr. Skuse took early retirement. That suggests a cover-up.

The Minister must accept that the forensic evidence in the trial has collapsed. In many ways, the confessions depended on that forensic evidence. It is quite clear that the police persisted with whatever methods they used to get those confessions because Dr. Skuse had told them that certain of the men were covered in gelignite. Therefore, the police assumed that they were guilty, and everything else followed.

Some extraordinary aspects about the case and the circumstances of the arrest of the men have never been explained by those who seriously believe that the men were members of the IRA. For instance, when the men were

taken off the train at Heysham, four were held by the police. One of them, Paddy Hill, actually went on to the ferry. He was taken off the ferry only a couple of minutes before it sailed. The four who were questioned by the police were told that they would have to go to Morecambe for forensic tests.

I believe that their response was quite undisputed, and it is a matter of police record. They said, "Oh, what about our mate?" Here we have, allegedly, brigadiers and so on of the IRA—hardened bombers with years of criminal terrorist experience — and the four who had been captured said of the one who was about to get away, "Oh, what about our mate?" Does anyone seriously believe that men who had any connection with the IRA would react in that way?

It is extraordinary that more attention was not paid at the trial to another point. It is a matter of record. It has been proven and never been denied. Paddy Hill, the man taken off the boat, went on the journey to Belfast at the last minute, having borrowed the train fare from Sister Bridget, a nun in the local convent. Does anyone really believe that an experienced IRA bomber, about to plant bombs in the middle of Birmingham in two pubs, would arrange to get his train fare by borrowing from a nun two hours before the train was to leave? That is nonsense. No one has ever managed to explain those circumstances.

Could anyone really believe that so many police in the west midlands and at Morecambe were capable of extracting confessions in this manner? We know the answer in respect of one of those policemen. As my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton has already said, Detective Sergeant Brian Morton was convicted and gaoled for beating up a suspect while obtaining a confession in another case. We therefore know that one of the policemen in the police station at the time the confessions were extracted was perfectly capable of taking that kind of action.

The point has already been made—I have personal experience of it—that the prisoners are widely regarded as innocent. Only a few weeks ago, when a little publicity about the concern being shown in this place appeared in my local newspaper, the *Sunderland Echo*, one of my constituents, who had served many years in Hull prison for an offence that had nothing to do with any political, Republican or terrorist motivation, rang me up and said how pleased he was that the case had been re-opened. He had been in the prison for many years with Richard McIlkenny. It was common knowledge in the prison, from the governor downwards, that that man was innocent and was treated as such.

The Home Secretary must explain why the six are treated as though they are in prison for committing a minor offence and why they can sit in the cafeteria among other prisoners, conducting interviews, while IRA prisoners convicted on much more minor charges are supervised by warders, are in locked cells, and the rest of it.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Has my hon. Friend asked himself another question on the implications if an inquiry were held and those being held for the Birmingham pub bombings were found to be guiltless? Has my hon. Friend considered the implications for the whole legal system, the position of the police—in view of the way in which they have extracted confessions in this case — and the forensic evidence that Dr. Skuse produced in this case and perhaps in previous cases? Does my hon. Friend think that it might be in the interests of the Home Office and the establishment to allow innocent people to stay in prison because, if they come out, there would be great implications for the legal system?

Mr. Clay: I thank my hon. Friend for making that point. I agree that that is the great difficulty faced by the Home Office. We have to understand and to feel some sympathy with its dilemma. The trial judge—now Lord Bridge — spelt it out clearly. My hon. Friend the Member for Leyton has already made this point. If one believes that the men are innocent and that the confessions were extracted in the way suggested, an extraordinary number of police perjured themselves. Some of those policemen were and still are in extremely senior positions. This is understandably a matter of great embarrassment to the Home Office. It faces potentially grave embarrassment if it does not clear up this case.

I should like to refer to another point which has already been raised by an hon. Member and in the press, and I am sure that the Minister will do so also because he has already done so during Question Time. Why does Mr. Mullin not name the people he believes did it? The first point to make — I am sure that the Minister is well aware of it—is that if Mr. Mullin were to name those whom he thinks did it, those whom he has interviewed, and, in two cases, those who have told him they did it, it would be of no value in a court. It is pure hearsay.

The second point, which I am surprised hon Members do not understand implicitly and obviously, is that the IRA is not an organisation known for dealing with people it falls out with by sending them solicitor's letters. Mr. Mullin, in embarking on this inquiry, which was intended not to identify those who did it but to establish the innocence of those who did not, gave undertakings in many cases to perfectly innocent third parties, in order to find his way to those who did it. He gave undertakings of absolute confidentiality at every stage. He is a man of integrity. Indeed, many aspects of journalism in this country depend on the integrity of journalists to keep their word and not break confidences. Assuming that the Minister accepts that it was a legitimate inquiry — he must accept that because the Home Office would not have spent the time that it has reviewing the case unless it thought there was an element of doubt—and assuming that the Minister thinks that Mr. Mullin was acting from honourable motives and doing a job that was potentially in the public interest, he must know that Mr. Mullin would not have got anywhere in trying to identify those who did it unless he gave undertaking of confidentiality. If the Minister was in the same line of business, surely he would have given those undertakings because he would know that he would not get anywhere if he did not. Having given those undertakings, would the Minister break them? Would the Minister put his hand on his heart and promise to keep certain information confidential and then blatantly breach that?

Mr. Tony Banks: Does my hon. Friend not agree that journalists can perform a valuable role—they certainly have in this case — but that the responsibility for checking the accuracy of Mr. Mullin's account rests entirely with the police? Why should Mr. Mullin perhaps put himself in danger by revealing the sources that he has had to use in order to produce his evidence? The evidence

[Mr. Tony Banks]

is there. The responsibility is now entirely that of the police and it is no good saying that it is Mr. Mullin's responsibility to bring other people to book.

Mr. Clay: I agree entirely. I was about to make that point. Apart from the incredible danger that would be involved, not only to Mr. Mullin but to other third parties, it is entirely the job of the police to find those who did it. Not only that, it should be much easier for the police. It is extraordinary that the police, with all their intelligence methods, special branch and the ability to interview anyone they wish within the jurisdiction, find it so difficult to discover who did it and yet complaints are made that Mr. Mullin, an investigative journalist with none of those facilities, refuses to give names. It is a bit of a cheek for the Minister and others in the Home Office to be pursuing that line and saying that Mr. Mullin should say who did it, especially as at the moment the Home Secretary and the Minister are refusing to talk to Mr. Mullin.

The Home Office should consider that, apart from the moral considerations of the case and the appalling and serious possibility that six innocent men have been held for 12 years, with all the ignominy of their convictions and the reflection on their families, there are, if the Government cannot understand those arguments, pragmatic arguments. I should like to put one to the Minister. The United States has recently signed an extradition treaty with the United Kingdom for the extradition of terrorists. As the Minister will be aware — this has been raised by Conservative Members in the House recently — it will still have to be demonstrated in an American court that those being extradited will face a fair trial in Britain. There will already be question marks over the Diplock courts. Unless the Home Office takes the case seriously and clears it up, it could well be that the case will, effectively, be retried in American courts. American lawyers will argue before American judges that there is no chance of a fair trial in this country, given the history of the case. The Minister should consider that argument. He should also consider the implications for the Anglo-Irish agreement which the Government and many Labour Members, not including me, were so enthusiastic about. The Minister knows perfectly well that Peter Barry, the Irish Foreign Minister, and other members of the Irish Government have made representations about the case.

A courageous decision is needed now from the Home Office. It has many options and my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton suggested that the case should be referred to the Court of Appeal or to a retrial. I am not so sure, and this is the only point on which I may possibly disagree with him. I am not sure whether there can be a retrial when the question rests on forensic evidence at that time, confessions and how they were extracted at that time, men's movements at that time and discrepancies about where the bombs were put. Memories of the witnesses and those charged will not go back that far. Moreover, no one has yet got hold of those who committed the crime.

There is enough evidence that six innocent men have already wrongly served 12-year sentences. It is within the Home Secretary's power to grant a pardon. If he did so, it might circumvent some of the embarrassment about which the Home Office is undoubtedly worried. A retrial or a reference to the Court of Appeal will mean that Dr. Frank Skuse, various police officers, the men and their families will be dragged through it all again. The most courageous decision would be for the Home Office to recognise that it has convicted the wrong people, to tell the police to get on with the job and to grant the men a free pardon.

I hope that the Minister will answer the specific questions raised tonight, especially by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton. We have debated why the Home Secretary or the Minister will not meet Mr. Mullin. This matter is too serious for playing games about who will ask whom for meetings. Mr. Mullin is in the precincts of the House and the Minister could leave the Chamber after the debate and start an initial discussion with Mr. Mullin and arrange to meet him for further discussions. I hope he will give a commitment to do so before he sits down tonight.

6.13 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What happened in Birmingham was simply horrific and innocent people were maimed and killed, so I started from a position of scepticism. However, the more one knows about events, the less comfortable one becomes.

The Minister must have time to answer, and my interest is confined to the forensic aspects of the case. For 19 years I was a weekly columnist in *New Scientist* and in that capacity Chatto and Windus gave me an advance copy of Chris Mullin's book "Error of Judgement". Anyone who reads the book must be increasingly disturbed about the case, but I shall leave the wider issues to others.

I have been interested in the forensic science aspects ever since Dr. Margaret Pereira and her colleagues took me round the Lambeth laboratory some years ago. Faced with the prospect of having to write a review of the book, I wrote to the Home Office on 28 June asking some factual questions, and, as ever, I received a courteous reply from the Home Secretary. But there is no reason why those factual questions cannot be answered, so I shall repeat them now.

In relation to page 35 of Mullin's book, the first question was whether in the light of subsequent information from Strathclyde, and with the benefit of hindsight, the Home Office now believes that Dr. Frank Skuse was as up-to-date in the latest techniques of detecting explosives on people's hands as his position warranted? I should make it clear to the House that these are my questions, and no one else's. Secondly, were Dr. Skuse's results cross-checked with professional colleagues at Chorley?

The third question relates to page 40. Does the Home Office have a record of the timing of Dr. Skuse's inquiries and investigation during his stay at Morecambe police station? The fourth question relates to page 45. I can imagine what Dr. Skuse felt like being hauled out of his bed, or whatever, in Wigan, driven to Morecambe and having to work through the night. But did Dr. Skuse ask Power or the others about what he had been doing — that is, playing cards?

The fifth question relates to page 46. Why does the Home Office refuse to permit Dr. Skuse to be interviewed? The sixth question relates to page 47. Would it not have been normal practice, by daybreak, to have provided Dr. Skuse with more forensic help from Chorley or from elsewhere? Is it satisfactory to rely on a necessarily tired man working through the night? Incidentally, that is no criticism of Dr. Skuse. It is just an explanation of the

position in which I suspect he found himself. I should be reluctant to say anything in criticism of Dr. Skuse until I have had the other side of the story.

In relation to page 48, the seventh question was this: what was the result of the water test? Was it submitted to a genito-urinary expert?

The eighth question relates to page 59. Does the Home Office agree that many of us who have never handled explosives could reveal faint positives of ammonium and nitrate on our hands?

The ninth question relates to page 165. What is the Home Office response to Mullin's suggestion that the results of the thin layer chromatography and gas chromatography mass spectrometry tests were "surprising"?

Question 10 relates to page 166. Is there documentary evidence that the GCMS test on Hill's left hand proved positive? Question 11 relates to page 167. What has happened to the oscilloscope readings suggesting the presence of nitroglycerine? Question 12 relates to page 168, where Mullin makes a statement which is possibly the central concern of my letter. It is this:

"Because most forensic scientists are in the employ of the Government, it has always been difficult to find scientists of sufficient stature and practical experience to stand up to the Crown experts like Dr. Skuse."

I asked the Home Office whether it sees this as a problem.

Of course, I have talked to Dr. Brian Caddy of Strathclyde, and I hope that funding may be made available, through the Scottish Office or the Home Office, to set up the sort of institute which the Home Office knows that he wants at Strathclyde. There is an urgent need for it. I have talked to lawyers and to friends in the police, who concur with that view.

Question 13 relates to page 169. Does the Home Office have records of the tests carried out on the men's clothing? Question 14 relates to page 169. How come that the playing cards had simply disappeared? Is this not extraordinary in a case of such gravity? Question 15 relates to page 170. Did Dr. Black, the former Home Office chief inspector, seek ministerial or departmental permission before giving evidence? Question 16 relates to page 237. How does the Home Office respond to statements, as presented to Mullin, of Mr. David Baldock and Mr. R. A. Hall?

Question 17 relates to page 238. How does the Home Office respond to Brian Caddy's finding that shuffling old packs of cards produces the same indications as handling nitroglycerine? Question 18, which relates to page 239, stated:

"Can you give the undertaking that Dr. Skuse's premature retirement was unrelated to the World in Action programme?"

That undertaking was given to me in the letter.

In summing up, Mr. Justice Bridge referred to two absolutely critical planks in the prosecution's case against the six men, first, there were the confessions and, secondly, the forensic evidence given by Dr. Skuse and the whole question of the Greiss tests, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) referred.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend referred to the playing cards and the traces of nitroglycerine. Does he not think that another question to ask the Minister is what has happened to the two sets of playing cards that the men were using on the train to Morecambe? They were exhibits at the trial, but they have subsequently disappeared. Should the Minister not answer where they are?

Mr. Dalyell: I agree with my hon. Friend. This is one of the questions that I asked. Like every one of those 18 questions, it is a factual question to which, after a month, there should surely have been some answer. I was not asking wild questions or proffering guesswork or hypothesis. I was simply asking factual questions, and that is why I was dissatisfied with the Home Secretary's answer.

It is most important that the Minister should have time to reply. I am going to cut out the rest of what I would have wished to say and sit down because Members of Parliament who raise questions ought to be disciplined in allowing Ministers to give answers.

6.21 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): In November 1974 there was a campaign of bombing in the midlands. On 14 November 1974 at the post office telephone exchange in Coventry, James McDade was killed when the bomb he was attempting to plant exploded prematurely. On 21 November, the day McDade's body was being taken to Northern Ireland for burial, at about 20 past 8 in the evening, there was an explosion at two public houses in the centre of Birmingham—"The Mulberry Bush" and "The Tavern in the Town". A warning was telephoned to a local newspaper, but not in time to save lives. In all, 21 people were killed and 162 injured, many of them very seriously. It was one of the most appalling crimes in British history. As we have heard this morning, six men were arrested and charged with murder arising out of this dreadful offence.

The six men came to trial in 1975. The trial, which was held in Lancaster, lasted 32 working days. On 15 August 1975, all six men were found guilty, each on 21 counts of murder, by unanimous verdicts. All six sought leave to appeal against their convictions. Their applications for leave to appeal were refused by the full Court of Appeal on 30 March 1976.

At these court hearings, all the evidence in the case was most thoroughly examined. The courts heard full details of the character of the accused, of their background and something of the circumstances leading up to the planting of the bombs. They considered the forensic evidence in considerable detail. The methods, results and significance were examined, and questioned. The defence brought its own expert to give evidence. The possibility of innocent contamination by a non-explosive substance was raised.

Most importantly, the nature and content of the confessions was closely examined. Here, of course, I touch one of the main points now raised in support of the contention that the six men were wrongfully convicted, namely, the suggestion that their statements were obtained by violence and threats and were therefore not only false but inadmissible as evidence.

So far as the trial is concerned, this issue was the subject of what has been termed a "trial within a trial". This lasted eight days. It was conducted first in the absence of the jury. The evidence was then repeated before it. At the end of the "trial within a trial", the presiding judge concluded that the evidence of the statements was admissible. At the end of the trial, the jury concluded, clearly in large part on the basis of the statements and confessions, that the men were guilty.

[Mr. David Mellor]

The key point raised in connection with the confessions has been, as I say, the allegation, made by the six men themselves, that they were improperly obtained. There is no doubt that when the six men appeared in court, after their remand at Winson green prison, clear signs of injury were seen on their faces. There is equally no doubt that the trial judge, and in turn the jury, accepted the evidence of more than 20 police officers that the men had not been assaulted or threatened while in police custody. The judge took the view, in the clearest terms, that the men had sustained their injuries while in prison. That view was later confirmed by the Appeal Court.

But the court hearings, and consideration of the case, did not end there. In 1977, three of the six men initiated a civil action against the chief constables of West Midlands and Lancashire, and against the Home Office. Eventually, in a variety of separate and joined actions, all six men sought the award of exemplary damages on the ground of assault and negligence while in police and prison custody. In the course of the hearing before the Court of Appeal (Civil Division), it was accepted by the Home Office that the six men had sustained injury while in the custody of the prison department.

In all, there were three civil hearings between 1978 and 1981, culminating in three days before the House of Lords in October 1981. In brief, the courts had to determine whether or not the action seeking damages, resting on the allegation of assault by the police, could properly be allowed to continue. In effect, the courts finally determined that they could not proceed to hear an issue —namely, the allegation of assault by the police—that had already been considered and determined in the criminal courts. The actions were thus held by the courts to be prevented from proceeding — in the legal terminology, by estoppel, or by the fact that they were an abuse of process.

Of particular significance, in the light of the recent representations about the case—to which I shall come—is the fact that both existing and new evidence was considered. In particular, the civil courts had before them evidence and statements from prison officers and a report regarding the appearance of injuries on photographs of faces of the six men.

Dr. Paul, the coroner for the City of London and Hornsey, had examined photographs taken before and after the men were received into prison. In a report in 1976, he concluded that these showed signs of injury inflicted before their reception into prison. This carried the implication that these injuries had been sustained while in police custody. However, to put the point at its simplest, the Court of Appeal (Civil Division), concluded that this evidence, and the evidence of prison officers regarding injuries, did not change the aspect of the case—again to use the legal wording—it had no probative value. That view was confirmed in the House of Lords.

Mr. Cohen: The Minister accepts that these men had injuries. On what date did the Home Office accept that injuries were inflicted on them while in custody?

Mr. Mellor: I said that the Home Office, given our responsibility for the prison service, accepts that injuries to the men were caused while in Winson Green prison.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: I wish to complete my speech within the time available. If I give way to an hon. Member, that rules out the prospects of my giving way later. If the hon. Gentleman wants his chance to intervene now, so be it.

Mr. Banks: As it is accepted that the prisoners were beaten while in prison — somebody did it; it was not self-inflicted—what action has been taken to bring those guilty of inflicting those wounds to book?

Mr. Mellor: There was a trial of prison officers.

Mr. Clay *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: Am I not to be allowed to answer interventions? The hon. Gentleman should contain himself. I contained myself while listening to his speech. He should contain himself while I deal with his hon. Friend's intervention, otherwise civilised debate in this place — to which I assume he attaches the same importance as I do—will not be possible.

As I was saying, there was a trial, before a court, of prison officers accused of that matter. That trial did not result in convictions.

Mr. Clay: Are we to take it that when people are acquitted of a crime, the police consider that to be the end of the matter? In other words, does it mean that from now on, crimes for which people are charged and acquitted are ignored and no attempt will be made to discover who committed them?

Perhaps the Minister would care to correct something he said. While it may not have been intentional, it may seem to somebody reading the *Official Report* that he gave some slightly misleading information. He said that the evidence of the warders had been considered at the appeal. Will he accept that the key evidence, given by the warders to their solicitors, has never been examined by a court? In that evidence, three of the warders said that, in their view, beatings had already taken place before the men arrived at Winson Green prison. Further statements have been submitted and they are being considered in the context of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's present inquiries as to whether there are fresh matters that would merit reference to the court.

Mr. Mellor: If I am permitted to get through the rest of my speech, that is one of the points that I hope to make. As I was saying, there was a trial in 1976 of 14 prison officers who were accused of assaulting the six men. All were, in fact, acquitted. This case has been given full and detailed attention by the courts, but in addition the case has already been the subject of review within the Home Office. The six men have long protested their innocence, and in particular denied their confessions. That has led, over the years, to many representations from right hon. and hon. Members and others. When such representations have been received, they have been carefully examined, but to date no Home Secretary of either political stripe has been able to conclude that he would be justified in taking any action to interfere with the decisions of the courts. At this point, before I turn to the recent representations, it is important that I should explain what powers the Home Secretary has at his disposal where a miscarriage of justice is alleged to have occurred.

Our constitution places the duty of administering justice in individual criminal cases on the courts. The clear, underlying principle is that the Executive should not intervene in or interfere with the courts' decisions.

Nevertheless, the Home Secretary has certain reserve powers. In particular, he may consider sending the case to the Court of Appeal for judicial review. This is his power of reference, provided by section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968.

But it is also clear that a Home Secretary must not exercise his powers in such a way as to usurp the functions of the courts. In practice, this means that he can consider intervening only if some new evidence, or some new and material consideration of substance, comes to light.

This practice is not rigid. It does not rule out the consideration of a case, or its referral to the Court of Appeal, solely on the grounds that some particular new piece of evidence could, with due diligence, have been laid before the courts. But what would be inappropriate would be for the Home Secretary to seek to review cases, and interfere with the decisions of the courts, on the basis of his own or someone else's view of the facts and arguments which have already been considered. He cannot exercise his powers on the basis of concern, doubt, rumour, suspicion, or unsupported claim. He should not intervene merely because, if the decision had rested with him, he might have taken a different view of the facts than the jury.

I turn now to the more recent representations which have been made about the men's convictions. The case was featured in a "World in Action" television programme which was broadcast on 28 October 1985. Following that programme, my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir. J. Farr) submitted to my right hon. Friend various papers in support of the contention that the men's case should be referred to the Court of Appeal. My right hon. Friend naturally undertook to give these papers the most careful consideration.

It may be helpful to the House if I summarise at this stage the main points raised in the programme and in the associated documents submitted by my hon. Friend. Essentially, they focus on two issues: first, the allegations that the men were beaten in police custody, and secondly, the reliability of the forensic evidence. With regard to the former, my right hon. Friend has received copies of statements by six prison officers to which the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) has already referred. These were apparently made in February 1976 but have not previously been made public. It is claimed that these statements support the view that the men were already injured when they were received into Winson Green prison. In addition, my right hon. Friend received a copy of the report by Dr. Paul, which I mentioned earlier, of his examination of photographs of the six men. As I have said, this report was produced in 1976. Turning to the forensic evidence, it has been claimed that tests carried out by Dr. Caddy of Strathclyde University and Mr. Baldock demonstrate that nitrocellulose can give the same positive result on a Griess test as does nitroglycerine. Hon. Members may recall that this was a claim made by the defence at the trial but which it was unable to substantiate.

Clearly, these various points needed to be taken seriously and examined with the greatest care. This examination was set in hand immediately by my right hon. Friend. Had it not been for the need subsequently to consider further new points raised in Mr. Mullin's book —to which I shall turn shortly—I think that I would have been able to give the House a detailed account tonight of the steps which we have taken to examine these matters. But, as the Home Secretary has said, it would be wrong, in my view, to deal with a case of this kind in a piecemeal fashion. It would be potentially misleading to try to provide a detailed response on one aspect when the case as a whole is under review. That is why I shall have to content myself with assuring the House that the points raised in the television programme and in the papers submitted by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough and others are being looked at very thoroughly, drawing on expert scientific advice as necessary. Not only are the points raised being examined in their own right but, as I have indicated, they are being considered against the background of the whole of the case, including the civil actions which the men subsequently pursued. I cannot take further what the hon. Gentleman said for the reasons that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary explained. He also said in his letter to the hon. Gentleman that those matters will be addressed in due course.

I do not think that the happy chance that this matter was eligible for debate today should project the Home Secretary into having to make premature explanations. One or two hon. Members have not fully understood it, but he exercises an extremely difficult quasi-judicial function. He has to make what is often an invidious decision whether to refer a case to the Court of Appeal, using the powers that Parliament conferred on him in the 1968 Act.

We have had a full account of some of the arguments in Mr. Mullin's book. Everyone will agree that, for the most part, it simply provides an account based on the man's own narrative. In the closing chapters, however, Mr. Mullin recounts how he traced three men and identified a fourth who he says were responsible for making or planting bombs. He does not, however, name them, which is not, of course, helpful to us in discharging our functions That is a decision which I hope he will reconsider. Of course I heard the explanation that the hon. Member for Sunderland, North gave, but if the Home Secretary is supposed to conclude that there is fresh evidence which entitles him to exercise his discretion under the 1968 Act, it is difficult for him to do so simply on an allegation that other unnamed men are responsible.

I do not propose to go into whether there is a good reason for not taking the matter further than that. I am simply saying that, if it is alleged that unnamed people are responsible for the offence, that is not a firm base on which the Home Secretary can exercise his discretion.

Mr. Clay: I am aware of the difficulty that the Home Secretary is in, but I wonder whether the Minister understands the difficulty that Mr. Mullin is in. However, helpful the Minister thinks it would be for Mr. Mullin to name names, does he agree that there are many questions that he or the Home Secretary would ask Mr. Mullin which he would happily answer about how he conducted his investigation and what leads him to believe that he knows who did it? The Minister has now talked quite a lot about Mr. Mullin. Is it not time that he talked to him?

Mr. Mellor: We want only to consider as objectively as we can evidence that comes forward. The question is how best to do that. I was grateful for the courtesy of Mr. Mullin's publishers who, presumably at the behest of Mr. Mullin, sent us an advance copy of his book. As a result of that, and as there was new material in at least two of the chapters, the decision was taken to ask that further inquiries be made by the police.

[Mr. Mellor]

If there is further evidence, in addition to that in the book, which Mr. Mullin wants to lay before us, either publicly or confidentially — perhaps some matters are best raised confidentially — we would be more than prepared to receive it. We are dealing with difficult and essentially legal matters — whether there is a basis for reopening a jury trial. It is a grave matter, because we cannot regard the jury as a bastion of our liberty and be too ready to reopen consideration of what it does. There are, of course, proper times to reopen cases, and the Home Secretary has no interest in not reopening a proper case. If there are points that Mr. Mullin wants to put in writing, they will be considered seriously. If there are points that he would rather discuss, a discussion can certainly take place. My judgment at the time was that the bulk of the work of trawling through the evidence in detail is not done by Ministers but by officials. Mr. Caffarey, who has made contact with Mr. Mullin, is the assistant secretary in charge of the division responsible for the work. It seemed to me appropriate that Mr. Caffarey, if there was to be a meeting, should be the person who carried it out. I even thought that that might have attractions for Mr. Mullin since Mr. Caffarey might be regarded as being more disinterested than a Minister, if some of the allegations are pursued—I hope they will not be—about why Ministers might not want to reopen the case.

I have stated as clearly as I can my view on that. I would be willing to consider any further representations that are made as to what would be the appropriate way of taking this forward and I hope that what I have said is helpful and clarifies the point.

My initial judgment was that an oral meeting with a Minister was not the best way of carrying forward these difficult matters. But, as I think even the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) after our exciting experiences together on the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 will agree, I am always open to argument, although I cannot guarantee to accept every argument put forward by him.

May we leave the matter and communicate further. The offer of the meeting with Mr. Caffarey remains. Other matters we can consider in due time.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Will the hon. Gentleman comment on one point that is puzzling me and that is that reference has been made to the fact that some of the prisoners are being treated differently in prison from the way in which one would expect them to be, given the gravity of the offences.

Mr. Mellor: They are being treated exactly as other prisoners. What is not happening is that certain additional restrictions are not being imposed on them as on some other prisoners because of the manner of their behaviour. That is why I told the hon. Gentleman yesterday that special restrictions are not being imposed on visits to Mr. Walker in Long Lartin prison.

I willingly concede that the behaviour of these men in prison has not been like many other IRA prisoners. There is no secret about that. I conceded it yesterday.

The Home Secretary must consider whether any of the material that has been submitted to him presents evidence of a kind which would justify referring the case back to the Court of Appeal. In practice he has to look for fresh evidence or new considerations of sufficient weight as might be thought to affect the court's view of the case. We have already given, and will continue to give, careful consideration to the representations made to us following the "World in Action" programme. We are now following up the wholly new claims in Mr. Mullin's recent book. Only when we have completed our examination of matters will my right hon. Friend be able to reach a final decision on whether to refer the case to the Court of Appeal.

I must assure the House that no considerations of favourable times for disclosing this matter arose. It simply is, as I think would be conceded, that even with the advance copy of Mr. Mullen's book it has only a matter of a few weeks that we have had that fresh evidence.

Apart from anything else, it would be disrespectful, given the amount of work that has gone into it, if the matters that were new within it were not subject to full and careful consideration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Order.

Aspirin

6.43 am

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise some of the implications of the experience that Britain has had over the disease called Reye's syndrome and the recent ban that has been announced by Britain's health authorities as a result of some of the experience with that disease and the way in which aspirin has been involved with the disease.

It may be helpful if I spend a moment outlining some of the background. Reye's syndrome is a rare disease and the public may not be aware that it is a potentially lethal childhood illness. It was first described by Reye and his colleagues working in Sydney in 1963 and it affects all organs of the body, with especially devastating attacks on the liver and in the brain and muscle tissue. It usually appears soon after a viral infection such as influenza or chickenpox or gastro-enteritis. Early signs are continuous vomiting, loss of energy, drowsiness, aggressiveness and confusion and that usually leads to delirium, coma and in some cases subsequent death following brain inflammation.

The disease strikes children from infancy all the way through late adolescence. It is rare. Between three and seven cases per million children under 16 have been reported in Britain, but its main characteristic is its high mortality rate. In the United Kingdom, some 229 cases have occurred in the last four years. The figures available to me suggest that something like 80 children recovered completely, 20 survived with some evidence of permanent brain damage, and something of the order of 115 died. That is a high mortality rate of about 40 to 50 per cent.

Reye's syndrome may be somewhat commoner than this. When Reye first described the condition only the most dramatically affected patients could be identified and 80 per cent. of those died. Mild cases are now known to occur. Mild Reye's syndrome may be a common cause of vomiting after chickenpox or influenza, and mortality rates in the United States are around 10 per cent. which suggests to me that doctors there may be diagnosing more mild cases than are diagnosed in Britain. The other factor about America is that the Americans have now probably slightly more experience in diagnosing and treating the disease than we have. Various studies in the United States show that about two thirds of cases can be detected by alert medical personnel before the coma stage sets in. Early treatment at that stage can halt progression of the disease and reduce fatalities to almost nil.

I should now like to turn to the link with aspirin. The basic cause of Reye's syndrome is still unknown, but it is still thought to be an abnormal reaction in a genetically susceptible person to a viral infection such as chickenpox or influenza, both of which are common viral infections in Britain. Studies of the disease began in the United States in 1974 and four epidemiological studies published between 1980 and 1982 linked aspirin given to treat viral illness with the onset of the syndrome. The first small epidemiological study reports appeared in 1980 and demonstrated an association with aspirin. They were followed by larger studies and on 6 June 1982 the Americal Academy of Pediatrics produced a special report called "Aspirin and Reye's syndrome". That report said:

"the studies for each of the two years showed a strong association with aspirin . . . Statistically, each of these studies considered independently of the others is significant; considering them together the significance is enormous . . . As you are well aware, an epidemiological association does not prove causation. However, causation may be strongly indicated by association when no other explanation for the relationship is found . . . the consensus of the Committee is that there is a high probability that the administration of aspirin contributes to the causation of Reye's syndrome. In balancing this probability"—

in saying that the report is referring to the risk—

"with the benefits of aspirin, it is the opinion of the Committee that aspirin should not be prescribed under usual circumstances . . . The Committee recognises that this recommendation is made with less than absolute proof . . . until contradictory information is available, the present evidence is sufficient to warrant this recommendation."

The United States Food and Drug Administration had earlier established a working group to review the data. Its evaluation was discussed in an open public meeting on 24 May 1982, and after consideration of the available evidence, on 11 June 1982, the United States Surgeon-General advised against the use of salicylates, the chemical name for aspirin, and salicylate-containing medications for children with influenza and chickenpox.

These early studies were criticised for various reasons and in 1983 the United States public health services mounted a further study designed to eliminate possible sources of error in the earlier work. The pilot phase of that study provided evidence to support the association between the disease and aspirin use in feverish children. A total of 93 per cent. of children with Reye's syndrome had a history of aspirin ingestion compared with only 46 per cent. of the matched controls.

In the light of those findings, on 17 December 1985 the Food and Drug Administration and the manufacturers of aspirin-containing medicines launched a campaign against giving aspirin to children and teenagers.

It is significant that the number of cases of Reye's syndrome reported in the United States had already fallen from 204 in 1984 to 91 in 1985. I conclude that the fall was a direct result of public discussion following the Surgeon-General's warning in 1982. The decline seems to bear out the association between the disease and aspirin.

What about the reaction in Britain? I want to contrast what has happened here with what has happened in the United States. British reporting of Reye's syndrome started in August 1981. Between February 1984 and August 1985 the communicable diseases surveillance centre published three annual reports. After the first report, the October 1984 edition of Drugs and Therapeutics Bulletin, published by the Consumers Association, warned:

"The possibility of an association between aspirin and Reye's syndrome has been raised and cannot be ignored . . . while the issue remains unresolved it seems sensible to recommend paracetamol rather than aspirin as an antipyretic in infants and children."

Three years earlier, the National Reye's Syndrome Foundation had been started by a couple whose 11-year-old daughter, Katie Harrington, had just died after taking aspirin for flu. In October 1982, Mrs. Harrington wrote to the DHSS about the possible link. Two months later it replied:

"no causal link between aspirin and Reye's syndrome has been established by the present evidence, and that no warning is therefore needed in the United Kingdom."

Meanwhile, the CDSC conducted its own study of the association between aspirin and Reye's syndrome. The preliminary results of this study reached the Committee on Safety of Medicine in February 1986, and were discussed

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

at its meeting in March. The CSM has not published the figures from the study, but a scientist at the CDSC who carried out the study, confirmed that of 106 victims studied in depth, 62 had been given aspirin in the three weeks preceding admisson to hospital.

On 9 June, the chair of the CSM wrote to all doctors, dentists and pharmacists advising that aspirin should not be given to children under 12 except on medical advice —for instance, in cases of rheumatoid juvenile arthritis. The next day, the DHSS *chief medical officer*, Dr. Donald Acheson, issued a statement repeating this advice.

The leading manufacturers of aspirin responded to the CSM's advice by halting the supply of junior aspirin products such as Junior Disprin. Label warnings are to appear on new packs of all other aspirin preparations by early 1987, advising parents not to give aspirin to children unless a doctor tells them to. Announcements to this effect were placed in the national press over the following week. Posters were made available for GP's surgeries and child health clinics.

The warning was subsequently extended to a range of drugs containing salicylate. The manufacturers will place warnings on the packets, but whereas children's aspirin preparations will be withdrawn, childrens' salicylates in general will not. This includes most notably, Bonjela, a painkiller used very widely for babies with teething troubles. In fact, Reckitt and Coleman does not even intend to place a warning on packets of Bonjela, on the grounds that it is not supposed to be used for fevers anyway.

Alternatives to aspirin include paracetamol, and in fact the CMO has advised avoiding drugs altogether, using instead fluid intake, sponging, and so on.

Against this background I should like to raise several questions. As I hope I have demonstrated, I believe that there have been clear differences between what has happened in Britain and what has happened in the United States in the way in which the problem has been approached. In the United States, the issue was discussed in the open from the beginning, and with full public attention. I believe that that resulted in the fall in the incidence of the disease before the Food and Drug Administration finally issued its official warning.

In the United Kingdom, however, the issue was kept completely in the dark, despite the warnings from various quarters that I set out earlier. Secondly, the United Kingdom authorities waited until the results of the British study were clear before acting, despite the mounting evidence from the United States as to the association between aspirin and the disease.

In the United States, the Surgeon-General did not wait to be certain. He issued the warning, anyway. Since that happened in 1982, probably in the region of 200 children have died in Britain from Reye's syndrome.

Thirdly, a possible reason for the delay—I hope that the Minister will say something about this — is the pressure from the pharmaceutical industry. The official report of the CSM's March 1985 meeting says that members "seemed to favour" a compulsory label on aspirin products. The drugs industry in the shape of the Aspirin Foundation worked hard to throw doubt on the research, criticising the methodology of the CDSC's study. Nevertheless, earlier this year the CSM reported that the evidence was overwhelming and a ban was eventually considered.

The industry, this time in the shape of the Proprietary Association of great Britain — which includes all the main firms—came back offering to withdraw children's preparations and to place warnings on adult packets.

The CSM documents, which are confidential but which were leaked extensively to *The Guardian*, suggest that firms were primariy concerned with protecting their market. The firms told the CSM that an under-16 ban — originally proposed by the CSM—would confuse people and there was

"a need to maintain public confidence in aspirin."

The Junior Aspirin market is worth about £3 million a year —a small proportion of the total aspirin market.

Fourthly, in the specialist medical journal *Pulse*, which was published this month, the warnings and the public education campaign undertaken by the Government have been extensively criticised. In fact, most children do not take junior aspirin products but simply take lower doses of adult preparations of aspirin—and the warnings are not yet included on the packets. There seems very little reason why labels could not have been stuck on the existing packets. Even more recently, I have come across some anecdotal evidence that some junior aspirin products are still on sale without warning labels and that some prescriptions are slipping through the pharmacists' and doctors' network. If that is true, and if it is substantiated on investigation, that would give me cause for great concern.

Fifthly, it is clear to me that a number of questions remain unanswered. One reason given by the DHSS for the delay in issuing warnings was the differences revealed in the United States and United Kingdom studies. It is true that median age of onset is much lower here—starting at about 14 months compared with the eight to nine year age group that is affected in the United States. In the United States there are also marked seasonal peaks, possibly associated with the incidence and virulence of influenza B, but no such peaks have been recorded in Britain. Therefore, I accept that there are some differences in the way in which the disease occurs in Britain compared with America.

Reye's syndrome is much more common in some parts of the United Kingdom, which raises another unanswered question. The incidence of the disease in Northern Ireland is much higher than in the rest of the United Kingdom. Of the United Kingdom cases, 25 per cent. lived in rural areas compared with the national average for all under 15-year-olds living in the rural areas — 10 per cent. There is a higher incidence in rural areas. A surprisingly high number of those affected had apparently been exposed to pesticides from crop spraying. That needs careful investigation.

A likely explanation for the disease seems to be a combination of factors — a body infected with viruses, perhaps weakened by some genetic susceptibility, exposed to an environmental pollutant and finished off by aspirin. More research is needed but the Department of Education and Science—through the Medical Research Council—is not supporting any such research.

In conclusion I shall quote Clifford Harrington, who is the co-founder of the National Reye's Syndrome Foundation:

"It's almost like Thalidomide all over again — complacency, secrecy, bureaucratic bungling, and a lack of care for innocent children".

I hope that the Minister will accept that in raising this issue I am not, in any way, looking for scapegoats or stating that heads should roll because no action has been taken. I believe that this is a matter of public concern which involves the lives of young children. On the evidence which is available to me I do not believe that the Government are doing enough. I hope that this debate will spur the Government into more activity to get to the root of the problem. I also hope that they will answer some of the questions that I have raised.

7.2 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am glad to have the opportunity to discuss this important and worrying phenomenon of Reye's syndrome and especially the relationship of Reye's syndrome with aspirin. The Committee on Safety of Medicines recommended that aspirin should not generally be given to children under 12, because of its possible association with Reye's syndrome. Reye's syndrome is a serious but fortunately very rare disease; there are about three to seven cases each year per million children under 16. As the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said, the disease strikes suddenly, usually when a child seems to be recovering from a viral infection. The early symptoms are usually very severe vomiting, and the child then becomes confused, sleepy, or aggressive, and may then progress to coma. About half the cases in this country have ended in death, and in some other cases there is brain damage. The children are very young, often only babies. Quite obviously, this disease is deeply distressing for families. I wish to extend my sympathy to the parents of all the children who have suffered from this condition particularly those who did not recover or who suffered brain damage.

Doctors have known of Reye's syndrome since 1963. There have been various attempts to investigate its nature, by clinical and biochemical investigations of the patients, and by looking at the epidemiology of the condition. The epidemiological approach showed some differences between different countries. In the United States, patients are noticeably older than they have been here. The median age of onset was about eight to nine years in the United States, but only 14 months in this country. In the United States there has been a very clear seasonal peak, as the hon. Member mentioned, in winter or early spring, just as there is for influenza, but in this country there is no seasonal peak. Perhaps this is linked to another finding, that most United States children had been ill with influenza of chickenpox before they developed Reye's syndrome, but a wider range of viral illnesses have been involved here. At present, I understand, there is no clear medical view about the reasons for these differences between countries, or about their implications. It is important, though, for us to keep them in mind throughout the discussion, just as the Committee on Safety of Medicines did during all its deliberations.

The committee considered the possibility of a causal link between Reye's syndrome and aspirin in 1982 and 1985 but decided that the available evidence did not establish that there was such a link. So what changed between April 1985 and June 1986, when the CSM gave a public warning that aspirin should not be given to children under 12 except on medical advice? Two new pieces of evidence became available. From the United States came figures showing that the number of reports of Reye's syndrome had fallen, in line with the fall in the use of aspirin. A statistical correlation in itself does not prove anything, but this was evidence of a different type which seemed to confirm the risk factor studies.

Secondly, the committee was shown the preliminary findings of a risk factor study in the British Isles. This report will soon be ready for publication, but the committee saw the preliminary results in confidence. Its findings were consistent with the American ones, that aspirin seemed to be associated with Reye's syndrome. That is still not proof; there is no accepted explanation of how aspirin might cause Reye's syndrome. Many children who have developed Reye's syndrome had not taken aspirin. The best medical advice at present is that Reye's syndrome arises from a virus-host interaction in a constitutionally susceptible individual, possibly modified by an exogenous agent.

Given this new evidence, the committee concluded that aspirin may be a contributory factor in some cases of Reye's syndrome, and that action should be taken to reduce the use of aspirin in children. Aspirin should be avoided for children because it may, very occasionally, lead to Reye's syndrome, but there is always an alternative available. When a child really needs a medicine for fever or aches or pains, paracetamol is as effective as aspirin and is safer, with the very important proviso that the correct dosage should be given. The availability of the alternative was an important factor in determining the advice given about aspirin.

Whenever an expert body warns against a well established product which was previously thought to be safe, there are two accusations. Either the cry is "What an overreaction! How can there be anything wrong with something which has been used for years?" Or the other critics say, "If this warning is needed now, it should have been given a long time ago." Scientific truth is not so simple. The Committee on Safety of Medicines has to try to get the balance right, between the danger of over-reacting and wrongly condemning a useful drug, and the opposite danger of letting a known hazard continue too long. The committee is very experienced in performing this balancing act, and I have every confidence in its expertise and judgment.

Aspirin is, of course, a very old, extensively used and useful medicine. However, the special position of aspirin must, I believe, have given the Committee on Safety of Medicines a particular problem. In general, when the committee has to advise about the safety of a drug, it is giving advice to doctors about a medicine which is usually given on prescription, and perhaps may only be legally available on prescription. Advice to professions can be given in terms of cautions, qualified, technical guidance, subject to professional discretion in particular cases, Much more was needed for aspirin. Any advice had to be clear-cut and easy to convey to people in their homes and given in a way which would not cause unjustified anxiety about a well-used and valuable medicine.

The committee is independent and its proceedings are confidential, so I cannot say exactly what it thought at different times, but the main conclusions are already on public record. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) asked a number of questions in the

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

first half of 1985 about Reye's syndrome and the committee's deliberations, and he received replies which were full and informative. There was no secret that a link between aspirin and Reye's syndrome had been postulated, that the CSM had considered the possibility of a causal connection in 1982 and again in 1985, and that in the light of the available evidence had concluded that there was no adequate proof of a causal connection. That information was available in *Hansard* to any hon. Member or for the press.

The CSM considered, at different times, a wide range of information and opinion about the possibility of a link between aspirin and Reye's syndrome. Some sources have already been give in *Hansard*. I have a complete bibliography of published references considered by the committee, which I would be happy to make available to any hon. Member. Much of the material was about the epidemiology of Reye's syndrome, looking particularly at the risk factors which seemed to have occurred more frequently in children who developed Reye's syndrome than in other children of the same age, who had the same initial viral illness. Four studies in the United States, published between 1980 and 1982, all suggested that aspirin was such a risk factor.

This is a difficult area of research. It means retrospective questioning about how ill children were and what medicines they took. There are many ways in which the research can be flawed. Scientists must look hard at the research methods, not just at the overall statistics. There were criticisms of each research paper. In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration was so conscious of the criticisms that it commissioned yet more research, which would endeavour to overcome the design problems of the earlier work. The CSM decided, when it first looked at these reports in 1982, that they did not provide satisfactory evidence of a causal link between aspirin and Reye's syndrome.

In March and April 1985, the CSM again carefully considered the available evidence. That included the report of the pilot phase of the further study in the United States. That study again showed a high numerical link between aspirin and Reye's syndrome, but I understand tha there were still some criticisms of its methodology. Again, after carefully weighing all the evidence, the CSM decided that a causal link between aspirin and Reye's syndrome had not been established.

In reaching this conclusion, the committee was aware of the label warnings and publicity in the United States, and we should be in no doubt of its concern to make the right decision, in the best interests of children in this country. Of course, although the evidence at that time did not convince the committee that there was a causal link, it could have said, "To be on the safe side, let us advise that children could be at risk of Reye's syndrome if they take aspirin even though we ourselves do not see any reason to believe that." So far as the committee could see in 1985, it would have been condemning a very useful medicine for no good reason. It would have been asking almost every family in the country to change its habits, just on a rumoured possibility that the committee itself did not find scientifically convincing. In those circumstances such action could not be regarded as responsible by a committee which, in my view, is rightly held in high esteem.

It has been suggested that the committee should have published a full account of the issues and its conclusions about them in 1982 and 1985, and, in the light of that information, left the public to make its own decision on the use of aspirin for children. Although, superficially, that approach might seem to have some attractions, I do not think that it would have provided a practical solution. It is likely that a cautious scientific statement by the CSM would have suffered from being summarised in reporting and that the message from much of the media would have suffered from over-simplification or even distortion with a real risk of the story emerging as a largely unsubstantiated aspirin scare, without serious consideration of the facts.

In fact, the medical reports from the United States were available to the press, and they wished to write about them. I believe that there was some coverage. The CSM's opinion on the evidence it had then seen was also publicly available. I do not accept that the committee, or the Department, should at that time have done anything more.

I now wish to turn to the successful exercise carried out last month to publicise the CSM's recommendation about aspirin. Reye's syndrome is still, I am glad to say, a very rare disease, but many families are now aware of it. We have tried to make sure that all families know that it is best not to give aspirin to a sick child under 12 years, unless their doctor tells them to do so. First, there was an extensive publicity campaign in which a number of parties were involved. The chairman of the CSM wrote to all doctors, dentists and pharmacists, explaining why the committee was recommending that children should not be given aspirin, except in certain special medical circumstances.

The chief medical officers for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland announced this advice to the press, and the chief nursing officers wrote to nurses with a copy of the chairman's letter. There were also similar notifications to health authorities and family practitioner committees. Posters were distributed for clinics and surgeries. The posters were provided by the pharmaceutical industry. The industry also paid for press advertisements, to follow up the extensive news coverage that the story attracted.

Secondly, the industry responded to the CSM's advice by making a voluntary decision immediately to take Junior Aspirin off the market.

I should like to emphasise that the decision to cease marketing junior aspirin was made voluntarily by the pharmaceutical industry. It was a prompt and constructive decision, which has made it much easier to carry out the CSM's recommendations. Manufactureres will also be following the CSM's recommendations by putting a warning on the labels of adult aspirin products, as soon as practicable.

I wish to put my appreciation of the industry's response on record, as my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health did at the time of the first announcement. I acknowledge also the part played by the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, who gave clear, well-timed advice to their members to get junior aspirin off the shelves and about what they should tell their customers.

Another and most important reason why the committee's advice on aspirin made such an impact was simply because it was aspirin, one of the oldest and best-known of modern medicines, used in treating a wide variety of aches and pains.

As I have said, the committee would not have been acting responsibly had it given premature advice on the basis of inadequate evidence that aspirin was suspected of causing an unnecessary hazard when used by children and babies. Once the CSM was convinced that aspirin might be a contributory factor in the causation of Reye's syndrome in some children, it acted very quickly and, I believe successfully. However, I acknowledge that the CSM will continue to monitor the situation very closely, and will give further prompt advice to the licensing authority if necessary.

I hope that my comments will reassure the hon. Member that the due processes were followed.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his useful comments, which I shall study carefully. Will he consider my point about continuing research into the disease? My information is that overt and explicit research is being undertaken. Will the hon. Gentleman write to reassure me that something is being done in terms of research into the causes of the disease?

Mr. Whitney: I shall certainly write to the hon. Gentleman on that point. I hope that he accepts the reassurance which I have given on the basis of the way in which this extremely difficult and delicate issue was handled.

Chile

7.16 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On 22 July 1985, the House had an opportunity to have a lengthy Adjournment debate on the United Kingdom's relations with Chile but, by a fluke of procedure, it was much more than the normal half hour. I introduced that debate and raised a number of questions about Britain's relations with Chile and about what Britain could do to encourage the promotion of democracy in Chile and to bring an end to the brutality and bestiality of the Chilean regime. I put it to the then Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) — that the changes for which we wished would be achieved by Britain ceasing the sale of arms to General Pinochet and breaking off diplomatic and trading links with the Chilean Government. He replied:

"I wish to underline the areas in which the hon. Gentleman, the Government and I personally share agreement. First, the internal situation in Chile, especially human rights, must be of great importance to us in determining the manner in which our relations are conducted. Secondly, the Government fully share the hon. Gentleman's concerns, and those of others, who have contributed to this brief but important debate, about human rights in Chile. We do not agree with every allegation in detail, but we are extremely concerned about human rights in Chile and we regret that, against the current trend in other South American countries, Chile is not making the fast progress towards the return of democracy that the Government would like to see."

The hon. Gentleman went on to say that the Government and I differed on the way to achieve those ends. After describing how normal diplomatic relations with the Chilean Government had been restored in 1980, he said that the then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who is now the Secretary of State for the Environment, had said:

"one factor in the decision to restore diplomatic relations had been to enable us"—

the British Government—

"to present our views on human rights and on other matters at a higher level and with greater impact. This is a good reason — it was valid then, and it is valid today. I ask the hon. Gentleman to think of the reasons for it." — [*Official Report*, 22 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 843.]

The tragedy of Chile has unfolded before us since 1973, 13 years ago. Despite Britain increasing its diplomatic representations in Chile in 1980, maintaining high level contacts, and continuing to allow the sale of arms to General Pinochet, one has to ask what has been achieved in that time. What has this constructive dialogue done for the people of Chile other than allowing the Government of General Pinochet to quote in their own defence the fact that they have diplomatic relations with Britain and to buy arms from the Government of Britain and use them against their own people? A process of constructive dialogue has benefited the Government of General Pinochet and not the people of Chile in any way whatsoever.

The question of Britain's relations with Chile goes back a long way. Until the coup of 1973, Chile was often called the England of south America. It was said that parliamentary democracy was strong and that the institutions of the country were strong and secure. Many of us watched with enthusiasm and excitement the progress that was made by the Government of Salvador Allende between 1970 and 1973 to get the country out of the grip of international monetary debt, to get a

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

reasonable price for the commodities produced by it and to bring some hope to the poor people of the shanty towns of Santiago and other places. Enormous achievements were made.

Salvador Allende spoke with great feeling and great passion of the way in which his Government were being destabilised by the efforts of the United States before the coup in 1973. He spoke with passion and feeling about the power of international capital through the ITT and other multinational companies to destroy his Government. His Government were destroyed. Bombs fell on his home. He was killed, and thousands of people were rounded up in football stadia. The planes that bombed the Moneda palace in 1973 were manufactured in Britain. They were Hawker Hunter jets. The response of many people in this country and other parts of Europe was one of outrage and horror. Workers at the Rolls-Royce factory in East Kilbride immediately refused to load or supply any more parts for those Rolls-Royce engines. There was immediate popular feeling against the horror that had happened in Chile as people saw a democratic Government destroyed by military intervention supported by the United States.

The incoming Labour Government had a programme to provide facilities for refugees arriving from Chile. After the torture of the British doctor, Sheila Cassidy, in 1976 the British ambassador was withdrawn from Chile and a ban on all arms sales was imposed. At that time we made clear what we thought of General Pinochet and the horror and nightmare the people of Chile were going through.

When the present Government came to office in 1979, things seemed to change. There were visits to Chile by British Ministers who congratulated that Government on the Chicage school of monetarist economics that was being introduced and being pushed through by General Pinochet, full diplomatic recognition was reinstated, and arms sales were eventually resumed. It is that aspect of Britain's relations with Chile that I wish to mention.

I recently received an answer from the Secretary of State for Defence when I asked him what contact there had been with representatives of the Chilean armed forces by United Kingdom defence personnel in Chile since November 1984. I chose that date for good reason because that is when the state of siege was imposed. The answer was:

"We have had formal diplomatic relations with Chile since 1980, including a defence element. United Kingdom defence personnel have regular contact with representatives of the Chilean armed forces, both in Chile and the United Kingdom." — [*Official Report*, 24 July 1986; Vol. 102, c. *485*.]

We are looking at a period of British history which, when all the details come out, will turn out to be one of the most sordid aspects of this century, that is, the whole matter surrounding the Falklands war and the defence arrangements made at that time.

In January 1985 the *New Statesman* published a lengthy article written by Duncan Campbell, revealing how Britain gave military equipment to General Pinochet and turned a blind eye on human rights violations in Chile and, in return, received extensive clandestine help from the Chilean Government in the war against Argentina. I could quote from the article at length, but I want the Minister to have time to reply, so I shall be brief.

After the Argentine forces landed on the Falklands on 2 April, a series of meetings were arranged through Mr. John Heath, the British ambassador in Santiago, with the Government of General Pinochet and a series of understandings were reached. Two explicitly stated that the arrangements for British use of Chilean bases had the full approval of President Pinochet and the cabinet. The terms of the understanding were:

"Use of Punta Arenas, an air base in southern Chile, for RAF spy planes, disguised in Chilean markings.

Use of Punta Arenas and other areas to infiltrate SAS special forces into Argentina for espionage and to destroy Argentine aircraft on the ground.

A complete exchange of intelligence, including monitoring and codebreaking of Argentine signals carried out by Chilean Naval Intelligence staff."

In return the Chilean Government gained:

"RAF Canberra aircraft used in the secret operation, which were to be turned over to Chile when the war was over.

A squadron of RAF Hawker Hunter aircraft, most of which was delivered to Chile after the war started.

Britain's support in undermining United Nations investigations into Chilean human rights abuses, by opposing the reappointment of the UN's special investigators.

The dropping of British restrictions on arms sales to Chile.

Supplies during 1982 also included enriched uranium, and the offer of a British maxnox nuclear reactor."

The article points out that in mid-May ITN reporter Jon Snow was in Santiago and saw two Canberra aircraft with Chilean markings among a group of military aircraft, including heavy US air force transports. Two ex-RAF Canberra PR9s are now officially on the strength of the Chilean air force—the third crashed in 1983. None of those aircraft was officially delivered until October 1982, five months after they had been seen in Santiago. On 28 May 1982 with most of its Canberra aircraft in Chile, No. 39 squadron at Wyton was formally disbanded. At the beginning of 1982 it had 15 aircraft—13 of them flying —and on 28 May only a single aircraft could be found for the memorial flypast, according to the *RAF News*.

The article shows the degree of military involvement with Chile at that time. There were reports of British troops landing at Punta Arenas and of the use of Chile as a staging post for part of the Falklands war. This is a serious matter and has never been openly admitted or explained by the Government. In today's debate we need to know exactly what the status is of the military arrangements made between the British Government and that of General Pinochet. Exactly how many British troops have been using Punta Arenas as a base? Exactly what training facilities have been offered? Exactly how many Chilean armed officers are being trained at British military establishments at present?

One must conclude that the British Government's obsession with the Fortress Falklands policy and their expenditure of vast sums on the Falklands defence arrangements override their consideration of the human rights of the people of Chile. They are prepared to do deals with the Chilean junta to buttress the Fortress Falklands policy.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is my hon. Friend surprised at that fact?

Mr. Corbyn: I am not surprised at that fact because the Government have a similar attitude towards their constructive dialogue with the Government of South Africa. I am surprised that none of this has been made public. We do not know how much public money is being spent in Chile by the Government on military matters.

Britain's voting record in the United Nations concerning Chile has been varied. Immediately after the

Falklands war, the British representative there declined to support motions that criticised Chile, and opposed the reappointment of the special rapporteur on human rights in Chile. Last year, after the state siege and the atrocities committed by the Pinochet regime during it, Britain supported motions critical of that. But the British Government have hardly been in the forefront of condemning human rights abuses in Chile. One must wonder exactly what British representatives in Chile are doing to report back to the British Government on the abuses of human rights there.

We cannot have it both ways. We cannot say that we oppose the human rights abuses in Chile if at the same time the Chilean Government know that there is a secret deal in the background to provide them with military and logistical support and know full well that the British Government will do nothing about human rights abuses in Chile.

On arms sales, this year — as every year — several Ministry of Defence arms sales, or supermarket bonanzas, took place. In June, there was one at Aldershot, and in July one at Middle Wallop. People can attend those arms sales and exhibitions only by invitation and with the approval of the Ministry of Defence. The Minister must tell us how many Chilean people were invited to the arms sales by the Government and exactly what was sold to them. What exports have gone to Chile via RAF Brize Norton or Aldershot since those two exhibitions of equipment? If the Government are supplying arms to Chile, the people of Britain would be outraged, especially if they knew the extent of military involvement and support that we are giving to General Pinochet.

The military Government in Chile came to power in 1973. Immediately, they rounded up all the opposition and put them in football stadia or secret prisons. They tortured them and destroyed the lives of many people. Recently, I attended a tribunal in Bristol of Chilean refugees who, at great personal cost to themselves, explained the process of torture and the process by which they had lost people. One of them, Luis Verdugo, lost his wife, who disappeared soon after the coup. He has not seen or heard of her since. He was tortured by blindfolding, by pain mechanisms attached to his body and by accusations being made against him. Eventually, he was released, left Chile and became a refugee in Britain. He would be the first to admit that he is scarred for life, as are hundreds of other people by torture.

Mr. Tony Banks: Did my hon. Friend see the excellent film "Missing", and does he agree that, whatever the role of the British Government at the time of Allende's overthrow and later, it pales into insignificance when one considers the disgraceful, disreputable role of the United States Government, who organised the coup?

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that. Henry Kissinger was involved, first, in organising the destabilisation of the Allende Government and, secondly, in organising the coup and supporting the Government of General Pinochet thereafter. The murder of Orlando Letellier in Washington by the CIA was yet another example of the lengths to which successive United States Governments have gone to destroy the Government of Allende and to give continued support to Pinochet's regime.

More recently much has been happening in Chile. As I was explaining, in 1973 the Government were overthrown, the football stadia were filled and many people were shot, disappeared and were murdered. Since that time there has been a process of regeneration of opposition. Year after year people die, people are murdered, people disappear, yet more people come forward determined to see a future of peace and hope for their country rather than the heel of the dictatorship.

A huge demonstration was organised in the early part of July when thousands of people took to the streets and there was a national strike. The vast majority of workers took part in the strike and supported it. The strike was in every sense an indication of the degree of opposition that exists to General Pinochet. That strike was succeeded by the imprisonment of the leaders of both trade unions and other popular organisations that sought to promote the strike, by very strict censorship and by the silencing of all the radio stations that had been reporting what was going on. It also witnessed a wave of oppression by the army against those who took part in the popular opposition to the Pinochet Government which had been almost unprecedented.

Two young American refugees from Chile were killed in the dispute. I refer to the tragic deaths of 19-year-old Rodrigo Rojas, the son of a Chilean exile living in Washington and himself a United States resident, and Carmen Quintana, aged 18. I refer to *The Guardian* of 12 July, which reported that witnesses and relatives said that they were beaten, doused with an inflammable liquid and set on fire by a military patrol. The army denied involvement. Rojas died last Sunday, and Miss Quintana is seriously ill in hospital.

General Pinochet appears to have a different version of things because he seems to claim that the young man blew himself up during the demonstration. It is a measure of how far the Government of Pinochet have gone that even the United States embassy rejected those accusations, and the United States ambassador, Harry Barnes, attended the funeral last Wednesday.

What we have to consider is what role the British Government should be playing in these matters. The manifesto of the national civil assembly of Chile has been published. It is a very important document and it is representative of a mass of opinion and hope in Chile. It says:

"Chile is experiencing today a deep political, economic, social and moral crisis. The government has shut its doors to any agreement or dialogue and responds by intensifying repression. It offers no solution to the agonising problems which accumulate from day to day. A vast foreign debt which weighs us down. A third of the population condemned to unemployment and hunger. An internal state of indebtedness which has deprived people and enterprises of years of effort and investment rendering unsustainable the position of the productive sectors, the merchants, the transport operators, and those in mortgage arrears. A housing deficit of around 1 million homes. The deterioration and dismantling of the health and education systems which were once the nation's pride, and an exmaple to all Latin America. A labour legislation which seeks only to atomize and constrict the legitimate expression of workers' demands. It would take a long time to repeat all the grave problems which affect us. But the government sticks by a failed economic model and a political project which aims to keep General Pinochet in power through recourse to force."

Indeed, anyone who has believed that General Pinochet intended ever to hand power over to a democratically elected Government must be very surprised because he continually makes statements that extend the lifetime of his own Government.

[Mr. Corbyn]

The manifesto is an expression of popular will to see the end of Pinochet and to see a democratic future for the people of Chile. We have to consider which side the British Government are on. We have witnessed the murders, the sale of British arms, the secret arms deals and, indeed, British approval of the existence of the Government of General Pinochet.

There can be no question whatsoever that the priority for this country and this Government should be to end immediately all arms sales to Chile, not just those that can be used for internal repression, but any arms sales to the Government of General Pinochet, because I do not believe that one can draw this fine distinction that the Ministry of Defence, the Home Office and the Foreign Office like to draw.

The second priority is to withdraw the British ambassador to Santiago. Only language of that type is understood by the Government of General Pinochet.

Thirdly, we must know what has happened to British or Anglo-Chilean residents who have gone missing in Chile. The case of Pedro Fernandez Lembach has been raised many times in the House. He remains imprisoned there. The British Government have said that as soon as he is released he will be granted admission to this country. Pressure must be exerted to get him released.

We need also to learn the whereabouts of William Beausire, who is still missing after many years. There are many other cases. I could give details of them, but I will not delay the House, because I want to allow the Minister sufficient time in which to reply.

We see in Chile a process of repression unparalleled anywhere in Latin America. It is similar to what is going on in South Africa in its horror for the people of Chile. The process of constructive dialogue is a discredited phrase. It has been shown in South Africa and Chile to be pointless. The only language that Pinochet understands is his inability to get guns with which to murder his own people.

It is vital for us to cease arms sales and impose on Chile all the sanctions available to us. There can be nothing more disgusting than a regime born of violence and murder having its representatives invited to this country to visit arms exhibitions and to have its officers trained at British military establishments.

I hope that the British Government will join civilised opinion throughout Latin America and elsewhere in the world. People are looking for a way out of the eternal cycle of debt, oppression and military dictatorship. Let us declare that we are opposed to the illegal Government of Chile, that we demand the removal of Pinochet and his armed forces from the streets and that we support the right of the Chilean people to elect their own Government, to decide their own way of life and not to have a form of life imposed on them by a combination of multinational companies, the United States and the military Establishment in Chile.

7.43 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Timothy Eggar): I welcome this opportunity once again to explain the Government's policy and position on Chile, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on his success in the ballot. He has been consistent in his interest in Chile.

I appreciate that hon. Members in all parts of the House remain concerned about the continuing human rights violations in Chile and about the lack of progress towards an orderly and peaceful transition to democracy. The absence of political dialogue there between the Government and the democratic opposition and the persistent oppression and repression of public demonstrations and basic political rights are of common concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House. The hon. Gentleman and I can at least agree on that. But the action proposed by him would almost certainly lead to the opposite effect to that which he intends.

The hon. Gentleman raised two human rights cases. The first was of Pedro Lembach. He is a Chilean national and we have no consular standing to intervene with the Chilean authorities on his behalf. But we have made it clear to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Justice and, in May and July of this year, to the Minister of the Interior that, if his sentence were commuted to one of exile, we would allow him to enter the United Kingdom. We shall continue to monitor the case very carefully and to make further representations, where opportunities arise.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the case of Mr. William Beausire. The Chilean authorities have informed us that investigations into that gentleman's disappearance have produced no results so far. In February 1985 they suspended further judicial review of all similar cases, including his, pending the presentation of new evidence. We are continuing to press the Chilean authorities to provide a more satisfactory reply. The matter has also been pursued with the Argentine Government through the Swiss protecting power.

To return to the main theme of the hon. Gentleman's speech—our diplomatic and other relations with Chile—we have had normal diplomatic relations with Chile since 1980. These relations enable us to express the concerns which we share—and which we believe are shared by the British public — on human rights, the lack of progress towards the restoration of democracy and other matters. It gives us an opportunity to make those representations direct to the Government of Chile at the very highest levels.

During the last 12 months, for example, our ambassador in Santiago has made a series of representations on these important matters to members of the ruling junta, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister of the Interior and others, while here in London, Ministers and senior officials have made comparable representations to the Chilean ambassador and to visiting influential Chilean.

We have also been able to make our views and concerns known in other ways. In late March and early April of this year, my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) made an important visit to Chile, during which he had meetings with key members of the Government and the democratic Opposition. He also addressed several audiences, including the Chilean defence college, on parliamentary democracy.

In May my noble Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, expressed our concerns very frankly and bluntly to General Matthei, the air force member of the ruling junta, when he was here on a private visit to the United Kingdom. These and many other contacts would not have been possible had we not had normal diplomatic relations.

We have also been able to make our views known on human rights in multilateral forums. Last December, at the United Nations General Assembly, we voted in favour of a resolution condemning Chile's human rights record, while in March 1986, at the United Nations Committee on Human Rights, we joined a consensus resolution criticising the Chilean Government's continuing poor record. We have also joined our European Community partners in a number of demarche actions and statements expressing concern about human rights abuses and lack of progress towards our shared goal, the restoration of democracy in Chile. Most recently, we have stepped up our Community action with a series of approaches to individual members of the junta and of the Government.

I think that I can reasonably claim that the Government have made considerable efforts to use the diplomatic channels that are open to them as a result of having diplomatic relations with Chile in order to get across our concern, and that of the House, about the state of human rights inside Chile. However, the hon. Gentleman went on to criticise the Government's policy on continued contact between United Kingdom defence personnel and representatives of the Chilean armed forces. I must emphasise that our defence relations with Chile are a normal part of our diplomatic relations with that country and that there is nothing sinister or unusual in those contacts.

They are a reflection of a long history of military contact between our two countries, especially between our two navies and air forces.

The hon. Member has once again called for an arms embargo. As has been said frequently from the Dispatch Box, we do not believe that it would be effective, not least because there are many other suppliers. Nor would it restore democracy.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does the Minister agree that, if the Chilean Government are using those arms against their own population, there is a moral argument for the British Government saying that they will not supply arms never mind the fact that someone else might supply them? Surely a moral argument stands on its own?

Mr. Eggar: I shall come to that matter shortly when I consider the criteria used in arms sales.

Our policy on arms sales continues to reflect our anxieties about the state of human rights in Chile. We take great care not to approve the sale of arms which we think are likely to be used for internal repression. We consider every application for arms sales to Chile with great care, and pay special attention to cases that could be described as borderline.

Perhaps I might quote the example of the export to Chile of the demonstration Centaur half-track vehicle, which the hon. Member for Islington, North raised at length during the Adjournment debate on 22 July 1985. The vehicle has been returned to the United Kingdom. Hon. Members have asserted that arms that we have sold to Chile have been used against the Chilean people. We have no evidence of that.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Minister aware that, although the demonstration Centaur half-track anti-personnel vehicle has been returned to Britain, during the national strike this year, an identical vehicle was seen on the streets of Santiago? It had apparently been manufactured by the Chilean junta one year after taking the design from the demonstration vehicle, and it was used to kill students who were taking part in the demonstration.

Mr. Eggar: I was not aware of that. If he would care to provide evidence, I shall of course look into the matter, but I notice that the hon. Gentleman accepts that the vehicle has been returned to the United Kingdom.

The hon. Gentleman also called for an end to the training of Chilean military personnel in the United Kingdom. We provide some training, but it is very limited. The hon. Gentleman knows that it has been the policy of successive Governments to keep the details of bilateral military training with other countries confidential. As I made clear in a parliamentary answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) on 9 April, we do not allocate places to Chileans for courses which cover internal security techniques.

Chile has a long history of democracy, and we are continually reminded in our contacts with democratic Chileans of the role that Britain played in their independence in the 1820s and the close family, cultural and commercial ties that we have had during her democratic history.

We and, we believe, the vast majority of the Chilean people want to see democracy peacefully restored in Chile. We continue to do all we can to urge the Chilean Government to take steps to bring back democracy. In particular, we are anxious to see the early promulgation of the long-promised laws on political parties, and on electoral registration. They would provide some demonstration that the Government are serious in their commitment to the political evolution foreseen by the Chilean Government in the 1980 Constitution. We are keen that the Government should permit rapid evolution towards normal democratic political activity. At the same time we maintain frequent and regular contact with the democratic opposition, both in Chile and the United Kingdom, and try to encourage them to develop their unity and to put forward credible long-term policies.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the strike and demonstrations that took place on 2 and 3 July. We condemned all violence on that occasion, in whatever quarter it arose. As my right hon. friend the Prime Minister said on 3 July in reply to a question posed by the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), we deeply regret the deaths that occurred on 2 and 3 July and we are particularly concerned, together with the hon. Member for Islington North, about the cases of Senor Rojas and Senorita Quintana. We welcome the appointment of a civilian judge to investigate the circumstances of those deaths and we hope that that judge will report quickly, giving the full facts.

This year we have continued to sponsor visits to the United Kingdom by a broad section of Chilean democratic politicians, for example Senor Lagos, of the Briones Socialist party, and Senor Allamand of the National Union party. These visits provide vital exposure to a wide range of democratic opinion in Britain and, for some, their first chance to see democracy in action.

While we on the Government side make considerable efforts to encourage political change in Chile, it is essential for us all to recognise that Chile's political problems can ultimately only be solved by the Chileans themselves. The first step must be dialogue between the Government and the democratic opposition, not continued confrontation.

[Mr. Eggar]

We regret the Government's rejection last December of the democratic opposition's national accord for the transition to full democracy, which we still believe provides a basis for dialogue. We also regret the Government's continued rejection of dialogue following presentation of the National Civil Assembly's "Demand for Chile". The initiative to start a dialogue now lies firmly in the hands of the Chilean Government.

We do not believe that the crude condemnation of the Chilean Government, called for by the hon. Gentleman, would have a favourable effect on the political evolution of Chile. Indeed, it is more likely to drive the Pinochet Government to greater intransigence and intensify Chile's lamentable political polarisation. Our policy is to try to be as constructive as possible. We firmly believe that constructive pressure and criticism has the best chance of bringing about the changes we would wish to see. The Government therefore fully intend to continue using every appropriate opportunity to encourage the moderate forces, both in the Government and within the democratic opposition, to prepare and organise themselves without delay to ensure an orderly transition to democracy. But the first step has to be the opening of a dialogue by the Government with the democratic opposition.

School Buildings (Lancashire)

7.58 am

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I shall take the opportunity of the two minutes that are available to open my debate on Lancashire schools because the Minister is here and it would have been an important debate. The case has been well presented by Lancashire county council to the former Secretary of State for Education, the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph), so the Minister will already be aware of the matter. A delegation of Members of Parliament from Lancashire has met the Minister to put our case. We need some £44 million extra, over the next five years if we are to deal with the problem that exists in Lancashire.

We need that money if we are to put our schools into good repair and maintain them. Obviously, the Minister will not have time to reply and I will not have time to put my case. Perhaps the Minister will accept an invitation to come to Lancashire during the summer recess to look at the problem on the ground. If he wants to be convinced that Lancashire has a good case, let him come along and see the situation and meet the chairman of Lancashire education authority and the hon. Members for Lancashire. Is he prepared to reply to that invitation in the time available?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Timothy Eggar) *rose—*

It being Eight o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Waste Disposal (Down District)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

8 am

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): It must strike you, Mr. Speaker, as happily and even providentially appropriate that so a long a debate that has ranged through the night over so many subjects should be terminating in the jaded and even mephitic atmosphere of the early hours of the morning by the consideration of the disposal of rubbish at a place called Drumnakelly in County Down in my constituency. But no one could argue that the disposal of rubbish is a a subject unimportant to the decent livelihood of a civilised society.

I wish to raise the matter with the Minister on a much wider basis than that of any single case and invite him to agree that the Government ought to take a larger view of their responsibilities in the province of Northern Ireland as a whole. The disposal of rubbish is, quite properly, one of the responsibilities of the district councils in Northern Ireland and I am not in the business of seeking the removal of powers but rather the addition of powers to local government in that Province. It is an appropriate responsibility for those authorities, especially in the matter of the collection of domestic waste, because it brings the administration into direct contact and somtimes conflict with residents and with local communities. However, there is a wider aspect and it is to that that I want to direct the Minister's attention.

At present, the district councils appear to act as almost independent authorities in settling upon sites for refuse disposal. Throughout the years that I have represented South Down I have seen a series of descents made by the local authorities upon the most beautiful sites in the constituency with the suggestion that they would be appropriate for the formation of a new rubbish dump.

There is a kind of hovering threat over the people in some of the more attractive parts of Northern Ireland, most of which are situated in my constituency, that they may be chosen for the next foray by the district council in its search for a suitable place for the disposal of rubbish. Often, the result of such forays is that two or three alternative sites are proposed, a careful examination is made of all of them, and they are then rejected with the assistance and advice of the planning department which is responsible to the Minister. But the damage has been done by the disturbance of opinion, by the alarm and despondency that has been caused, and by the irritation that has been created between ratepayers and the administering authorities.

This is an irrational way to go about the business. A long-term view needs to be taken upon a wider scale of the problem presented by the disposal of rubbish. In three ways this would be beneficial genrally as well as to the areas more directly concerned. First, we would have an end to the sudden descent of a district council upon a locality with a proposal for the formation of a rubbish dump. At least the proposals and intentions of the district council would be known years in advance, be open to criticism and would have been authorised, if at all, by the planning authority after due deliberation. That is the first advantage.

The second advantage is that we would have a more rational choice of sites and the opportunity of choosing sites where there might be economic advantage and benefit in the long run from their being selected for the disposal of rubbish. I am afraid that no such benefit can be discerned in many of the sites selected. In the site approved by the Minister at Drumnakelly in my constituency it would be very hard indeed for anyone to identify any economic, agricultural, amenity or other value which will accrue, either locally or generally, from the use of that site for the deposit of rubbish.

The second advantage can be reaped upon a wider scale. There must surely, in most parts of the Province, be places where economic benefits can be drawn from the depositing of rubbish; where it can be co-ordinated with other requirements for the general benefit. It is obviously impossible to reap that advantage if the 26 independent authorities are left to make the decisions. There must, therfore, be co-ordination between the authorities, not only in the actual work of disposing of rubbish, but in the identification, as far as possible, of joint sites which would be suitable and beneficial for that purpose.

The third advantage which would come from a wider view of the problem, is that we might be able to introduce upon the scene more modern methods of processing rubbish. I find it impossible to believe that at the end of the 20th century, the best thing that we can do with the rubbish generated in the Province of Northern Ireland is to allow each district authority to dump it in the place where least objection can be raised on amenity grounds. There must surely be processes which, on a larger scale than the deposits taking place at present, would be economic and might even be attractive. I hope that that is an aspect which appeals to the present Administration for consideration with private enterprise.

On all three counts the argument lies in favour, not of removing from district councils the ultimate responsibility for serving their ratepayers in this way, but the Department co-ordinating this activity and guiding it, so that the disposal of rubbish, instead of becoming a constant threat to the amenities and well-being of the people of the Province, becomes a source of benefit and is rationally and logically organised.

I add to that main proposition the contention that the Department should be more active in policing the execution by the authorities of the conditions attached to the planning permission for the deposit of rubbish. I have seen some schedules of conditions. They are very comprehensive. Reading a schedule, one might wonder how the residents in the area could object; one might imagine that they might even be gratified at the notion that such an establishment was to be set up in their vicinity. Unfortunately, there is often a big gap between the conditions and their observations. Both in the transportation of rubbish to dumping areas, and in the management of the dumping areas a great deal is left to be desired.

I do not think that the routes and transportation are adequately policed or supervised. There are far too many examples of unnecessary disturbance being caused by ill-chosen routes for the rubbish lorries and the consequent flying of rubbish into the countryside. Very often the management of a dump is not supervised with a view to the minimum disturbance to the environment. Provided that a rubbish dump is properly supervised, that the spreading is done at the right time and in the best way, and that the spreading of soil between the layers of rubbish

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

takes place in good time, promptly and with sufficient frequency, there is no reason why most dumps should be a cause of nuisance very far beyond their actual locations.

In what I hope will be the interim period before we get a much more comprehensive, rational and modern system for the disposal of rubbish in the Province, the Department—which, after all, is the planning authority that gives the permission—should do much more to supervise and police these activities when they are carried out by the district councils.

8.10 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) began by referring to the jaded look of the House. That certainly does not apply to him, given what he has just said.

Last year on 5 June, the right hon. Gentleman raised the problem of waste disposal with my predecessor. I am sorry that he has felt it necessary to raise the matter again, although I fully understand why. Nothing is more contentious, either to the right hon. Gentleman's constituents or mine, than the problem of getting rid of rubbish.

As the right hon. Gentleman knows—he referred to it in his speech—the responsibility for disposal of waste in Northern Ireland is with the local authorities, and neither he nor I would want to do anything to change that. But I have every sympathy with the general points that the right hon. Gentleman raised. One of the key questions that he touched on was whether the Department could, or should, do more to stimulate an co-ordinate the activities of district councils in the way they expect to work out their waste disposal requirements. He also referred to the supervising of tipping once a site has been brought into use.

Let me deal with the last point first. I have no statutory power to tell councils how to manage their sites. On occasions on my trips around the Province, when I see how tipping is not being done as well as it ought to be, I make sure that my officials get on to the local councils. But we have no statutory power. All that we can do at present is give them advice, and that we do. However, I accept that that advice is not always taken.

There will be an increasingly supervisory role in the management of these sites throughout the whole of the United Kingdom, and this will be done through the newly established hazardous waste inspectorate. Therefore, the problems to which the right hon. Gentleman referred will be tackled more effectively in the future than they have been in the past.

Mr. Powell: I wish to make a point in the context of available powers. Surely the powers are available in the form of the enforcement of planning control. After all, I hope that a private individual who was given permission to carry out certain operations subject to conditions would have those conditions enforced upon him by the planning authority. As in this case the Minister is the planning authority, surely in that way he has powers to supervise and police what the local authorities have done in the execution of a planning permission that they have been given.

Mr. Needham: We do, for example, lay down conditions for fencing, and if fencing does not take place we shall enforce it. However, much of the time, a problem arises when some of the conditions are not fulfilled during a short period. Rubbish may be blown across the road or, as the right hon. Gentleman said, the soil may not be spread adequately or sufficient protection may not be taken when the wind is blowing in the wrong direction. I have sympathy with the right hon. Gentleman's arguments, because it is a disgrace to the neighbourhood. The right hon. Gentleman will have to wait to see how the hazardous waste inspectorate solves this problem.

I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that I have made a careful study of the current position and I agree with him that local councils are the best instruments to plan adequately for the disposal of refuse in their areas. That is especially true in the rural parts of the Province. After all, the local council knows every nook and cranny of its area and it is, through its councillors, close to the feelings and wishes of the local people. It is best placed to discover the areas where refuse can be tipped with the minimum of nuisance and upset to residents.

This is not quite the position around Belfast, which raises different problems and where there is a need for a co-ordinated plan covering the six district councils which make up the greater Belfast area. This requires a 10-year strategy which will take care of the rubbish generated by the city and its surrounding towns. We will put forward our suggestions for this when we publish the Belfast Urban Area Plan at the end of the year.

The Department's present responsibilities and relationship with the district councils is covered by the terms of the Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978. That lays down that councils are required to make specific waste disposal plans on a 10-year basis. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will accept that there is now an Order in Northern Ireland which lays down, over 10 years, the strategy that the councils must adopt.

The plans are based on detailed surveys of the waste being produced and the current methods of disposal, and must set a strategy for future arrangements. The vital element in the development of those plans is the consultation undertaken by the districts with anyone who is interested in waste disposal. That includes neighbouring district councils. The councils must contact their neighbours to discover the best way to proceed, jointly, in the rural areas. The councils must also undertake consultations with my Department. During this consultation stage the Department of the Environment plays an important role to ensure that there is consistency and compatibility right across the Province.

Any approved plan must take into account access to it and the effect that it is likely to have on local roads. I am encouraged—I am sure the right hon. Gentleman will share that encouragement—that significant progress has been made by the district councils in the production of these plans. Eleven district plans have been completed, including Banbridge in the right hon. Gentleman's constituency—and another 10 are at various stages of preparation and consultation—that includes Newry and Mourne, which also touches on the constituency of the right hon. Gentleman.

Only five councils have not yet carried out the necessary surveys. Although there is no statutory deadline, I can

assure the right hon. Gentleman that I will do all that I can to make sure that the completion of those plans goes through as quickly as possible.

With regard to Down district council, the right hon. Gentleman must be aware that the survey has been completed and the plan should be available, publicly, early next year. We in Northern Ireland are considerably further down the path in the production of these plans than the rest of the United Kingdom. At the moment, I have no statutory power in my locker to use on those councils which have not yet undertaken the surveys. If I believe it is impossible to get the surveys undertaken for any reason, I will of course reconsider whether the Department's powers are sufficient. I must tell the right hon. Gentleman, however, that I do not think that that will be a speedy process.

As for the Down district council, the principles which I have mentioned apply. I accept entirely that to find suitable sites in the Down district council area is far from easy, for the reasons given by the right hon. Gentleman. The Department has liaised closely with the council in helping it to find somewhere to go. We have ensured that the technical requirements—for example, the prevention of water polution — are adhered to. The right hon. Gentleman referred to the proposed site at Drumnakelly. The council came to a conclusion on that site after at least 11 other sites had been considered and assessed. There were site meetings and discussions with both members and officials of the council.

As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the present tip is at Inch, near Downpatrick. This site has had to be closed and as a temporary measure two other sites — one at Burrenbane and one at Ballygowan—are currently being used. Nevertheless, these can be nothing other than temporary and the council is therfore faced with the pressing problem of finding a new long-term tip. There is a further proposed short-term site at Dunmore, near Ballynahinch, which will have a life of about two years. The need for a major long-life landfill site can be met only by Drumnakelly — it is the only suitable site that we have been able to find — and it will last for about 40 years. As I understand it, acquiring this site and finalising the engineering works on it will take a further 12 months.

The site is not in an area of outstanding natural beauty or green belt. The greater part of it, to which most of the tipping will be confined, is out of sight of the public road and almost every house within a mile of its boundaries. As I understand it, there is only one house which faces directly on to the site from some high ground about 340 yards away. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will want to know that the conditions which we have imposed in the planning permission ensure that only a small portion of the site will be visible to any traffic on the public road, and to about five or six houses which are 150 yards from the site boundary. I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that it will be effectively screened before tipping commences.

Not all the site will be used for tipping. There are a number of rocks that will be left untouched and exposed to maintain the ruggedness of the landscape, which is typical of the countryside around it.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: There will be winds.

Mr. Needham: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman is right in saying that wherever it is in Northern Ireland there will be plenty of wind. That is one reason why it is vital to ensure that the fencing is right.

It was only after we had had the widest consultation that the site was accepted at a relatively remote location. A considerable degree of shelter is afforded by the lie of the land. The quality of the land itself is not of a very high grade. Nor is there any apparent threat to the conservation of the area, the scenery or the wildlife. We are responsible for prevention of water pollution, a matter which we take seriously. In the first instance we have granted a Water Act consent for five years, subject to the conditions that I have mentioned.

I shall touch briefly on the matters that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned in terms of other methods of waste disposal, such as incineration, and whether it would be possible to find some element of private enterprise that we could bring in. I have to tell him that no interest has been shown by the private sector up to now, although the Department has tried to gain it. We are keeping open all methods of use and disposal, to ascertain whether there are any new technologies that we could bring in that would reduce the need for landscaping. For the foreseeable future there does not seem to be too much of an opening down that road. I note, as will my Department, the points that the right hon. Gentleman makes on that score.

I can only reiterate that sites for tipping will always be difficult to find. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman accepts that, in this instance, we have not fallen foul of the strictures that he made in last year's debate and which he repeated today. He said that sites applied for by district councils were turned down on planning grounds. I hope that he accepts that we are proceeding, throughout the whole Province, with the production of 10-year plans which cross local authority boundaries, which will give the public an adequate look at what is proposed for their areas.

I should be delighted to visit the site at Drumnakelly with the right hon. Gentleman if he feels that particular aspects of landscaping, fencing, and so on, are required. I assure him that I shall keep the strategic aspect of the problem under review. If I feel that any of the councils are lagging behind or that we are not getting on as quickly as we should with an adequate Province-wide strategy, I shall reconsider any extra measures that we might take to remedy the problem.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes past Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 25 July 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Irina Ratushinskaya

9.35 am

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of the Holy Trinity church, Beckenham, the Beckenham Baptist church, the church of St. Paul's, Penge, St. Anthony's church, Penge, the Penge Congregational church, St. John's church, Penge, and almost 700 residents of Beckenham and Penge, who are concerned about the poetess Irina Ratushinskaya who is confined in a Soviet labour camp for writing poetry. She is in very poor health and, in the view of her husband and other fellow prisoners, her life is in danger.

The petitioner pray that

your honourable House encourages the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues in their representations to the Soviet Government with the purpose of obtaining both the release of Mrs. Ratushinskaya from the labour camp and her urgently needed medical assessment and treatment.

I wholeheartedly support the petition. Irina Ratushinskaya's fate has depressed and shocked many of my constituents. She will continue to suffer while many of us enjoy a holiday. We hope that during the recess the Foreign Secretary and other hon. Members will remind the Soviet authorities that we deplore their behaviour in this and many other cases.

To lie upon the Table.

East Birmingham Hospital

9.36 am

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I beg to ask leave to present a petition signed by Mrs. Beryl Parker and 3,500 other people living in the catchment area of East Birmingham hospital, protesting about the closure of wards and cuts in medical services at the hospital as a result of underfunding by the regional health authority.

The petitioners pray that

the honourable Members of the House of Commons should ask the Secretary of State for Social Services that he should increase the funding of the West Midland Regional Authority to make it possible for the services to be restored and improved in what is one of the most disadvantaged districts in the West Midlands.

I wish strongly to support the petition and to associate myself with my constituents' protest.

To lie upon the Table.

South Africa

9.37 am

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I beg to ask leave to present a petition that was handed to me by one of my constituents, Mrs. Jean Taylor—someone for whom I have the highest regard and who has done a tremendous amount of work for Christian Aid and other charities. The other signatures were collected from the Park Methodist church, Jarrow.

The petition asks the Government to take action over sanctions against South Africa to bring to an end the evil system of apartheid. Despite the many problems suffered by my constituents, such as unemployment and housing—an issue which I hope to raise later today—they are still greatly concerned about what is happening in South Africa. I support the sentiments expressed in the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Irina Ratushinskaya

9.38 am

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of All Saints church, Fulham, signed by 89 petitioners who are concerned with the position of Irina Ratushinskaya and calling on the Government to assist in representations to secure her release.

To lie upon the Table.

9.39 am

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of 68 members and worshippers of Deane Avenue Evangelical church, South Ruislip, Middlesex, about the poetess Irina Ratushinskaya, who is currently confined in a Soviet labour camp.

The petitioners pray that

your honourable House encourages the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues in their representations to the Soviet Government with the purpose of obtaining both the release of Mrs. Ratushinskaya from the labour camp and her urgently needed medical assessment and treatment.

I wholeheartedly associate myself with the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Overseas Aid

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

9.39 am

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): One day, a little less than three weeks ago, the population of the world for the first time exceeded 5 billion people. Well, so what, most might reply with a yawn? In the course of the next few minutes I want to try to provide some answers to that question and to ask the Government how they are responding.

I do not know—I do not think anybody knows—what population the world can carry, but there is a limit, and whatever that limit may be we are racing towards it at an ever-increasing pace, not because the world population growth rate is increasing—fortunately, it is marginally decreasing—but because, on the basis of compound interest, the number of people throughout the world is growing at an alarming rate.

There are some people who doubt that there is a limit to the number of people that the world can carry, but in my judgment they are deluding themselves and are being quite unrealistic. Anyone who knows anything about animal populations will know that excess numbers lead to starvation, disease and sometimes strife and madness.

Among human populations the effect of starvation and disease in recent times has been self-evident. With regard to strife or madness among animals, why else do lemmings behave as they do, or even the Gadarene swine as they did?

In principle, there is no difference between the human race and other animals. Thus it is that world wide we must urgently demonstrate that the superior wisdom of the human race and the application of knowledge available to it can lead to a control of human numbers before any misfortune should occur.

Furthermore, in the immediate future we must ensure that population growth does not exceed economic growth. If it does, although total national income may grow, the standard of living per head will fall and there will be still more hardship and poverty.

Thus it is that we should take note of population growth and do what we can to control it. Ultimately, all our constituents or their successors will be affected by population growth. Our constituents may not realise it, but they will be affected simply because excess population will lead to dwindling world resources and shortages of raw materials necessary for the wellbeing even of our country, relatively wealthy though it may be.

So it is important that we should take note that it took from the beginning of time to 1830 for the world population to reach 1 billion. It took another 60 years for the population to double to 2 billion. It took another 30 years to reach 3 billion and only another 15 years—to 1975—to reach 4 billion. Today, 11 years later, it has reached 5 billion, and 6 billion will be notched up well before the year 2000.

It is true that statistics mean more in those countries where population growth is most rapid. In the past two years I have had the opportunity of visiting some of the most populous countries in the world and joining in discussions at conferences in Delhi, Mexico City and Harare, in addition to a small conference held in Britain involving parliamentarians from European countries.

In each of those conferences the population statistics became still more mind-boggling. For instance, Mexico City is scheduled to grow to 26 million people by the year 2000 and already totals 18 million people, 46 per cent. of whom are living as squatters or in slums. The World Bank estimates that India's population will peak at 1·6 billion. That is a good deal larger than the population of China today.

In both Mexico City and Delhi I had the opportunity of meeting Members of Parliament and experts from developing countries for whom rapid population growth is a day-to-day problem known to be undermining the prospects of the countries and their people.

In Africa, the population crisis has been brought home to every family in Britain by the famine in sub-Saharan Africa. The result here has been the most impressive show of public generosity to Live Aid, Band Aid and Sport Aid.

In May this year I attended the all-Africa parliamentary conference on population and development in Harare. It was attended by 31 out of 36 African countries with Parliaments and by representatives of nine African countries without Parliaments. The quality of the speeches was high and showed a strong commitment to programmes for population control. Ancient beliefs about the need for large families throughout Africa were not just questioned; they were refuted. Prime Minister Mugabe, in his opening speech, took pride in his country's family planning programme, and correctly stated that no population programme should be considered in isolation from policies and plans on health, housing, education, employment, the environment and the use of available resources.

Those words were echoed again and again by experts and Members of Parliaments alike, as well they might be, given that at present the population growth rate in Africa at 2·9 per cent. per annum is the highest in the world with a population doubling time of 24 years. Those statistics include the figures for Kenya, which has the fastest growth rate of all and which are therefore even worse. Kenya has a current growth rate of 4·1 per cent. and a population doubling time of 17 years. It is the target of the Kenyan Government to reduce that growth to 3·6 per cent. by 1989, and that is a considerable target.

In such circumstances as I have described, I am glad to note that at the United Nations special session on Africa on 28 May this year my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary said:

"on present trends the population of Africa will approach 900 million by the end of the century. How is such population growth to be reconciled with decent living standards? Africa, if she is not careful, will find herself having to run in order merely to stay where she is. I know the sensitivities. But the problem must be faced. We shall give any help we can."

My right hon. and learned Friend could not have uttered wiser words.

Therefore, I should like to hear from the Under-Secretary a little more about what help the Government are giving. The scope is unlimited. When in Zimbabwe in May, I spent one day with the local Save the Children Fund representative, Simon Metcalfe, looking at the Save the Children Fund farms health service, which provides excellent health care and education at a basic level. The weakness is that the area that it covers is so limited. Small wonder that in some parts of Africa the maternal death rate is still about 1,000 per 100,000 live births, in comparison with only 6 per 100,000 in some European countries.

In my one day in Kenya on the way home I looked at services provided by Kenya's family planning association. They were excellent as far as they went, but the size of the task and the need for better provision was emphasised when I was told that in the particular area where I was there were 16 advisers or lay educators, as they were called, to cope with a population of 1·8 million people.

It should not be forgotten that the knock-on effect of the excessive population growth is enormous and cannot be stressed too loudly. For example, although fuel wood accounts for only one tenth of world energy, and although Nigeria is oil rich, fuel wood accounts for 80 per cent. of domestic energy consumption. That level of fuel wood consumption leads to deforestation. In turn, that leads to soil erosion and to desertification. In turn that leads to less land available for food production and forestry. Therefore, there is a greater chance of starvation.

Population programmes must play a major part within the Government's overall aid programme. I am not convinced that the part that these programmes play is large enough. The increase in population aid from £7·8 million in 1984 to £12 million in 1986 to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and to the World Health Organisation is helpful and welcome, especially in the light of the highly regrettable cuts in aid to IPPF by the United States Administration and the cut in 1985 by $10 million by the United States Administration to UNFPA.

Unfortunately, in the United States there is a small minority of extremely vociferous people who have influenced the American Government to the extent that politically they are fearful of maintaining, let alone increasing as they should, aid for population programmes. I hope that the British Government will not fall into the same trap simply because there are a few vociferous people here as well. None the less, the percentage of overseas aid spent on population activities from this country amounts to only 1 per cent. of all aid. Is that enough? Frankly, I doubt it.

In 1980 the late Sir Neil Marten, when Minister for Overseas Development, directed that when development projects were under consideration full accont should be taken of, and wherever possible include, a population element. Does that policy still exist? If it does, for how many development projects has that policy been relevant since 1983? When my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs replies, will he tell me what aid and expertise ODA can offer to countries wishing to establish a better health infrastructure? Without such aid and expertise, population projects will be much less successful. What population, health and family planning projects in Africa and elsewhere are aided by the United Kingdom Government? I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can provide answers to some of these questions.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Before my hon. Friend finishes his speech, may I ask him, while he is drawing the attention of the Minister to these matters, and while he is talking about the vociferous minority, to emphasise that early-day motion 25 has more signatures to it than any other early-day motion this Session, and that more than 300 parliamentarians have signed that early-day motion calling for an increased aid programme?

Mr. Morrison: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention, just as the House and I am grateful to him for his work on the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. That Committee has also drawn special attention to the adverse effect of excessive population growth in developing countries.

The world is said to be threatened by two explosions, one nuclear and the other population. Due to the balance of power and, I hope, balanced disarmament, the likelihood of the first, in my judgment, is slight. However, the threat from the second grows ever larger. I trust, therefore, that the Government will do all in their power to defuse that threat.

9.55 am

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison) for allowing me to speak in the debate. This is a very important debate and I congratulate him on his choice of subject. I will be brief as I believe another hon. Member wishes to speak before the Minister replies.

I would like to concentrate my remarks on the principles that should underlie family planning programmes. As the hon. Member for Devizes told the House a moment ago, there is some concern about the way in which family planning projects are implemented in some Third world countries. It is generally agreed that, in this important and sensitive area of human relationships and conduct, we must proceed by the principle of voluntary choice. There must be no element of coercion.

The Parliamentary Group on Population and Development, of which I have the honour to be joint honorary secretary, heard a talk recently from Dr. Malik from the Ministry of Health and Family Planning in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is one of the countries that figure in a motion on the Order Paper in the name of my right hon. and hon. Friends who are critical of what they understood to be the way that family planning programmes are implemented. We talked to Dr. Malik about the criticisms that have been raised and the fears expressed by hon. Members and organisations outside the House about what is happening in Bangladesh. Dr. Malik assured us that the principles upon which the Bangladesh Family Planning Association and the Ministry of Health and Family Planning based their programmes were voluntary principles. There was no element of coercion. He emphasised the principles, and these are important as they should apply in every country and certainly in every developing country.

The first principle is full information for clients. The second is comprehensive criteria for acceptance or rejection of clients for sterilisation. Sterilisation is obviously a very big step for men and women to take. There must be full information available to those considering that step. Thirdly, clients should have to sign a form to show that they have understood the implications of the chosen method of contraception. That does not simply apply to sterilisations; it applies to the pill and IUD and so on.

Dr. Malik assured us that for the Bangladesh Government, the authorities and bureaucracy, the principle is one of voluntary choice. However, as in many developing countries, the efficiency of management below the top level leaves a lot to be desired. There is a shortage of people who can effectively manage programmes. We must admit, and this is true of many developing countries, that the people at the top do not always know what is happening at the grass roots. It is therefore essential for

[Mr. Eric Deakins]

people at the top, in the Ministries, not to set targets that would lead people to the conclusion that they should take exceptional measures, as happened in India in 1976-77, when Gandhi put forward plans that were misinterpreted and led to accusations, which, in some cases, were justified, of enforced sterilisation. Such sterilisation is obviously out of the question and unacceptable. More must be done in the management of projects at the lowest level in Third world countries.

At grass roots level, voluntary projects as well as official family planning projects aided by the ODA can play an important part. Some of us know the actress Miss Susan Hampshire very well. She is running a project in the slums of Bangladesh, for which she has raised a lot of money and, I am glad to say, the ODA is now part-funding her programme.

When extra money becomes available for family planning programmes, more consideration should be given to the part-funding of voluntary projects. The management is rather more within the control of those supervising the project and it is possible to ensure that nothing goes wrong and that there is no question of coercion.

I would like to endorse the remarks made by the hon. Member for Devizes. If this and other Governments, as aid donors, do not make this issue a bigger part of their aid package, the scale of the problem in places such as Bangladesh will become so great as to place so many stresses on internal economies and development that Governments may be forced, even against their better judgment, into coercive measures. We do not want to see that happen. To prevent that, I hope that in this country, at official and unofficial level, we shall take family planning programmes and mother and child health care programmes in the Third world more seriously than we have done.

9.59 am

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I wish to take just one minute on behalf of the all-party group on overseas development and the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs to support all that has been said in the debate. The population question is an important element in aid provision, but it is only a part of any developmental aid programme.

Those of us who know Africa and other parts of the world know that the one thing that the poorest families need and are able to create is manpower. Children are seen as a means of planting and harvesting the bare necessities of life. Population figures show that as standards improve and people can afford more things the population declines.

I make that point because it is important that any development aid programme should be designed first to relieve poverty. That will relieve hunger and the population programmes will then begin to fit in.

10.1 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison) on his success in the ballot. I thank him, my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) for putting their case so effectively and acting as such a responsible pressure group in the House and the country. They have a genuine commitment which, on a personal basis, I share.

There should be no doubt about the importance that the Government attach to population activities within the total aid programme. It is noteworthy that we have more than doubled our assistance in this sector from £7·5 million in 1980 to just over £15·5 million in 1985, an increase that compares extremely well with other aspects of the aid programme.

I am particularly grateful that hon. Members have linked the issues of health and family planning. As the hon. Member for Walthamstow said, family planning can be a sensitive subject and raises important moral and emotive questions with which society has grappled in the 20 years since modern contraception became readily available. I am sure that we shall continue to debate those issues, but in so doing we must recognise that family planning is a key preventive health measure and that in poor countries it is a real force for improving child survival and maternal health.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): As my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) has said, sterilisation is a major question, but reversible vasectomy could be a different proposition in terms of the ability to persuade people to accept the operation. Will the Minister examine that aspect?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point, but there are differing views on methods and morality in this area. I shall not take time to stress the dramatic growth in world population, as my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes has already done so, but I should point out that the problem in Asia is different in both type and scale from that in Africa and that we must not regard the problems as being the same throughout the world.

The slackening in the rate of global population growth at the end of the 1970s represented a considerable achievement by the developed countries, international aid agencies and non-governmental organisations in the population sector, but it was most of all an achievement on the part of the developing countries. Those countries realised the considerable threat of increasing population to economic and social development, as was emphasised at the conference in Mexico City to which my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes referred.

Despite the good trend towards the end of the 1970s, we cannot afford to be complacent because the trend requires continuing reinforcement and assistance. In addition, substantial challenges remain before all individuals can enjoy the prospect of a long and healthy life. Despite the lack of reliable information, it is clear that infant mortality remains unacceptably high in many countries. The introduction of public health measures and vaccination campaigns has reduced death rates but, sadly, the improvements of the 1970s in this area have given way to a stationary or even deteriorating situation in the 1980s. Every year, 17 million children die from simple preventable diseases such as diarrhoea, malaria, pneumonia, and so on. Virtually all those preventable diseases occur in the developing world and we estimate that between half and two thirds of them could be prevented with relatively simple measures at relatively little cost. As my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes said, maternal mortality is grossly under-reported. Last

year, almost half a million women in poor countries died as a consequence of pregnancy and many more suffered injury and permanent ill-health.

What can the international community do to improve the situation? Many countries have already recognised the importance of population considerations in their general development. We must encourage them to turn statements into action and to devote resources to it, but in a sensible and humane way. Sadly, some countries still do not accept the need for population policies. We must encourage them to do so, but ultimately the responsibility for population growth must lie with national Governments. Developed countries and the international community can help, but their assistance is worthless without the political, moral and financial commitment of the developing countries themselves.

Our aid programme finances a number of multilateral programmes working specifically in the population and health sectors. Indeed, the largest proportion of our population assistance is given in the form of contributions to the multilateral organisations operating in the population sector. We do this because recipient Governments often find it more acceptable to receive assistance in this relatively sensitive sector from the international community acting jointly through multilateral agencies. The British Government's contribution to multilateral population agencies has risen from £5·5 million in 1980 to £11 million in 1985 and I am pleased to say that in 1986 we intend to provide a total of £12 million in contributions to the various United Nations agencies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes asked three detailed questions about the 1980 Neil Marten guidelines. I shall write to him on some of the points, but we do not keep a record of all projects in which those criteria have been applied. Nevertheless, Overseas Development Administration guidance to all staff responsible for direct spending on aid programmes makes it clear that special efforts should be made to ensure that population components are built into new aid projects wherever possible.

In the health sector, it is clear that the responsibility for developing health service facilities must rest with national Governments, but there are important aspects of health care which cannot be tackled in a nationally oriented and often piecemeal fashion. The transfer of bio-medical expertise to developing countries is a good example.

In recognition of the importance of transfer to developing countries, we support a number of health-oriented multilateral development programmes. As the House knows, we are a major contributor to UNICEF, the major United Nations agency concerned solely with improving the well-being of children throughout the world.

As the hon. Member for Walthamstow said, population is a development sector in which much can be, and, in some countries, is being done by non-governmental organisations. We very much welcome that. We have recognised that trend and the advantages that the NGOs have in that sector. In recognition of that, under the joint funding scheme, our Overseas Development Administration will fund population-related projects by up to 100 per cent. of the cost, rather than the 50 per cent. which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, is the rule in other sectors. The health and population projects that we have helped through NGOs are many and varied. They range from support for the Save the Children Fund to help to mount an immunisation programme in Mali to assistance with a training programme in Bangladesh to improve the skills of local midwives and traditional birth attendants.

We also support health services, medical and population research. Research in health covers both the development of the means of controlling the major communicable diseases and the improvement of delivery of existing technologies. Projects that we have recently supported range from studies on the epidemiology of leprosy in northern Malawi to a study in Nepal which pinpointed the need for reliable year-round water supplies by demonstrating the links between infantile gastro-intestinal infections and contamination of water supplies during the rainy season.

In the population sector, research is broadly based. In Botswana, the Gambia, Kenya and Sierra Leone, the programme for the introduction and adaptation of contraceptive technology was contracted to research the design, production, field testing and evaluation of pamphlets, booklets and flip charts on contraceptive methods. Those materials were specifically designed and aimed at illiterate and semi-illiterate groups and developed to meet their specific needs and concerns. Hon. Members will know the importance of that. Training in those countries was also provided for primary health care workers in the use of the various materials.

Another area in which we are active is in trying to overcome the shortage of staff in developing countries, who understand the difficulties and dynamics of population growth, and to develop in those countries the necessary technical expertise to run the population and health programmes that those countries may wish to establish. We finance a substantial health manpower assistance programme designed to strengthen developing countries' health manpower and services and to help in the development of national health policies and strategies. That is complemented by a British training package under which trainees from such countries can undertake courses either in this country or elsewhere.

I have tried, in the short time available to me, to outline the various activities that the Government carry out in the population sector and to reassure members of the all-party group that we are committed to a significant contribution in that sector. I should like to make it clear that we do not in any way underestimate the importance of the different points that they have been making.

The matters that I have just outlined are not limited simply to the work that we do in the health and population sector, important though those are. They run throughout our aid programme. Our approach reflects a basic philosophy underlying the aid programme that we should meet the real needs of developing countries, focusing particularly on the poorest developing countries. Population work is an excellent example of the way in which aid can help the struggle against poverty in the world, and I am sure that that is an aim that will commend itself to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Westland plc

10.15 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I welcome the courteous presence of the Leader of the House, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) and the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins). I should like to express thanks on behalf of many other hon. Members for the volume of work put in by our colleagues on the Committee, from all parties, and for the quality of presentation of the report. I thank not only our parliamentary colleagues on the Committee, but particularly Robert Rogers and other Clerks for their philologically elegant work. It is a superbly presented document, which has enhanced the standing of Select Committees as a whole.

I attended several of the meetings as a spectator when the Select Committee saw Sir Robert Armstrong and the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) and the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). It would have made fascinating television. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) was right yesterday when he said that one cannot get the full flavour from the written record.

Why have this debate the day after the report was published? I believe passionately that the House of Commons should be told the truth. Yesterday the Prime Minister reiterated four times that we would have a debate in due course. Why not this morning? In particular, why can we not have a statement this morning on the matter raised by the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) yesterday, when he complained that the Attorney-General could not speak in his defence. The shadow Attorney-General is here. It was an official request from the Opposition Chief Whip that the Attorney-General might care to take the opportunity of replying. He has not done so. I do not make any complaint, but, in the light of what was said by the right hon. and learned Member for Southport last night, I want it to be placed on the record that he was given an opportunity.

The Prime Minister talked to her party last night about the virtues of unity. This debate is about the need for the virtue of integrity in public life. I say to the Prime Minister that political integrity may be more important than political unity. While we are on the question of unity and integrity, let us ask about another "ity"—responsibility; ministerial responsibility. Does the Prime Minister take ministerial responsibility for the cover provided by her office for the leak of the Solicitor-General's letter, or does she not? If, as constitutional convention suggests, she accepts that responsibility, she has to take the blame for the leak operation. Under the old-fashioned doctrine of ministerial responsibility she cannot say that it was the fault of her office, and it does not matter whether she knew about it or not. If, on the other hand, the Prime Minister does not accept such responsibility, her office, and Mr. Ingham in particular, is guilty of unacceptable conduct and should be disciplined. I say to the Minister responsible for the Civil Service, because it is particularly his area, that if he answers little else, will he tell us what has become of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility?

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does my hon. Friend recall that on Tuesday 27 January the Prime Minister claimed that

"there was a genuine difference in understanding between officials".—[*Official Report*, 27 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 655.]

but on the previous Thursday, 23 January, the day before the dramatic resignation of her then right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, she said when defending him:

"They did not seek my agreement: they considered—and they were right—that I should agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that the fact that the then Defence Secretary's letter of 3 January was thought by the Solicitor-General to contain material inaccuracies which needed to be corrected, should become public knowledge as soon as possible".—[*Official Report*, 23 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 450.]

Does that not show that, far from misunderstanding, they understood only too well and did what the Prime Minister wanted and carried out her policy? Does that not mean that while the right hon. Lady may have full confidence in civil servants, her party, Parliament and the people should have no confidence in her?

Mr. Dalyell: I have enormous respect for my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). He put in a power of work on another Select Committee report, together with my hon. Friends the Members for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo), for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) and for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) which was treated as a fag-end of Session document last year. I refer to the Foreign Affairs Committee report on the Belgrano sinking, Cmnd. 9647. Any question that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South asks is a serious question and I hope that Ministers will bear that in mind.

Where is the evidence that public servants' conduct does not call for any action being taken against them? Why should the House accept that there is no case for disciplinary action being taken against the civil servants concerned, when all the House is told by the Prime Minister is that a report, which has not been made public, says so? Why cannot Sir Robert Armstrong's report be made public, especially as the question of national security is not involved? Does the report contain something that the Prime Minister wishes to hide?

As the Prime Minister answers questions that are put to her by introducing information that is not directly related to the question, the following unanswered questions should be put to her yet again. Does the Prime Minister take ministerial responsibility for the cover provided by her office for the leak of the Solicitor-General's letter? What is the distinction between authority and cover? My right hon. Friend the shadow Leader of the House never had that question answered, so we put the question again.

Paragraph 187 of the report states:

"It must therefore be the case that Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell were in a position to tell the Prime Minister on 7 January what turned out to be the principal findings of Sir Robert Armstrong's inquiry more than a fortnight later."

Paragraph 188 states:

"Yet on 7 January Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell did not share their knowledge—not with Mr. Nigel Wicks, the Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary, not with Sir Robert Armstrong and not with the Prime Minister."

However, Sir Robert Armstrong was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) at the Committee hearing on 5 February 1986 — an unforgettable occasion:

"did the Prime Minister make any of her own private inquiries, to your knowledge, as to who the culprit or culprits might be prior to your being authorised to conduct you inquiry?"

Sir Robert replied:

"I do not think she did, no. She knew very early on 7 January that there was a probability of a more formal inquiry and she could well have thought that she would be criticised if she anticipated that inquiry by some more informed method of proceeding."

Are we expected to believe that the Prime Minister knew very early on 7 January that there was a probability of a more formal inquiry concerning the conduct of her staff and that she did not get to the bottom of it immediately in case she should be criticised for doing so? The reverse is true. She can be seriously criticised for looking the other way when she knew that something serious had happened in her office. At best, she turned a Nelson's eye. That is a grave dereliction of duty by a Prime Minister.

I now turn to a topic that concerns me deeply. The legal advice from the Solicitor-General on 6 January was that the Government were

"under a duty not to give information which is incomplete or inaccurate in any material particular."

If it was argued that the right hon. Member for Henley was completely inaccurate, it would have been the Government's duty to inform the shareholders. In the event, the letter of the right hon. Member for Henley was not inaccurate. It was based on evidence in his possession. As the Prime Minister said to the House on 27 January, it was thought that there was a "possible inaccuracy" in the letter from the right hon. Member for Henley to Mr. David Horne of Lloyds. Because those responsible failed to leak the qualification—the possibility of inaccuracy—they committed the very offence of which they had accused the former Secretary of State for Defence that day. If they alleged, as they did, that the former Secretary of State for Defence had misled the shareholders, they too were guilty of misleading. They were in direct breach of their duty not to give information which is incomplete or inaccurate in any material particular. Having committed the very offence of which they accused the former Secretary of State for Defence, should they not apologise to the shareholders? We now know, thanks to the Select Committee, that the former Secretary of State for Defence was justified in writing the original letter.

It flows from that that the Prime Minister's men and Miss Bowe orchestrated a campaign against the Secretary of State for Defence. More than that, they were in breach of a legal duty—I refer to the appendix on page lxix. What is more, that was done in the full knowledge that the leak was also a breach of that duty. What is the basis of that duty? Is it moral, or statutory? If it is the latter, those involved were acting in breach of civil or criminal law. Therefore, are they open to litigation or prosecution?

For the sake of time, I shall not go over the interchange that took place last night about paragraph 195 between my right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) and the right hon. and learned Member for Southport. I shall simply say that I received a characteristically courteous letter from the Attorney-General in his own handwriting. It said:

"Dear Tam, Thank you for your letter — perhaps the best way to deal with your question is to show you my written answer I gave today. Yours ever, Michael."

How, on 30 January, could the Attorney-General say that his first knowledge of the direct involvement of the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was on 22 January and yet the indemnity was given before or on 16 January? On what basis do we give any kind of indemnity? That is a deep question, because one does not give indemnity lightly. I am not a lawyer.

I return to the point made by my right hon. Friend the shadow Leader of the House. He was talking about paragraph 195 of the report. The Attorney-General said that when he was asked to grant immunity

"he was also told enough 'to make it clear to me that under no circumstances would I have prosecuted her in any event.' These statements are unequivocal."

This may be an occasion to answer my right hon. Friend's question. I also have questions I wish to put. On the reply to the hon. and learned Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) by the Attorney-General, how did the Attorney-General have

"reason to believe that the disclosure had been made by the official concerned"?

Secondly, how did he know that the official had acted in "complete good faith"?

If it was important that the inquiry should discover as fully as possible the circumstances in which the disclosure came to be made, why was the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks not interviewed by Sir Robert Armstrong? Does not protocol, apart from common courtesy, demand that Sir Robert Armstrong should have gone to the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in the first place? I have to repeat what was said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East, that the opportunity was not taken in the official answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fylde to deny the conclusion that the Committee had come to in paragraph 195.

In paragraph 201, why did the Attorney-General decide that there was

"no justification for the institution of proceedings under the Official Secrets Act 1911 in respect of those concerned."?

Can the House see the evidence? Has there been a change of policy since Ponting and Tisdall? Will the Minister make a clear statement?

I attended all 11 days of the trial at the Old Bailey. Clive Ponting could only too easily have been languishing in prison at this moment. That is the backcloth to some of this debate, and it comes to "sauce for the goose and sauce for the gander."

Then there are the unanswered questions of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks. As the Prime Minister claims that she has nothing whatever to hide, will she now do the House a service by requiring the right hon. and learned Gentleman to answer the Defence Select Committee's questions in paragraph 203? When was he first involved in discussions about releasing information? When did he first speak to anybody in No. 10 about the publication of the Solicitor-General's letter? Did he have any conversation with the Prime Minister about the fact that he had authorised disclosure of part of the Solicitor-General's letter? Did he discuss with his private office or with other members of his staff the likely course of the leak inquiry?

The only reason for not answering those questions is that to have done so honestly would have landed the Prime Minister well and truly in the soup. If the Prime Minister claims that she has nothing to hide, now is the time for the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to answer those questions that were properly asked by the Defence Select Committee.

[Mr. Dalyell]

Paragraph 202 refers to Sir Robert Armstrong's appearance on 5 February. In relation to the authority of the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to leak the letter, Sir Robert said:

"I naturally addressed that matter in the inquiry and I found absolutely no evidence whatever that he did."

However, at that time Sir Robert Armstrong had not interviewed the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who was the only person who could have definitively answered the query. Is that the level of investigation that Sir Robert Armstrong pursued? If so, his efforts are little less than a charade.

Why did Sir Robert Armstrong not just call the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and ask him whether he authorised the leak? Why did the Prime Minister not ring the Solicitor-General and ask for his consent to the publication of the letter? Why did Sir Robert Armstrong not interview Ministers, especially the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Attorney-General? Why did the Prime Minister not ask or instruct Sir Robert Armstrong to interview Ministers, especially the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Attorney-General?

The final sentence of paragraph 196 gives Sir Robert Armstrong's finding that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had authorised the leak before the inquiry began into the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Sir Robert Armstrong, Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell. Is it remotely feasible that neither Mr. Powell nor Mr. Ingham never mentioned, hinted at or discussed that vital knowledge with the Prime Minister? If not, they should be fired for gross dereliction of duty.

As the Prime Minister has so much confidence in Sir Robert Armstrong, as we were told yesterday, will she publish his report about the leak? Why cannot the rest of us see it? This is not a matter of national security. Who, other than Sir Robert Armstrong and the Attorney-General, discussed whether the police should be involved? Were the Prime Minister, the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Sir Gordon Reece, Mr. Nigel Wicks or Mr. Powell consulted?

Did the Prime Minister agree Sir Gordon Reece's employment by Westland? Did she not see a conflict of interest? If not, why not? Are not the activities of a Prime Minister's closest adviser, whether formal or informal, in these circumstances, of considerable interest? It is being claimed that the former Secretary State for Trade and Industry was responsible for determining the form of disclosure. If that is so, why did the Prime Minister state that the former Trade Secretary

"expressed no view as to the form in which disclosure should be made."?—[*Official Report*, 23 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 450.]

Why, after the internal inquiry had been completed, were the police not called in, as was the case with Clive Ponting? The Government were quick enough to bring the police in on Clive Ponting and Sarah Tisdall. Was that to shield somebody, and, if so, who?

The extracts from the Committee's minutes relating to its sitting on Wednesday 9 April on page lxii show that all three questions aimed at calling evidence from key Civil Service witnesses were negatived. No reason was given for that. Why were steps needed to block the evidence from such key witnesses? It is not good enough to say that they had already been questioned by Sir Robert Armstrong. If they had done nothing wrong, they would have nothing to fear from the Committee. Mr. Bernard Ingham, whatever else he is, is not a shrinking violet. They should now give evidence, and I welcome the final clause of the report.

Senior civil servants were asked to do something which they knew to be improper. In normal circumstances such experienced and highly placed civil servants would have asked whether they should do such a thing. With the arguable exception of Colette Bowe, not one did so. Why? They knew that they were acting in accordance with the Prime Minister's wishes before the Solicitor-General was ever asked to write the letter. Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr. Ingham are not exactly minnow civil servants remote from Ministers. Sir Thomas Dugdale resigned. They are as close to the Prime Minister as Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman were to Richard Nixon.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): I recognise the hon. Gentleman's interest in pursuing the matter in detail, and in the nature of politics it is understandable that he seeks to attack my right hon. Friends. Before he concludes, will he address his mind to paragraph 214 of the report of the Committee, on which I had the privilege to serve? It refers to the problem of Sir Robert Armstrong combining the jobs of head of the Civil Service and Cabinet Secretary. If the hon. Gentleman is prepared to address his mind to that problem, surely he will see that many of the matters to which he has referred are manifestations of that problem. Will he address himself to the principal issue rather than to the minutiae?

Mr. Dalyell: I have addressed my mind to that. I was present during the evidence given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan). He argued before the Committee chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) that from his experience as Prime Minister those two jobs should be separate. I strongly agree with the public statements of Lord Bancroft, Lord Allen of Abbeydale and many others on that matter.

The reason why civil servants are not being disciplined is outlined in a book that I wrote. I hesitate to refer to "Thatcher: Patterns of Deceit". It states:

"After some press coverage in *The Times* Diary and *The Guardian* of this debate, I was given the following information which I am authorised to use, by a participant at a dinner for the Turkish Minister of Technology, Mustafa Tinaz Titiz, on 30 January at Lancaster House.

At this dinner officials of the Department of Trade and Industry, in a position to know, raged about the behaviour of politicians for all who cared to listen. They were extremely angry at the fact that the blame for the leaking, the selective leaking, of the Solicitor-General's letter had been put on them and their colleagues at the DTI. It could be argued, they said, that what the Prime Minister had told the House of Commons, in a narrow sense, was technically correct: that there were no telephone calls for 'permission to leak or selectively leak'.

Why?

Because there was no need for such telephone calls.

The agreement to leak had been reached between the Prime Minister and an uneasy right hon. Gentleman for Richmond, who had demurred, but was eager to please the PM, before ever inducing the Solicitor-General to write a letter to the then Defence Secretary [Michael Heseltine].

When my right hon. Friend, the Leader of the Opposition [Neil Kinnock], questioned the Prime Minister on her actions, he did not get very far. Nor did I do any better, nor any of the rest of us, because we were all like an audience looking at a conjuror and looking at the wrong part of the trick to see how the conjuror did it. The hanky panky of the selective leaking was at the very beginning of the performance and did

not take place *after* the letter was formulated. The latter was the point we were all looking at, because even the most hardened of us had not expected that degree of cynical, underhand behaviour from a British Prime Minister.

To be fair to Colette Bowe, although she had the instruction to leak from Mr. Bernard Ingham, she certainly kicked out against what she was being expected to do. The House will remember that she said very little, but what she did say in public was that every enquiry should be referred to Number 10 Downing Street. No wonder! Nor, technically, was Mr. Bernard Ingham lying to the Armstrong Enquiry: just possibly he did not discuss the leak *after* the letter had been leaked, with the Prime Minister. Such a discussion would have been superflous, since Mr. Ingham knew, *a priori*, explicitly what the Prime Minister wanted done, and what had been cooked up *beforehand* between the Prime Minister and her uncomfortable Trade Secretary.

Will the Minister answer the specific charge against his Prime Minister that the 'dirty work', the decision to leak a Law Officer's letter, took place before it was suggested to the Solicitor-General that he should write the letter.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Law Officers will study what I have just said, because the House of Commons is entitled to know what the right hon. Gentleman for Wimbledon and the right hon. Gentleman for Royal Tunbridge Wells think about what I have just said. Put in colloquial language, the Solicitor-General was set-up, used and abused. No wonder the Law Officers were reported as being on the very verge of resignation. But I chide them not, because had they resigned on this issue, at that time, their whole Government would have been at risk and that would be a fearful responsibility to take on their shoulders.

However, the Law Officers do now owe the House of Commons the truth as to what did occur.

Let us be clear. It is nauseating what this Prime Minister has done in her tantrums. Mad with anger against her erstwhile Defence Secretary, she and Bernard Ingham, with the eventual acquiescence, but against the better judgment of, her Trade Secretary hit on the idea of putting the right hon. Gentleman for Henley wrong in law and making him look publicly foolish. So these three cook up the scheme of getting one of the Law Officers — the other one, the Attorney-General, was away sick — to send a letter, which they intended to leak wholly or in part. Leaking it, Mr. Speaker, selectively or in full, was the *raison d'être* of the letter — that was its purpose — to do down the infernal nuisance, that the right hon. Gentleman for Henley had by then become. So they prompt the Solicitor-General to write his letter. The right hon. Gentleman for Tunbridge Wells imagines, naturally enough, that every Law Officer's letter to a Minister of the Crown is strictly confidential. In all innocence, he writes the letter. Routinely, a copy goes to Downing Street. I understand from those who have worked in Number 10, both under Lord Wilson and under the right hon. Gentleman for Bexley that any Law Officer's letter, because it may have consequences for the Courts, is handled with the utmost care, and rightly so.

Can one imagine the career diplomat, Mr. Heath's Press Secretary, Sir Donald Maitland, using a Law Officer's letter for such a purpose. It is inconceivable! Moreover, it is a pertinent question to ask why a Law Officer's letter went anywhere near Mr. Ingham's desk, unless the whole purpose was to make use, or abuse, of it in public? The only way in which the Downing Street Civil Service machine would allow a Law Officer's letter anywhere near the Press Office would be because they knew they had to act under Prime Ministerial instruction.

To continue the narrative: Mr. Bernard Ingham, knowing his Prime Minister's predetermined plan, orders a protesting Colette Bowe to leak the Solicitor-General's letter to Chris Moncrieff at the Press Association. They imagine that the leaked letter will serve its purpose of helping to discredit the right hon. Gentleman for Henley: that it will be a two-day wonder, ephemeral and quickly forgotten like so many two-day wonders in British politics. They take the view that the situation will be manageable, and that the House of Commons will, as usual, move on to other interests.

Unfortunately for the Prime Minister, an outraged Government employee, livid at the treatment of the Civil Service meted out to them by the Prime Minister, confirmed my information that it was Colette Bowe who phoned Mr. Moncrieff, and that Miss Bowe acted under Ministerial and Prime Ministerial instructions. Otherwise, I would not have named her in this House. With the naming of Colette Bowe, the situation which the Prime Minister and her accomplices thought was manageable, became unmanageable. The paramount consideration now became the need to protect the position of the Prime Minister. The only way to do this was to put the onus, the blame, on understandings, or misunderstandings, between Civil Servants, no matter that it involved impugning, without good reason, the competence and integrity of Civil Servants caught up in an impossible situation."

I expect the Minister with responsibility for the Civil Service to say something about the honour of the Civil Service.

Finally, I say this, and I really mean it: it is now up to right hon. and hon. Members of the Conservative party to reflect upon whether they should continue to be led by a person whose whole detailed background, in my view, as a Member of the House of Commons for 24 years shows her to be unsuitable to lead one of the great parties of our country and to be the occupant of No. 10 Downing street.

10.46 am

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I have literally one minute, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in which to speak. I want to bring back to the attention of the House the fourth report of the Select Committee on Defence, of which I was a signatory. For the last quarter of an hour the speech of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was nothing but pure froth and speculation. It had nothing to do with the report that I signed. After the hon. Gentleman's peroration, I am, as a member of the Conservative party, proud to be led by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Also I want to bring back to the attention of the House paragraph 183 of the report, the most important paragraph, which states quite clearly that

"The evidence is that the action of the Prime Minister's office on 6 January in relation to the disclosure was without her direct authority . . . We accept this."

Every national newspaper that I have read this morning says, in essence, that the Prime Minister has been cleared by this report. That is the important point.

I refer the hon. Gentleman, since he did not refer to it, to paragraph 184 where he will see that Sir Robert Armstrong said:

" 'I have inquired about it separately and my inquiries confirmed what the Prime Minister said, that there was a discussion on Tuesday 7 January, in which she was told in general terms of those contacts.' "

The hon. Gentleman referred to ministerial responsibility. The whole point is that this misunderstanding came about and that this unauthorised disclosure was made without the approval of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. There is no ministerial responsibility.

As for the inquiries of Sir Robert Armstrong, I refer the House to paragraph 190 of the report. The Committee's comment was:

"This was normal procedure."

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) said yesterday, just because there has been an authorised disclosure it does not necessarily mean that it has been authorised by a Minister. The report is quite clear. It clears the Prime Minister.

10.48 am

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): My hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Richard Luce]

Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) introduces a refreshing sense of perspective into the debate. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is well known in the House and outside for his persistence and determination in pursuing issues. We respect him for that. But I have to let him into a secret. He does sometimes get so obsessed with an issue that he loses his balance and objectivity. One obsession he has is that there is a continual conspiracy in Government against the nation. This impression that he gives, that he lives in a world of illusions, does very often diminish the credibility of his case. Indeed he is notorious for raising issues which fascinate a part of Westminster and the press but which bore the rest of the country stiff. *[Interruption.]* I do not think that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is interested in listening to the reply, because he is simply not interested in objective discussion.

The third and fourth reports from the Defence Committee on Westland were received by the Government only yesterday. These reports are based on lengthy inquiries that the Committee has conducted and the Government will naturally be studying them carefully before responding to Parliament in due course. I note that the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) recognised yesterday the need for the Government to have time to reply. That is why I find it all the more astonishing that the hon. Member for Linlithgow was expecting there to be an immediate reply from the Government within 24 hours of the issuing of a substantial report. He knows all the conventions of the House and it is only reasonable that the Government should have time to reply.

In responding to the points that the hon. Member has made, I do not propose to go over the entire series of events in detail. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave full accounts to the House on 23 and 27 January and has answered many questions in the House since then. Sir Robert Armstrong gave extensive and detailed evidence to the Committee on two occasions; and my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has answered numerous questions in the House concerning his position and that of my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General.

But the hon. Gentleman has insisted on making several points, often despite the information already made available, and I propose to deal briefly in the time available with a few of them and to raise related issues.

First, on the Prime Minister's involvement, the hon. Gentleman continues to allege that the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter was made in some way with the Prime Minister's authority. The Committee report states clearly in paragraph 183:

"The Prime Minister stated that she had no knowledge on 6 January of what was taking place. We accept this."

I hope that in the light of that clear conclusion from the Committee we shall hear no more from hon. Members on this matter.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Luce: No; I have been given absolutely no time. The hon. Member for Linlithgow has taken up a large part of the debate, and I should have time to respond to it.

The hon. Gentleman repeated his earlier allegation concerning the Attorney-General, suggesting that my right hon. and learned Friend knew when he instituted the inquiry that the disclosure had been authorised by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I refer the House to the reply given yesterday by the Attorney-General in which he made the position abundantly clear. As it is on the record, there is no need for me to repeat the reply, in view of the importance of answering some of the other points. As it was a full reply that put on the record his response to the allegation, I can add no more to it.

I now deal with the hon. Gentleman's allegations about individual civil servants. He was right to say that I am the Minister responsible for the Civil Service. I have the greatest admiration for the professionalism, impartiality and loyalty of civil servants which they bring to Governments of every complexion. Once again, I refer hon. Members to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in the House yesterday on this matter:

"First, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I have total confidence in our officials referred to in the report. As the House will be aware, those responsible for decisions on disciplinary action have already concluded that there was no case for such action. Secondly, I do not accept that Committee's comments on the role of the head of the home Civil Service. He continues to enjoy the Government's total confidence. He is a very distinguished public servant, who has performed great service to Governments of both parties."—[*Official Report*, 24 July 1986; Vol. 102, c. 590.]

The Select Committee said that it finds extraordinary the fact that no disciplinary action was taken against any of the officials concerned in the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already expressed to the House, in her speech on 27 January, her regret at the manner in which the disclosure was made. As the head of the home Civil Service said in his evidence to the Select Committee, clearly things were done in this affair which would have been better done differently, and in that sense people made wrong judgments. The question is whether those errors of judgment were such as to call for disciplinary action. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear yesterday, those responsible for decisions about disciplinary action concluded that there was no case for such action in these instances.

As the Committee's report acknowledges, the disclosure was made with the authority of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Indeed, the House will need little reminding that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), in his statement to this House on 27 January, accepted full responsibility for the fact and form of the disclosure. He went on to make it clear that officials acted in accordance with his wishes and instructions.

The overriding importance of the principle of ministerial accountability has been stressed in the Government's response to the seventh report from the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister presented to the House yesterday.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Luce: I have great respect for the right hon. and learned Gentleman, but the hon. Member for Linlithgow took about 30 minutes of the debate, and I must reply to it.

Mr. Morris: Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves this point, will he address his mind to the Select Committee's request in paragraph 231? In the absence of ministerial authority, civil servants were not allowed to give evidence and Ministers did not answer questions fully. At the end of the paragraph, the Select Committee says, "This we now do", in relation to making a special request for the authority of the House.

Mr. Luce: That proves my point. It would have been better had I proceeded with the debate because I shall deal with those points in a moment. Now I am dealing with the Government's reply which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister presented to the House yesterday.

Sir Humphrey Atkins (Spelthorne): The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) said that the Select Committee has requested the support of the House in obtaining the attendance of civil servants. If he reads paragraph 231 again, he will see that that is not the case at all. We said that we wished to complete our inquiry as far as possible on the evidence before us before reporting to the House, and then we said, "This we now do." The right hon. and learned Gentleman is quite wrong.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for clarifying the position.

The Government's response to the seventh report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee stated:

"Any attempt to make civil servants directly accountable to Parliament, other than the strictly defined case of the Accounting Officer's responsibility, would be difficult to reconcile with Minister's responsibility for their departments and civil servants' duty to their Ministers."

That is an important point. The response makes several other points about ministerial accountability.

It is important to quote from the Procedure Committee's report, which stated:

"It would not, however, be appropriate for the House to seek directly or through its committees to enforce its right to secure information from the Executive at a level below that of the ministerial head of the department concerned . . . since such a practice would tend to undermine rather than strengthen the accountability of Ministers to the House."

I should mention the increasing tendency to summon officals to appear at Select Committee hearings. The House must reflect carefully on this important issue, especially the tendency to examine the performance and conduct of individual officials. I hope that the Select Committees will return to the principles that have hitherto been accepted as the basis upon which officials give evidence to Select Committees.

In the last few minutes available to me, I shall deal with Sir Robert Armstrong. The hon. Member for Linlithgow singled out for special criticism the head of the home Civil Service and the Prime Minister's chief press secretary. They have long been accustomed to such allegations from the hon. Gentleman. But that is no reason for leaving those allegations unanswered, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it clear to the House many times, including yesterday afternoon, that they retain her total confidence. She has asked me to confirm that again this morning.

The Select Committee's report claims that Sir Robert Armstrong's dual role as Cabinet Secretary and head of the Civil Service may have caused a conflict of interest in the conduct of the inquiry. The Government's response to the seventh report from the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee already makes it clear that they see no grounds for changing this arrangement, and nothing said in the Defence Select Committee's report affects that.

The Select Committee said that the head of the Home Civil Service failed to give a lead in this case. I cannot accept that view. He has stated on the record, in evidence to the Select Committee which has been reported and broadcast, that it would have been much better not to have disclosed the information in the way in which it was disclosed. He issued a note of guidance in February last year on the duties and responsibilities of civil servants in relation to Ministers. The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee has accepted the validity of those principles, and they have been reaffirmed by the Government in the response to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee which was published yesterday.

The head of the Home Civil Service conducted, with assistance from a colleague from the Cabinet Office (Management and Personnel Office), the inquiry into the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter and reported fully to the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General on the disclosure. He took the view, in my judgment rightly, that it would not be fair or reasonable to expect the officials who had given an account of their role to him and co-operated fully in the inquiry to appear before the Select Committee. He offered to give evidence to the Select Committee, and answered its questions fully and fairly at two sessions lasting altogether for nearly five hours. Far from that being a failure of leadership, it demonstrates the exercise of leadership with great responsibility and integrity.

If I had had more time, I would have tried to deal with some other issues, including the guidelines that are being given to civil servants on matters of conscience. However, the hon. Member for Linlithgow will see, in the reply that the Government gave yesterday, that we acknowledge that some changes might be considered. Discussions will take place to see whether changes can be made to take the issue a stage further. The matters to which I have referred are but a few of those raised in the Committee's report. The Government will, of course, be making their full views known in due course.

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 5 (Friday sittings).*

Turks and Caicos Islands

11 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): Mr. Speaker, with permission, I would like to make a statement about the Turks and Caicos Islands.

On 27 March the House was informed that a commission of inquiry had been set up by the Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands, one of our remaining Caribbean dependencies. The commission was asked to investigate allegations of arson of Government offices, corruption in the Public Works Department and related issues. The Commissioner, Mr. Louis Blom-Cooper QC, submitted his report to the Governor in London on 4 July. Mr. Blom-Cooper has found arson of a public building by persons unknown. He has also found the Chief Minister and two of his ministerial colleagues unfit to hold ministerial office. The report states that Ministers have indulged in unconstitutional behaviour, political discrimination and administrative malpractices. The commission also finds that the leader of the Opposition party and a senior Opposition figure have been involved in a conspiracy to commit public order offences to overthrow the present Government. The commission observes that such is the corrupting effect of patronage throughout the system that this was the only means of protest available to them.

We have agreed with the Governor that we must treat these findings extremely seriously. It is essential that we put right what has gone wrong. Many islanders would like to see an end to present abuses. We have accordingly decided that, in the interests of the islanders themselves, the administrative structure of the islands must be changed to prevent ministerial abuses. This is partly because the present constitution, dating from 1976, was drafted on the assumption, which was not borne out, that local Ministers should be given wide responsibilities in preparation for eventual independence. The Chief Minister and his colleagues resigned yesterday morning. The Governor then announced in the Turks and Caicos Islands that we have amended the constitution by means of an Order in Council. This replaces the existing Executive Council with an Advisory Council consisting of members nominated by the Governor from among the most respected and responsible islanders. It will include members of the elected Legislative Council, which will remain in existence. The Governor has already received assurances of support from a number of respected islanders.

This is an interim measure. We are not suspending the constitution and substituting direct administration through the Governor. We are not taking away the franchise. We will appoint a Constitutional Commission to review the constitution and make recommendations for the future. It will aim to conclude its review by the end of the year and will be followed by fresh elections.

These decisions offer the opportunity for active co-operation by the islanders themselves. Reports we have received so far show that the essential interim measures we are taking to restore good government will receive the islanders' full co-operation and understanding. We and they have a common interest in ensuring regional stability. We are keeping Commonwealth Caribbean Governments and others closely informed.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I shall not be tempted by the echo of the previous debate that the statement has clearly evoked in some of my colleagues, because this is an important matter for the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Given the difficult situation on the islands that the Minister has described, and the dependency status under the 1976 constitution, the Opposition accept the right of the British Government to take the action described. We believe that it is in the best interests of the islanders, in the light of what we understand to be the findings of the Blom-Cooper report. We welcome the Minister's assurance that there will be full and continuing consultation with respected leaders in the islands on all the action to be taken, and also the assurance that there can be a swift return to administration by elected island representatives.

I have a few questions to ask the Minister. First, will he confirm that the Blom-Cooper report will be published today—it is not yet available in the Vote Office—so that the House can know the background to this statement? Is not assistance urgently needed to tackle the growing drugs menace on the islands and to develop a healthy economy so that they will not be dependent on money from drugs, which is a growing market? Will assistance be given to equip the coastguard and the police to tackle that problem? The drugs barons have greater resources than have the islands Government. Will the Minister look with his colleagues at the Overseas Development Administration to see what financial help can be given to the Government on the islands for this purpose?

Will there not remain a problem of organising political and administrative structures, not just on the Turks and Caicos Islands, but on a number of island dependencies with small populations? Will the Government look at the options for tackling this problem?

My next question is on an important matter, which has been pressed on me by people who know the islands and the situation in the Caribbean well. Will the Government refrain from using anything other than civilian forces to deal with law and order on the islands, unless it is absolutely necessary?

As the House is about to rise, will the Minister give us an assurance that he will keep all the Opposition parties informed over the next few months and report on what we hope will be a speedy return to stable democratic government on the Turks and Caicos Islands?

Mr. Eggar: I welcome the tone and content of the hon. Gentleman's questions. We value the support that we are receiving from the official Opposition on what, as he says, is a difficult and delicate situation.

We hope that the Constitutional Commission will report by the end of the year, but we can give no firm assurances. The Blom-Cooper report is to be placed in the Library, not in the Vote Office. If hon. Members want copies, I am sure that we can make them available.

I have taken careful note of the points that the hon. Gentleman made about drugs and general crime prevention. We have a regional police adviser stationed in the Turks and Caicos Islands and a number of measures have been taken in this sector. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the islands are already in receipt of some £5 million per annum of both budgetary and capital aid from the ODA, and that is a considerable commitment.

I am delighted to be able to say that we are just about to commence a long-term review of our remaining dependent territories, and I hope that that will be welcomed.

The hon. Gentleman stressed the need for the use of civilian police rather than other forms of support for law and order, and I share his desire that that process will be used. I willingly undertake to keep Opposition parties informed, as well as other hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Who will lead the Constitutional Commission? Will the Legislative Council still be able to legislate while these temporary measures are in force? What is the reaction among the islanders to these measures, which are recognised on both sides of the House to be regrettably necessary?

Mr. Eggar: We are not yet able to announce the name of the person who will head the Constitutional Commission, but we have every expectation that it will be a leading Caribbean statesman. We also hope to appoint to the commission a citizen of the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Legislative Council will remain in place, but the Governor will take executive decisions as advised by the Advisory Council, which is replacing the Executive Council as an interim measure. The announcement of the change was made in the Turks and Caicos Islands yesterday. It is now about 5 am there. The initial reports are that developments have been generally welcomed by the vast majority of the population.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I welcome the statement and endorse the Government's action. It is obviously right to purge Ministers who do not behave themselves. Does the Minister agree that the only long-term hope for the economy of the islands is development of tourism and the financial centre there? Does he agree that that can be done only against a background of international confidence? The Government's action has gone a long way to underpin such confidence.

The report contains much useful background and historical information. It merits wider circulation than the House. Will the Minister consider making it an HMSO paper? Will he examine the North Creek situation? There is widespread feeling that it requires urgent attention before the commission is put in, as there is wide scope for scandal and corruption. That issue is developed in the report.

Does the Minister agree that this is an example of why we should have a longer-term policy for smaller dependencies such as Pitcairn and Tristan de Cunha and other legacies of the colonial age? Is it not time that we had a longer-term policy to deal with such issues?

Mr. Eggar: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his support, which we value. I take his point about the future of the islands lying with tourism, and perhaps a financial centre. There is some evidence to suggest that the arrest of the Chief Minister last year, and other incidents, has led to a loss of confidence among external investors. We hope that the measures that we have announced will provide a different atmosphere, restore stability and encourage people from outside to invest in the islands in sectors such as the hon. Gentleman described.

I shall consider what the hon. Gentleman said about the report. It is bulky and lengthy, and I am not sure whether it is appropriate to make it an HMSO publication, but we shall consider ways in which to make it more generally available.

I note what the hon. Gentleman said about North Creek. As for longer-term policy, I have said that we are embarking on consideration of just that.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I congratulate my hon. Friend on the sensitive and sensible way in which he has approached this difficult problem. Will he elaborate on what he said about consultations with other Caribbean countries in the Commonwealth? What support has he received from them? I hope that he will consult them closely on how to deal with the problem in the longer term.

In his review of the constitutional arrangements in the Turks and Caicos Islands, will my hon. Friend take account of the difficulties of running an independent nation with such a small population without there being any reserve powers outside? He has had to take extra constitutional means to bring to book Ministers who have misused their powers. It is essential that, in any future arrangements, reserve powers should lie somewhere outside the islands.

Mr. Eggar: I thank my hon. Friend for his initial remarks. We have informed several Caribbean states and others of our actions. We will keep them closely in touch with developments. We intend to have the Constitutional Commission headed by a leading figure in the Caribbean. We believe that we can benefit in the next few months from help and exchanges of information with other Caribbean countries.

We have reserve powers, and have effectively exercised them by the Order in Council. My hon. Friend's general question about reserve powers is, however, something that we will want to consider in the light of the review of our future relations with dependent territories.

Mr. Mark Hughes (City of Durham): I visited the Turks and Caicos Islands a few years ago. Is the Minister aware that the previous Governor impressed on me the high quality of Ministers, the quality of whom has now been found to be less than high, coming from so small a population? Did the Government, through that Governor, receive advance advice that all was not well? Is the Minister satisfied that Club Mediterranée and other conspicious investment such as that is the best way to get over the islands' immense paucity of water and other natural resources?

Mr. Eggar: The present Governor is very well respected, and it is largely as a result of actions that he has taken that the Blom-Cooper report and other measures that I have been able to announce today have been instituted.

As for Club Mediterranée and Providenciales Island, I agree with the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) that the economic development of the islands must be associated at least in part with the development of tourism. Despite the anxieties that have been expressed by hon. Members and others about the level of expenditure on the runway on Providenciales Island, the Club Mediterranée development has been spectacularly successful. There has been a large increase in the number of beds in a short time and

[Mr. Eggar]

it provides a significant amount of employment. It is significant that that island is the most economically self-sufficient in the Turks and Caicos chain.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): When considering the problems of the Turks and Caicos Islands, will my hon. Friend remember that a mini-state such as this just does not have the internal resources necessary to deal with any serious internal or external threat? Will he also remember that a fully independent mini-state would be under constant threat from drug smugglers, the Mafia and political extremists?

Mr. Eggar: I entirely take my hon. Friend's point. I should like to endorse what he said about the considerable threat posed to our dependent territories, and to independent states, in that part of the world by the activities of drug traffickers. It is also impossible to underestimate the problems that the industry associated with drug trafficking poses.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Minister mentioned the £5 million investment and praised the current economic development that it has generated. Does he remember that, on the half-day debate on this matter on 14 March 1983, the House thought that the investment would not succeed? Will he confirm that the budgetary support that it was supposed to eliminate continues? Does he recall that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, in HC26 for 1980-81 and HC112 for 1982-83, showed that the Minister who was then responsible, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), fudged the figures to get such investment and demonstrated a certain amount of shady land development?

I welcome what the Minister said about a review. Will other Commonwealth countries be consulted?

Mr. Eggar: I do not for one moment accept the hon. Gentleman's remarks about my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley). Indeed, I notice that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), who was also a member of that Select Committee, does not agree with that interpretation of the report.

The Club Mediterranée development has produced considerable benefits for the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands in the form of taxes and employment. We shall certainly consult other Commonwealth Governments, particularly other Caribbean Governments, and keep them in touch as matters develop.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Is my hon. Friend aware that the corruption and maladministration in the Turks and Caicos Islands have been notorious for years in the Caribbean? Why have the Government delayed so long in dealing with that? Such corruption and maladministration may be commonplace in the independent territories of the Caribbean, but it is intolerable that they should have gone on for so long in a colony under direct British administration. Does it not illustrate the need for us to take a fresh look at all our dependent territories and to institute something like a council for the dependent territories to ensure that there is continuous supervision at a parliamentary level?

Mr. Eggar: I shall certainly take that suggestion into account when we go through the review of our relations with our dependent territories. Prior to Mr. Blom-Cooper's report we did not have clear or sufficient evidence of ministerial abuse on which to take firm action. It is true, however, that there were some rumours. Because the report and inquiry produced evidence of abuse that would stand up, we took the line recommended by Mr. Blom-Cooper.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Minister aware that there is nothing so pompous as a Tory Minister giving a report to the House of so-called malpractices on an island where the population happen to be black on the very day of a debate about the malpractices, political discrimination and unconstitutional behaviour of the Prime Minister of Britain? My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is just passed on with a wave of the hand when he raises that matter——

Mr. Eggar *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: I have not done yet. Get down.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) should bear in mind that this is a private Members' day, and should make his questions succinct and to the point, on the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Minister agree——

Mr. Eggar *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: I have not finished. The hon. Gentleman crawled to get that job.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: He did. He made a crawling speech.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman put his question briefly?

Mr. Skinner: Does the Minister agree that in the report that he read he referred to the Chief Minister being dismissed because of unconstitutional behaviour, administrative malpractice and political discrimination? Are they not crimes of which the British Prime Minister is also guilty? If we want to make progress in this country, it would not be a bad idea to get Louis Blom-Cooper to deliver a report on this Tory Government and get the seedy lot out.

Mr. Eggar: We can always rely on the hon. Gentleman to lower the tone of any discussion. I just hope that he will take the opportunity afforded by the recess to work out his bile.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): May I urge on my hon. Friend the desirability of giving additional financial resources to the Turks and Caicos Islands at the time of these new and welcome measures? British forces have been very effective in Belize in helping the Government there to handle the drugs problem. Will serious consideration be given to deploying British service men in a similar role in the region of the Turks and Caicos Islands?

Mr. Eggar: I have taken careful note of my hon. Friend's first point, but we must be careful about involving our forces in drugs work in Belize or other areas. The forces are really there to do another type of work. We must always bear that in mind.

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): I wonder whether my hon. Friend can help me with this matter, which he will no doubt agree has some immediacy. As the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands banned their athletes from appearing at the Commonwealth Games but have now, to all intents and purposes, fallen, can those athletes take part in the games? If so, will my hon. Friend encourage the organisers of the games to welcome them, no matter how late the hour of their appearance?

Mr. Eggar: As far as I am aware, the Turks and Caicos Islands did not have an entry in the games, so there is no point in their withdrawing or staying in.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that drug trafficking and related criminal activities affect not only the Turks and Caicos Islands, but the region as a whole? Will my hon. Friend ensure that the closest consultation is carried out with the other Caribbean Governments mentioned in his statement and with the Government of the United States of America in order to defeat such activities?

Mr. Eggar: I agree with the point made by my hon. Friend. Indeed, only three or four weeks ago I had discussions with United States Government agencies in Miami about the drug problems in the Caribbean area.

Mr. Speaker: We now return to the Adjournment motions. May I suggest that the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) and the next hon. Member to speak, the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), split the five minutes between them, so that they have two and a half minutes each on their half hours?

Cereals (Co-responsibility Levy)

11.25 am

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): I am glad to have this opportunity to conduct this important debate, and am pleased that so many of my colleagues want to stay to hear it. Indeed, if the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) leaves as well, there will be no Labour Member present to hear it. No, I am mistaken, there are two Labour Members present, and I am grateful to them for that. This subject is important. The previous Adjournment debate was raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—an extreme pessimist who looks very much at the past. I am an optimist and I prefer to look to the future, and particularly to the EEC's agriculture policy. However, I must say that I see there the same sort of Scotch mist and gloom as the hon. Member for Linlithgow saw elsewhere. Trying to reorganise the EEC's agriculture policy is like working in a shadowy dream world, where our limbs are ineffective.

Our debates in the House need to be directed not just at our own Ministers but, rather, at the Ministers of our Common Market partners. The CAP system was not designed for Britain. The circumstances that it was arranged for have changed. French agriculture has been dramatically modernised. German agriculture and its social needs have been protected. Europe is now producing large surpluses, and reform of the system is urgently needed. However, I do not see the necessary European political will to change that system. Perhaps that is why I seem to share in the sort of gloom spread by the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has received a grossly unfair share of personal criticism during the past year or two. I do not believe that the institutions involved with agriculture fully understand the need to work together and to direct our shots at the EEC. The co-responsibility levy for cereals increases my pessimism. That levy will not reduce overproduction or improve the efficiency of our agriculture. It may raise revenue for the EEC Commission, but it should not have been accepted, and I very much regret its introduction. Its introduction came about in an unfortunate way. I am told that the Commission had the documents and plans ready for this scheme in January and that, as our Ministers have told us, our Government resisted such a levy until the last possible moment. It was introduced by a statutory instrument that was laid on 15 July, no fewer than 15 days after the levy came into effect. For that reason our industry has not been able to prepare and there has been no advance warning to the trades related to agriculture.

I represent one of the largest concentrations of dairy farmers in Britain and I recollect with some sorrow the introduction of milk quotas. In most cases the quotas have settled down remarkably well, but the way in which they were introduced made it difficult to get a system that was fair, fully understood and capable of working in an equitable way. I am sorry to say that I see the same pattern in the introduction of this levy.

Surely the Ministers who run the Common Market must want to run it and to affect the businesses in their countries better than this. What is the purpose of this levy? We were told originally by the Commission and the Government that it would be a way to tax surplus cereal production and to reduce prices for the benefit of cereal consumers. A levy of £3·30 per tonne will not do that. Tax will be raised by the processor and in the end it will probably be paid by the consumer. I shall come back to that in a moment. I do not think that there will be a reduction of cereal prices that will benefit cereal consumers.

If it will not achieve that, perhaps it is designed to reduce cereal production. As I have said, that is a proper objective but I do not think that it will happen as a result of this levy. It may even encourage an increase in cereal production. It will be a petty annoyance and be too small to have any great effect upon production. If that was the aim, it would have to be achieved through the price reduction mechanism and by a really savage act. Cereal growers would have to be influenced when they made their plans before planting their corn, that is to say in the long-term rather than at the last minute. The levy would provide some revenue for the Commission but I am not persuaded that for that reason alone it is a good idea.

Let us look at the effect upon farming. We are told that this levy should cut prices for farmers who produce grain but it will not necessarily do that. More likely, it will be passed on as a price increase to the consumer, especially the livestock farmer, who will have to bear the brunt of this tax. I looked at the price of grain the other day and noted that it had already increased, taking into account the tax that has now been introduced.

The levy will have a detrimental effect upon the small and medium-sized family farm producing pigs and poultry. Such farms will be hit quite hard and, if they can, they will turn to cereal substitutes. The burden of cereal surpluses will again be shifted, but will not be dealt with on an EEC basis. Either way, I do not envisage any cut in production arising from the levy. It discriminates against those who are able to process cereals and those who buy in feed for livestock. Farmers who have to do that will suffer serious discrimination.

I shall turn now to look at the effect upon the grain trade. Integrated grain users who produce, process and use grain on their own farms will be exempt from the levy, provided that their farms are within a radius of 15 miles. Outside that radius all grain processed will be subject to the levy. That discriminates against the compound feed industry, as the people who work in that industry will lose turnover as more milling takes place on farms. I see no result other than an increase in the amount of grain used by producers themselves and this will create great distortions in the grain trade.

If there were other justifications for this levy it might be necessary for an industry to have to adjust to distortions, but to have it imposed in this sudden, arbitrary way is unfair. Perhaps when she is replying to the debate my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will tell us her expectations about the effect of the levy and about the revenue that it is likely to produce for the Commission. I and many people affected by this levy fear that the amount it will produce will be much lower than expected, and that next year that will result in an application for an increase in the levy.

Grain merchants do not wish to become tax collectors and are rightly concerned about the administrative burden they will have to bear. For them, this is yet another tax.

I know that my hon. Friend and her Ministry are conducting discussions with the grain trade. Perhaps she can tell us the latest state of those discussions and how far her Ministry will be able to reduce the administrative burden that merchants will have to bear.

The exemption of mobile mill and mix companies which travel around mixing grain for farmers is considerable. Some of these companies are very big and this large exemption will considerably distort the trade. I hope that my hon. Friend will bear that in mind. I also fear that the small processor will come under yet another pressure because this exemption will encourage the growth of giant companies which may grow even more, eat up the smaller processors, and regain an increasingly dominant position in the market.

As I have said, the statutory instrument laid last week covers the introduction of this levy. It contains extremely tough powers relating to the production of documents and wide powers concerning entry into premises. I am sure that my hon. Friend will say that it is necessary to have such powers to police the levy to ensure that it is fairly and properly extracted. The powers are similar to those given to VAT inspectors, and I regret that it should be necessary to take further powers of this kind. There are still considerable opportunities for fraud and for ways around the rules that have been introduced. It is extremely hard to assess what a pile of grain lying in a farmer's yard or grain bin represents. What will it cost to police this system? Does my hon. Friend have in her Ministry sufficient experts to do the job?

I see nothing responsible about this levy. It will not attack the basic problem of overproduction of grain within the EEC and I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister is concerned about the prospect of about 80 million tonnes of grain in intervention stores by 1991. That prospect still faces us and is not diminished by the introduction of this levy. It is a tax mainly upon the livestock producers, and it will hit the small family farms rather than the large ones. It has been introduced at the request of the Commission. I regret that we did not have the opportunity to discuss it and prepare the industry for it.

I conclude as I began—I do not believe that the levy is necessary. I hope that my hon. Friend will reconsider the matter and do what she can to reduce the impact. I hope that she will answer some of the points that I have put to her today.

11.40 am

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Peggy Fenner): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) for giving us the opportunity for a further discussion about the cereals co-responsibility levy this morning. No one would deny that the levy is a major new factor affecting the operation of the cereals market, and it deserves our most careful consideration.

The levy will require changes in trading practices and, inevitably, there will be a period of uncertainty before it fits into the trading routine. I pay tribute to the good will and co-operation that we have received from trade organisations in dealing with this subject. We have striven to keep them informed of the twists and turns in the negotiations, while they have made sure that we understand the practicalities of the levy implementation so that we can operate a feasible system.

I emphasise that none of us in this House favoured the introduction of a levy on cereals. Although it has a similar effect to a price cut on the producer, it does not have the same advantage to consumers as a price cut across the board. But in the negotiations in the Council of Ministers, my right hon. Friend had to recognise the importance attached by so many other member states to the levy. It would clearly form part of the price-fixing package which, in other respects, was consistent with our aim of bringing the market into better balance. In those circumstances, our best course was not to remain inflexibly opposed to the concept, but rather to try to change the proposal so that it was less discriminatory against the United Kingdom. That we did. The exemption from levy for sales up to 25 tonnes, which would have discriminated against the United Kingdom, was dropped and the application of the levy to all sales into intervention meant that it had much more the effect of a direct price cut, which would have been our preferred method. Instead of the United Kingdom having to contribute a greater proportion of levy revenue than other member states—as would have been the case under the original proposal—we now estimate we will pay levy on about three-quarters of our production, which is the same proportion that the Commission expects for the Community as a whole.

Some may, of course, doubt whether other member states will enforce levy collection and contribute as they are meant to do. But as a significant proportion of the levy will be collected on sales into intervention and on export, which are already subject to official controls, and as any member state not collecting the levy will be subject to disallowance, I do not think that is a point that should be over-emphasised. We will make sure through the Commission that we receive data on levy collection in other member states. We are confident that we will be able to ensure that it is collected in the United Kingdom.

There have been many complaints—and my right hon. Friend raised it today—about the confusion caused to the trade by the delay in reaching agreement on the implementing regulations. We regret these delays very much, but to some extent they are unavoidable when 12 member states have to agree. We did press hard for early finalisation of the rules and only when the Commission rules were finalised at the end of June were we able to draft our own statutory instrument, which we then did as quickly as possible in order to lay it before the House well before the end of the Session. Throughout the period of uncertainty we kept in close contact with the trade organisations involved.

I cannot pretend that all the delays and uncertainties are now over. Clearly a scheme like this will, I am afraid, throw up problems for some time to come. Only yesterday in Brussels a series of changes was adopted to the regulations that were agreed so arduously at the end of June. These measures will not require any change in the way in which the levy is to be applied in the United Kingdom. In fact, they bring the Community rules closely into line with the guidance that we issued last week to clarify uncertainties surrounding who would be exempt from the levy. I, my colleagues, and officials in the Department and in the intervention board will continue to work to solve any remaining problems, to the benefit of those affected, just as quickly as we can.

I appreciate that, whatever guidelines are drawn up, there will inevitably continue to be complaints about distortion. It would be impossible to avoid some degree of

[Mrs. Peggy Fenner]

discrimination unless the levy were applied to all production or to all cereals acreage. That was clearly not negotiable. In its present form the levy is bound to discriminate between those able to process cereals on their farms and those who rely on bought-in feeds. It is also bound to discriminate against the compound feed industry because it encourages more milling on farms. But our aim has been to minimise this discrimination and the arrangements now adopted mean that all grain processed for sale will be treated in exactly the same way and that the exemption of on-farm use is on a logical and reasonably clear basis.

I am not surprised that the practicalities of the current scheme have been questioned on the issue of passing on the levy to the producer, while collecting it from the processor. This is certainly a thorny problem, because, particularly when feed grain is sold off the farm, it will not be known whether its use will ultimately be subject to levy. It is a problem that we have talked through at length with the trade and with farmers. Clearly there are a number of ways in which the requirement that the levy should be passed back to the producer could be fulfilled, but that is largely a matter of presentation rather than economics. The key to the economic impact of the levy is that it is collected on all sales into intervention. As the market for grain is supported by the intervention price, this means that the market price of all feed grain will fall, regardless of its use. There is no reason why one processor should be prepared to pay more for his grain than another just because he is exempt from the levy. The benefit of exemption from the levy therefore accrues to the use of the grain, and the only way of passing that benefit back to the cereal producer would be by making the user pay more. As well as posing enormous administrative problems, that seems wrong in principle and inconsistent with the intention of the Council when it agreed to impose the levy.

While I do not want to minimise the traders' worries, I must stress that this is a matter of how the documents relating to transactions in grain are presented, rather than a real economic problem. It seems to me that such a problem is best handled by farmers and traders themselves, and that this is something with which the Government should not become involved.

My hon. Friend made a particular point about the small farmer. The United Kingdom receives more than 5 million ecus out of the 120 million ecus that the EEC gives to small farmers—and that is basically with a national flexibility as to the definition.

My hon. Friend also asked what would be the estimated income levy. The EC estimates that it will be about 650 million ecu or about £400 million in a full year. That is in the EC, but the yield in the United Kingdom depends on the harvest. My hon. Friend expressed concern about administrative costs. Like any other provision which affects trade in CAP commodities, administrative costs will have to be absorbed in trading costs. My hon. Friend also asked about mobile mill and mix units. Those will be exempt so long as the equipment is rented by the farmer using them. If they were not exempt there would be discrimination between those farmers big enough to operate their own equipment and those who cannot afford to operate their own equipment.

I assure my hon. Friend that we shall continue to monitor the operation of the levy closely from all points of view. We shall do our best to ensure that any new problems are sorted out as quickly as possible and we shall go on when the House is no longer sitting and I hope that when the House returns it will find that the grain market has adjusted fully to this levy placed upon it.

Jarrow and South Tyneside (Housing)

11.50 am

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I welcome this opportunity to deal with housing in my constituency in south Tyneside. May I preface my remarks by saying that today is the last day for the last steel plant in my constituency? The rolling mill in Jarrow closes today and 250 men will join the already too long dole queues in my constituency. It is rather ironic that today is the 50th anniversary of the Jarrow march, as a result of which industries were eventually sited in Jarrow.

Housing is a problem in Britain, not just in Jarrow or south Tyneside. In 1986, over 1 million British households are living in homes considered unfit for human habitation. A further 250,000 have nowhere to call a home. Many more live in homes that are considered habitable but with leaky roofs, damp walls and serious overflow.

If Britain were too poor to provide for those families, that would be a misfortune, but not only is this nation rich in economic and human resources, but millions of pounds are held by local authorities which they are not allowed to spend, even though they raised it for the specific purpose of investing in public and private housing stock.

There are in Britain 1·2 million people on the council waiting list; 250,000 are registered as homeless; and there is £3·5 billion in the banks from the sale of council houses. Almost 500,000 construction workers are unemployed and the total cost of dealing with disrepair, unfitness and defects in our total housing stock is estimated at about £50 billion.

The Secretary of State for the Environment is visiting my constituency today. Unfortunately, he will not be looking at the housing stock. He is going for another purpose. I applied for this Adjournment debate to draw to the Government's attention the deteriorating position of housing in south Tyneside where my constituency lies, as does the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). Both he and I have frequent meetings with the authority to discuss this particular concern.

The Government have constantly argued that they need to control local government spending. They have particularly argued that they need to control local authority spending on houses. They claim that to provide homes for those who need them is wrong because it leads to inflation. I disagree with that argument. It is eminently suitable to provide homes for those who need them. I go further. I regard a decent home as a right for everyone. A decent home is a basic need like proper food or good health and to claim that we should not build homes for people who need them because it may lead to inflation is morally indefensible. The Government seem to have no moral scruples and base this matter on purely financial grounds.

But it is not true to say that housebuilding by local authorities leads to inflation. Local authorities do not contribute to inflation by using their own capital and revenue to build homes for their own people on their own land using their own labour. Yet the Government pretend they must prevent councils doing that.

In south Tyneside there are 7,200 applicants on the council waiting lists. That does not mean 7,200 people; it means that 7,200 families require accommodation. That includes individuals, single-parent families, pensioners and others. They are desperately looking for someone to help them get a decent home. If South Tyneside local authority was allowed to do so, it would provide homes as it has been providing well designed, soundly built and traditionally constructed homes for many years. These would be homes for families, single persons and the elderly. The authority has provided 34,000 homes. Last year, because of Government restrictions, the authority built the magnificent total of 47 houses.

When I was chairman of the housing committee less than 10 years ago, the council built more than 7,000 houses a year. That made an impact on the waiting list. Under this Government, the authority built only 47 houses last year and this year it will complete 26. There is no shortage of labour, as there are plenty of unemployed tradesmen. There is no shortage of expertise. The record shows that houses can be built under a decent Government. There is no shortage of land. The council has sold land to private builders because the Government will not allow the authority to develop that land. Indeed, one of the prime sites in Jarrow, the Croft terrace school site, has been sold to private builders for development. That site would have been ideal for pensioners' bungalows as it is in the centre of town, near the shopping centre. However, because of Government restrictions, the authority has not been allowed to build and the land was advertised for sale to private builders.

What can the Minister tell the 7,200 applicants on the waiting list? Will he tell them that the Government think that they should wait a little longer? At the current rate of building, they will have to wait 276 years for a house. I appreciate, as a former chairman of the housing committee, that the waiting list is not static. I accept that waiting lists change. However, the Government are hoping that waiting lists will magically disappear when everyone becomes a house owner. The Government are determined to make house ownership compulsory.

I have no objection to people owning their own home. I built my own home. It took me 15 months. I worked in the shipyards during the day and I left every night and at the weekends to build my own home. That was quite an achievement and it gave me a lot of satisfaction. However, not everyone can do that.

South Tyneside council has sold 4,300 council houses. If it had been able to re-use the money from the sale of those houses, it would have been able to provide more homes for those on the housing list. The Government have said that it cannot do that. If the problem was simply the 7,200 applicants on the waiting list, that would be bad enough, but that is not the only aspect of the problem. Last year, the council rehoused 800 families from the waiting list on relets, yet they built only 47 houses. A further 1,310 families joined the waiting list. The list was increased by 510 families. The current building rate and the relets will not even meet the annual increase.

Not only are fewer houses being built; the existing houses are getting older. The sale of the better houses means that fewer houses are available for relets. The long-term, traditionally built houses are becoming defective and must be demolished. The council is being hampered in carrying out that operation because of the cut in its housing investment programme allocation. In 1986-87, the HIP allocation for south Tyneside was £5,840,000. That was a reduction of £560,000 on the 1985-86 allocation.

That may not appear to be a large amount, but it is a vast change when viewed in the context of the allocation

[Mr. Don Dixon]

of £14·3 million in 1979-80 when I was chairman of the housing committee. Since then, the HIP allocations have been reduced every year. In order to keep pace with inflation, south Tyneside would have needed £27 million in 1986-87 in comparison to the 1979-80 figure. In all, the authority has lost £69 million over the years. In addition, the council received £7 million in subsidies in 1980-81. Today, it has not received a penny in subsidies.

Recently the Department of the Environment asked authorities to complete a questionnaire about defective buildings. That revealed that, nationally, approximately £20 billion must be spent to improve housing. South Tyneside requires £15 million. More than 99 per cent. of dwellings in south Tyneside are currently occupied. That is a credit to the housing department and to housing management. There is a void rate of less than 1,000. In the private sector, the void rate is 4 per cent., according to the figures released by the Department of the Environment. Virtually all the buildings provide accommodation for someone, but it is not all satisfactory accommodation. Those buildings may count as housing units in the Government's statistics, but they will never be homes. I am talking not about statistics or housing units, but about families of people in the homes to which they have a right.

Precast concrete housing of the Orlit, Airey and Dorvians type were built on the cheap to make profits for industry. South Tyneside has 2,700 houses of this type and the council has already demolished 450 Orlit houses. The problems caused by that type of housing show the foolishness of building down to a price rather than up to a standard. That is the result when pound notes are regarded as more important than human beings. That is where Governments—I do not blame this Government alone — went wrong, making councils build precast industrialised housing with flat roofs. When I was leader of Jarrow council and chairman of the housing committee, we were told by the Government, and by the Labour Government, to build housing with flat roofs because it would save £147 per house. Councils are now having to live with the results of that foolishness.

Penny pinching by Governments has created the problem that local authorities have to put right today. To deal with the 2,700 precast concrete houses in south Tyneside would cost at least £25 million. Those dwellings need to be substantially renovated or demolished, as the Government apparently agree — but only for private owners lucky enough to receive grants from the council's dwindling HIP allocation. When will the Government acknowledge that authorities must be given the resources to deal with the problems of the houses that they own before the buildings literally fall down around their ears?

Another problem on south Tyneside is defective wall ties caused by the use of black ash mortar in the 1920s and 1930s. The cost of putting that right is at least £1,000 per house and if the outside leaf has to be taken down the cost is at least £7,000. I am informed that it would cost £6 million to put those houses right.

Jarrow has only one high-rise concrete block in the centre of the town and another in Hebburn, but there are many medium-rise blocks with concrete stairs, communal entrances, ramps and refuse areas. The council needs finance to put those problems right, but the Government's only response is to set up yet another body of experts—the urban housing renewal unit — to collect expertise from authorities and consolidate it in a glossy magazine. Funds are then distributed to authorities prepared to sell council housing stock to private builders. That money comes from the local authorities in any case. More than £50 million of the national HIP allocation has been creamed off by authorities politically responsive to the Government's offer.

The Government claim to be committed to a policy of rehabilitation rather than new building. They maintain that the preservation of communities in improved dwellings is infinitely preferable to bulldozing them to make way for new housing, and to some extent I agree. Indeed, that is one of the first things that we did; in 1979 I had the honour on behalf of the council to receive from the then Minister an award for the St. Paul's road development in Jarrow. The council has rehabilitated many of its houses as well as building new ones.

More than 800 private tenants in south Tyneside still have to boil kettles for a bath and more than 1,200 occupiers of private dwellings still have outside WCs. That is only a small proportion of the 1 million dwellings in the country that lack amenities, and an even smaller proportion of the 3 million dwellings that are known to be in a state of gross disrepair. Those people look to the Government and the local authorities for help, but unfortunately receive none.

Because of the cut in the HIP allocation, south Tyneside has had to restrict improvement grants to owner-occupiers — those in private dwellings. There is a six-month backlog. The council allocates only £1·5 million for mandatory grants or repair grants, so 500 people are waiting to improve their houses. Because of the restriction on finance, south Tyneside has to tell them that there is a six-months delay.

The stupidity of all that, apart from the human misery, is that it does not make economic sense to stop giving grants. Many houses in the older areas could make good family homes. Many have already been improved with grant-aid, but potential for further improvement and finance already invested is being put at risk by the Government's shortsighted policies. The Government claimed to be committed to housing improvement and the need to improve inner city areas, but they misled the local authorities on that. The Government encouraged authorities to embark on improvement programmes, but now apparently they have changed their mind. Previously, the local authority could help private tenants when the private landlord refused to face up to his responsibility for a sub-standard house. As a last resort, the local authority could purchase the dwelling by agreement or by compulsion, and then improve it. Now authorities are forbidden to purchase by agreement. In any case, they do not have the resources to do so.

Also related to improvement aid previously given to provide basic amenities is mortgage assistance. In South Tyneside and, indeed, in many areas in our region there is a type of house called the Tyneside flat, consisting of two-storey terraces with a separate flat on each floor. Traditionally, they were sold in pairs so that the owner-occupier of one was the landlord of the other. Many have been handed down through the generations and many are owned by the elderly. South Tyneside, by providing council mortgages, has assisted many of those elderly owners to repair and improve their property. Because the building societies would not give mortgages for that type

of house, those people had to rely on the council, but since the reduction in funds the council's finances have been too limited to continue assistance through mortgaging.

Because of the restriction in finance and the cutback on house building, the authorities have attempted to use existing stock to the best advantage, but again that has been hindered. In south Tyneside there are 3,506 households in council stock that is unsuitable for their needs. Elderly tenants in three-bedroomed houses would like bungalows. I have a surgery tomorrow in Jarrow, and I have no doubt that many elderly people will come to me and say, "Can I put my name down for one of the bungalows in Burn Bede road?" They want a bungalow, but the council is prohibited from building those houses. The council could use the larger houses for families. Many of the elderly people who come to see me at my surgery are too frail to manage the stairs and want bungalow accommodation, but it is not being provided by the council because of the Government's cutback. Thus two sets of households suffer. There are many single people occupying a family house in my area. For example, when her family has left, a widow might still be in the family home. Such people want a decent bungalow in the area where they have lived all their life. That is the sort of thing that south Tyneside wishes to provide.

South Tyneside has a massive housing problem. As I said, 7,200 families are waiting for houses and 3,506 families are waiting for transfers. The council has the officers who are capable of designing and managing those houses. It has the construction workers, who are now on the dole, who are capable of building those homes. It has the councillors who wish to provide homes for those who need them. All that is required is for the Government to release finance or let the council use the finance that it has raised from the many council houses that it has sold. If the Government were to do that, the council could get on with the job.

Councillor Elliott, the chairman of the housing committee, and Mr. Jack Brown, the housing director in south Tyneside, are doing a magnificent job with the resources available. The councillors are doing a magnificent job, and so are the housing officers, architectural staff and everyone else. However, finance is needed. I offer an invitation for the Minister to pass on to his hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction. We would welcome a visit to south Tyneside so that the Minister responsible for housing can look at the magnificent job that those people are doing with the limited resources. They require some Government finance or, perhaps, the release of their own finance so that they can provide houses for the people in south Tyneside.

12.10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): I congratulate the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) on the way in which he has presented his constituents' case and on drawing the attention of the House to the housing problems in his constituency. I shall of course pass on his invitation to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction. I know that if he can fit it into his diary he will be delighted to visit the area.

Before I turn to the specific problems of Jarrow, I shall deal with some of the more general points touched on by the hon. Gentleman in his opening remarks. The hon. Gentleman is a fair man and I am sure that he will agree that the problems of disrepair, especially in the public sector stock, have not simply arisen over the past few years. Sadly, they are the result of many years of underspending on management, maintenance and repair. Because of the concern we felt, we initiated a survey last year, through the local authorities, which came up with the figure of £19 billion to put the disrepair right. We then increased the provision for housing investment this year by £200 million to take account of the backlog and to try to make a start in putting it right.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about reductions in public sector investment in housing. The major reductions in public sector investment in housing took place under the previous Administration. The figures he used, which contrasted the allocations for 1978-79 with the allocations for the current year, left out of account capital receipts. As he said, there have been substantial capital receipts and the local authority can supplement its HIP allocation with the prescribed proportion of capital receipts. That factor is far bigger than it was in 1978-79. Simply comparing the allocations between now and then ignores that and gives a somewhat distorted picture.

The hon. Gentleman also fairly pointed out the decline in the number of new houses built by local authorities. It is generally accepted by both sides of the House that the real emphasis should now be on making better use of the stock we have, tackling the problems of disrepair and improving and converting the existing stock rather than embarking on a somewhat expensive programme of new build. Given that many properties are empty, the top priority is to bring those back into use and restore the missing amenities, about which the hon. Gentleman spoke movingly, rather than, as I said, embarking on a new programme of build for rent.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about specific groups such as the homeless, the elderly and the disabled. We have asked the local authority to concentrate its resources on those groups for whom it is difficult for the private sector to make proper provision.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about unemployment. One interesting development over the past few years has been the growth of community refurbishment schemes whereby those who are unemployed can, through the community programme, work on improving their estate, sometimes doing unskilled building work or environmental work or installing security systems. That is one area that the Government are interested in pursuing.

I shall now move to the more specific problems that the hon. Gentleman touched on. Jarrow shares many characteristics with the rest of the South Tyneside borough council. I am heartened by the sensible and constructive attitude of the borough council towards the improvement of housing conditions and diversification of housing opportunities within its area.

The borough council has clearly set out policy objectives. One of the main objectives is eliminating substandard housing and ensuring an adequate provision of new housing. That includes widening the housing choice in the borough and encouraging self-help groups.

In south Tyneside at present, nearly 50 per cent. of the housing stock is in local authority ownership. Therefore, there is scope for private sector resources to be harnessed and used to help finance the improvements and rehabilitation required and the borough council has adopted and demonstrated a pioneering approach.

[Sir George Young]

South Tyneside was the first authority to launch a self-build programme and the hon. Gentleman explained how he had built his house. In his area there are a number of schemes whereby skilled tradesmen and labourers work together as a team to build each other's houses. The final cost of the houses is some 25 per cent. lower than similar houses on the open market. In that way people can be taken off the council waiting list and, through their own endeavours, become house owners. The borough council started the eighth such scheme in March 1986 and has recognised the approach as an alternative method of financing housing construction.

South Tyneside has also shown a positive approach towards tackling the problems of difficult-to-let estates. Some six years ago the borough council converted unpopular three-storey flats and maisonettes at Queens road, Jarrow, to two-storey self-contained terraced houses with gardens at front and rear. At the same time it improved housing management techniques, remodelled the estate layout and improved the environment by landscaping and other works. Some properties were improved for sale, with priority given to existing tenants. The advantage is that the local authority gets some money from the sale of the properties and it meets its housing needs because existing tenants are offered the properties, so it gets a useful relet without expending part of its valuable HIP allocation.

Mr. Dixon: When I was chairman of the housing committee the Queens road area was a difficult-to-let area. The houses had flat roofs, so the council erected pitched roofs and improved the area, so that it is now a success. I appreciate the Minister's comments about it. However, south Tyneside council still has many houses with flat roofs which cause problems, and give tenants all sorts of anxieties.

Sir George Young: I hope that it will be possible to pursue that approach elsewhere. If some of the properties can be improved for sale, the demand on the council's HIP allocations will be less than if they are improved for rent. I understand that the scheme has been successful and has transformed a run-down estate, resulting in popular dwellings in a good environment.

By releasing land for the private sector to develop low-cost starter homes and small family homes specifically targeted at first-time buyers, the council has further helped to widen the choice of tenure. In that way it has been able to offer people on housing waiting lists the opportunity to own their home.

In 1985 the private sector started 292 new dwellings and completed 346. If one considers the total picture, it is fair to include private sector starts, together with public sector starts. Nationally known builders, such as Barratts, are providing a range of housing types, and local developers, such as Lemmington Estates, are building low-cost starter homes and small family homes.

At the other end of the market an attractive large site for detached and semi-detached executive housing at Cleadon park is to be released by the local authority. It will be the first such development in south Tyneside and will be within the hon. Gentleman's constituency. Its release will further widen the housing choices available within the area.

The borough council has a long record of allowing tenants the right to buy. Since April 1979 it has sold almost 4,700 council houses, more than 13 per cent. of its original housing stock. The capital value tied up in both land and houses has thus been realised, and the council has been able to reinvest the prescribed proportions of those receipts in its capital expenditure programme. The hon. Gentleman argued that it should be able to spend more. He may know that at present we are considering the whole system of capital allocations for local government to see whether we can come up with a better system.

The Government are committed to widening the opportunities for home ownership. I was pleased to hear the hon. Gentleman endorse the philosophy of home ownership. It results in advantages for individuals in a property-owning democracy. The success of those measures demonstrates that the people of south Tyneside and Jarrow agree with our philosophy and are willing to take responsibilities to meet their housing needs, given the choice and opportunity.

Mr. Dixon: The reason why 7,200 people are on the waiting list is that they cannot buy a house and do not have a mortgage. They require rented accommodation which is why they have applied to the council for it. Unfortunately, the council has not been allowed to build rented accommodation for them.

Sir George Young: The approach that I have tried to outline is that if the local authority can make available to builders in the private sector land upon which to build, on condition that the properties are offered either to people on the housing waiting list or to existing council tenants, the council gets the benefit of the relets or of the reduced pressure on the waiting list without having to dig into its own housing investment programme allocation. That is the kind of approach that the Government have suggested, and in fairness to south Tyneside it has adopted it. I suspect that there are quite a lot of tenants in south Tyneside who are interested in becoming home owners but who do not necessarily want to buy the property in which they live. That kind of approach has considerable possibilities for them.

As for the public sector housing stock, we want, if possible, to reduce reliance upon public sector expenditure and subsidies by encouraging private sector involvement in housing renewal. In that way we can bring resources to bear more quickly and help to tackle problems at an early stage. The hon. Member for Jarrow referred to the urban housing renewal unit in my Department which I set up a year ago to try to engage the interest and resources of the public sector to turn round some of the difficult-to-let local authority estates. There has been a good response to that initiative from local authorities of all political persuasions.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that this is not just about privatisation. Of the 25,000 properties that have been helped or that are about to be helped under the scheme, privatisation encompasses only about 1,000, so we are interested in proposals for improving the estates. It is not a precondition that any part of an estate should be sold off. We are not dogmatic about it and I hope that the local authorities will not be dogmatic about it.

An early example of the type of scheme which the urban housing renewal unit is advocating was undertaken by South Tyneside borough council at the Hepscott estate, to

which the hon. Gentleman referred in his speech. Here several terraces of 1880s houses in local authority ownership had become unpopular because of poor location and structural faults. Having considered various options, the council decided to sell the estate to a private builder for refurbishment and sale at low cost.

The developers, Bellways, were able to remove unsatisfactory prefrabricated extensions, knock two units into one to create larger dwellings, repair the structure and services and instal new bathrooms and kitchens. Externally, private back gardens were created and traffic was diverted away from the estate. All the houses were sold quickly to first-time buyers. That scheme was described in the glossy publication to which the hon. Gentleman referred, the booklet entitled "New Homes for Old." It illustrates very well the progress that can be made when a local authority is prepared to join forces with the private sector to tackle the problems of run-down housing.

Members of my unit team visited south Tyneside in October last year and were very impressed by the Hepscott estate and also by the intensive management arrangements at Cumberland court in Hebburn new town which has improved a difficult-to-let eight-storey block of flats. In December, the unit invited south Tyneside to apply for an additional HIP allocation — the £50 million represents additional resources, not something that is provided at the expense of the basic allocations—relating to the capital expenditure element of any housing improvement scheme that is approved by the unit. I understand that an application for a grant towards the cost of renovating the flats and maisonettes in the Grange court—North court development in Jarrow is under consideration.

That initiative by the unit will enable local authorities to combine capital funding from an additional HIP allocation with, in some cases, urban programme funding and, in other cases, funding under the community refurbishment scheme. This harnessing of expenditure programmes to tackle the problems of an area is imaginative and it is not new to south Tyneside. We have pursued it elsewhere.

The hon. Gentleman referred to specific problems, and first to wall tie failures. He rightly pointed out that the failure of the metal wall ties between the inner and outer leaves of cavity walls of traditionlly built dwellings is now a major problem in the district and that early estimates of the replacement cost are about £6 million. The hon. Gentleman also referred to system-built housing. The borough council inherited about 2,750 non-traditional housing units, one of the highest totals in the northern region, including Orlit, Sheppards, Myton, Skarne dwellings, Wimpey Mo Fines, Spooner, BISF and Airey. You name it, south Tyneside appears to have it. The majority of the Orlit houses have been demolished. The council's policies for most of the other types have yet to be decided, but, as with the wall tie failures, these are matters that we shall take into account in the discussions that are beginning with council officials about the HIP allocations for next year.

Assistance to private housing development is also available through urban development grants. A scheme of 18 flats for sale at Mill dam on the riverside at South Shields is being built by the Northern Rock housing trust with the help of an urban development grant. Another large private housing project is being considered for a site in Hebburn, but no urban development grant application has yet been submitted to my Department.

The hon. Gentleman said that there has been a considerable reduction in resources for capital spending on housing. As I said a moment ago, gross provision for local authority capital expenditure was increased by £200 million to £2·5 billion for the current year. However, because of the need to allow for the increasing spending power available to authorities from their capital receipts, the national total for HIP allocations was reduced from £1,600 million to £1,465 million.

We recognise the special problems of south Tyneside, not least those associated with system-built dwellings and the council's responsibilities under the Housing Defects Act. The HIP allocation of £5·8 million was a lower reduction compared with the regional allocation as a whole. I must say that £5·8 million is a considerable sum of money. A proportion of it can be used to lever in private sector funding to help tackle many of the problems described by the hon. Gentleman. The borough council of South Tyneside has already demonstrated many different approaches to tackling the problems.

Officers of my Department in the urban housing renewal unit are always available for further talks with the local authority to promote good housing initiatives. In the light of what the hon. Gentleman said, I shall take a special interest in the HIP allocations for south Tyneside in 1987-88.

Birkbeck College

12.26 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I am grateful for the opportunity to debate the future of Birkbeck college in the University of London. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsburg) also hopes to catch your eye during the debate, Mr. Speaker, and my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) has told me that, although he is unable to be here today, he supports what I have to say. Many of his constituents, like mine, are past, present and prospective students and supporters of Birkbeck college, and they wish him to express his support for it.

I left school at the age of 15. It was a very good school, but that was the end of my school education. The war was on and all London schools and university colleges had been evacuated. I got a full-time job, but I aspired to higher education. Only one college of London university then remained in London. It was sited in Breams Buildings, just off Fleet street. It was founded in 1823 by George Birkbeck to teach arts and sciences,

"during the hours of the evening."

It has continued to provide part-time evening study for adults for 163 years. Of the 2,794 students at the college last year, 91 per cent. were part-time students in full-time employment.

In 1941 the blitz was on every night so, characteristically, Birkbeck opened all day Saturdays and Sundays. It had a distinguished academic staff, including such well-known names as Dr. C. E. M. Joad, Professor J. D. Bernal and Professor E. G. R. Taylor. I obtained permission from my employer to have Saturday mornings off in return for working later during the week. I joined hundreds of other Londoners of all ages, paying the fees myself and participating in all the college and student activities. Those were exciting and rewarding days for me.

Eventually, I got an intermediate degree, by means of which I was able, after war service with the Royal Air Force, to go on as a full-time student to London and then to Oxford universities and to be called to the Bar. The House will understand that I have a great affection for Birkbeck and that I owe it a debt that I wish, if possible, to repay.

The concept that it serves is one that should be applauded by the Government, for it enables men and women whose education has been interrupted or foreshortened, or who are late developers, to aspire to higher education by their own efforts at their own expense. The student body at such a college is of high quality in every way. Birkbeck graduates achieved a higher proportion of first-class degrees in 1984 than any other London college, except Imperial. Birkbeck was operating for the benefit of the likes of me for over 150 years before the Open University was even thought of, and the College of the Air is an even later comer.

Now Birkbeck is in great difficulties. The finances of this excellent institution are arranged by a complicated formula based on full-time equivalents and organised between the University Grants Committee and the Court of the University of London. The present crisis started when the UGC made known on 20 May 1986 that it had employed a national standard conversion factor of 0·5 per cent. for all part-time students. When applied to Birkbeck, that would have meant a major drop in the college's funding base line over four years, which could not be less than £2 million by 1989-90. Last year, it received £7·7 million. This year it may get only £6·2 million. Neither the college nor the University of London could be expected to replace lost income on this scale.

There has recently been a review of the position and the conversion factor has been raised, but the result is still a prospective cut of about 21 per cent. in Birkbeck funding, which could eventually cause the closure of the college. That would be a tragedy, and a humiliation for the Government and the principles for which they are supposed to stand.

Why is the conversion factor operated in this way? Is it because 91 per cent. of Birkbeck's students have full-time jobs? Do its laboratories, lecture halls and academic facilities cost less to acquire than in full-time institutions? Mr. Michael Prouse, in the *Financial Times* of 23 July, wrote:

"The overall cost to the economy of a Birkbeck education is only about a third of that at a normal college."

Is that a good reason to reduce the state's investment in this college?

Is it wrong that students should pay for their education? On the contrary. We need more part-time students paying their own way and earning their own living, and not fewer. If we had more, we would have fewer problems with full-time students, because they are subsidised by the taxpayer and expect to be kept in funds even during the vacations. Birkbeck students do not even get tax relief on fees that they pay for tuition. If the Government really believe in an enterprise society, they should encourage, not discourage, hard-working mature students who strive to help themselves and find a solution that will encourage Birkbeck to continue and expand its good work.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, who I am glad to see on the Front Bench, said in a letter dated 9 July:

"It would not be right for the Government to intervene in internal university decisions."

That may be so, but the Government have a duty to see that Birkbeck survives and, what is more, that it is encouraged.

It is an ill wind that blows no good. All the publicity about Birkbeck has demonstrated what an excellent institution it is and how it could be used to further the Government's education programme. A mere reprieve is not enough. The task of defining a new role for the college is beyond the purview of London university and the UGC. The problem should be tackled in the context of the work of the Open University, the home counties polytechnics and the needs of the secondary school system for better teachers, especially in the hard sciences. There is overlapping and duplication amounting to over-provision in some subjects in the south-east, yet, as the Tight report on part-time degree-level studies in the United Kingdom shows, provision is patchy and inadequate away from the south-east. There is a real job for a committee to do. It need not take long, however, because all the required data are readily available.

At the college, the faculties of arts and of social sciences could phase out bachelors degree courses, except in psychology, and possibly the history of art, and offer only taught masters degree courses and research facilities. Birkbeck, the Open University, the London Institute of Education and the home counties polytechnics could then collaborate to provide fresh courses of general degree

standard in the science subjects which are taught in secondary schools, starting with physics and mathematics, in which the shortage of school teachers is critical.

A combination of distance learning, face-to-face evening teaching and full-time vocational work could be developed. Generous incentives could be offered to serving teachers of arts subjects who want to convert to science teaching. Mature new entrants could receive graded financial support amounting to a full teacher's salary if pedagogy is intercalated full-time in school term time. A five-year guarantee of employment could be offered to those who complete the course successfully. The departments which undertook that role could retain facilities for masters degree level teaching and research. Other science departments could be transferred to other colleges of London university.

Those are just suggestions to illustrate that, far from there being a case for closing Birkbeck, there is an opportunity to develop it and make it serve the role for which it was devised 163 years ago, and which it can and has so successfully fulfilled. Birkbeck is known to and trusted by the teaching profession. It is to have a new Master from October next year. Given a newly-defined role, proper financing and a realistic scheme of student support, Birkbeck could make a major contribution to a critical situation in our secondary schools.

For all those reasons, I ask my hon. Friend to persuade his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to intervene in this matter. I urge him not to sit back and allow a tragedy to occur, but to ensure that this excellent institution continues its good work, and is positively encouraged to do so.

12.40 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) for allowing me to intervene in this important debate. I wish to make just two points, as my hon. Friend has already put the case exceptionally cogently. However, I shall confine my remarks to the present.

I appreciate that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will give the stock answer that a Department of Education and Science Minister has to give, namely, that the Department must not interfere with the UGC. However, I hope that he will convey to it the strength of feeling in the House over one of the most inept and stupid decisions that it has ever taken. The UGC tried to justify it, as my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington said, by changing the conversion factor. Having received a deluge of protests from hon. Members representing London and elsewhere, it thought again and rejigged the conversion factor. It thus showed that it is just tinkering in order to try to justify its original foolish decision.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will not let the UGC get away with that, and that he will indicate as firmly as possible that the House does not accept that sort of argument. As my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington said, Birkbeck may have a different role in future. However, I am pleading for the present.

12.41 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. George Walden): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), both for the careful and reasoned case that he has presented, and for taking the opportunity of bringing the affairs of his old college to the detailed attention of the House. It is a matter about which many hon. Members are concerned. There have been a stream of questions, and my postbag has been full of letters about Birkbeck. That is a tribute both to the pulling power of the college and to its pushing power. The college is also fortunate in having in my hon. Friend not only one of its most distinguished alumni but a doughty champion. I have also received personal representations from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) is interested in the debate and shares the concerns that have been expressed.

If I had not already been very well aware of the valuable work undertaken at Birkbeck and of its special role in the teaching of part-time students, I would be a new convert now. As it happens, I needed no convincing. No doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington saw me nodding vigorously at some of the points that he made. He is quite right. Some splendid work is done at Birkbeck. Many people would be a good deal worse off but for the opportunities that the college has provided and which, let me make it quite clear, the Government hope that it will go on providing.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not ony individuals who will be much worse off if Birkbeck is not allowed to continue as at present, or cannot function as well as it has done? Institutions, particularly schools and universities, and many commercial organisations that have profited from the added qualifications that people have obtained following part-time courses at Birkbeck, will also suffer.

Mr. Walden: The normal response would be to say that I was about to make that point, but I was not about to do so, and I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for adding to our debate in that way.

Most of what has been said in recent weeks has been about Birkbeck's value as a teaching institution. The UGC's recent assessments of research quality reveal beyond doubt that the college is more than that. Research in six departments — psychology, crystallography, geography, economics, the history of art, and philosophy — was assessed as of above average standard in the United Kingdom. A good part of the rest was judged to have research of around average standard. Birkbeck clearly has academic strengths in both teaching and research.

Perhaps I may now turn to the cause of the recent controversy — funding. It is not a straightforward tale, so I had better tell it in full. In parts I shall be reiterating what my hon. Friend said. I hope that he will forgive me, but it is important that all the facts are laid out clearly. In a number of respects this is a field in which honest men may differ, but it should be on interpretation that they differ, not on facts.

There is considerable irony in the fact that all the disputation is rooted in a decision by the UGC, as part of its current major planning exercise, to increase the resources allocated to part-time students. Previously, the unit of resource used for funding part-time students was lower per full-time equivalent student than that for full-time students in the same subject. The UGC decided that

[Mr. Walden]

this discrimination should stop and that henceforth the same unit of resource should be used for full-timers and for part-timers on equivalent courses.

Many commentators have accused the UGC of introducing discrimination against part-time students. Its intention, as spelt out in circular letters to universities, was quite the reverse. However, when the UGC came to put that intention into practice some difficulties arose. The increased unit of resource had to be multiplied by the full-time equivalent of part-time student numbers, and when the committee examined the full-time equivalent figures submitted by universities, it had some doubts. These doubts arose because, in submitting their figures, universities had used conversion factors ranging between 0·2 and 1. The committee had insufficient information and time to examine these more closely if it was to announce its overall grant allocations in May. Therefore, it decided that it would be fairer to use a common conversion factor of 0·5 for part-time students at all universities. With hindsight, as Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer has freely acknowledged, that was a mistake. However—and here I come to the second important point—it was not a mistake that was wrapped up and conveniently buried.

The UGC's resource allocation procedures are now much more open than previously. The committee explained to all universities precisely how it had allocated resources for part-time students, and, because of the concentration of such students at Birkbeck college, it particularly drew this to the attention of London university. Not surprisingly, it was not long before Birkbeck college realised that the implications of the UGC's approach were not to its advantage. It protested, and at a meeting between London university and the UGC on 11 June the committee agreed to review the matter in the light of further information about Birkbeck to be submitted by the university.

A month later the UGC announced the twofold outcome of this review. First, it decided that for 1986-87 its grant to London university in respect of Birkbeck should be calculated on the same basis as in previous years, and thereby that the total grant to London should be increased by £600,000. Secondly, and perhaps more important, the committee decided that from 1987-88 part-time students should be resourced on exactly the same basis, taking their course as a whole, as full-time students on equivalent courses. That means that if a part-time course at a university takes six years to cover the ground in a three-year full-time course, students on the part-time course will in future be weighted as 0·5 full-time equivalent.

At Birkbeck, undergraduate courses are normally four years while taught postgraduate courses are of two years compared with the normal one year full-time course. The weightings attracted will thus be 0·75 and 0·5 respectively. Information on the normal period for postgraduate research students at Birkbeck and for all classes of students at other universities is not currently available, and that explains why the UGC is not introducing this new approach until 1987-88.

Several commentators have dismissed the committee's approach as simplistic. It is not for me to defend it in detail, because that is the committee's business, but I should point out that arrangements with a strong underlying rationale are often simple. For someone watching from the sidelines, like me, there certainly seems to be a sound and reasonable basis for the UGC to say that the most sensible approach is for it to provide the same sum of money for a particular type of course whether it is taught full-time or part-time. Those who believe otherwise will need to deploy detailed arguments to prove a different case.

From the Birkbeck side I have heard a lot about the Ashby formula. On inquiry, I discovered that that formula weighted Birkbeck undergraduates at 0·8 and post-graduates at 1, that it was derived from a 1967 report and that it originally related solely to accommodation requirements. Before such a formula can be accepted, it seems to me that someone has to produce strong arguments that the situation has not changed in the past 20 years and that an assessment based on accommodation requirements can equally well be applied to overall funding.

The other main Birkbeck argument is that because the college has so many part-time students it incurs certain costs disproportionately which, in universities with fewer part-timers, can otherwise be offset against full-time costs. But at this point Birkbeck omits to mention that it is part of London university. Although the college is an important institution in its own right, part of its strength, academically and otherwise, surely lies in it being part of the university also.

In fact, the university's role is quite central in this whole affair. The UGC pays a block grant to London university, and it is for the university court to determine how much is allocated to each of its constituent colleges, schools and institutes. The UGC provides the court with information on how the total grant was calculated, but the court is free to adopt quite different criteria in its own internal distribution of funds.

In recent years London university has allocated well in excess of £1 million more each year to Birkbeck than the UGC had allowed for the college in its block grant. It is because the university court has decided to reduce that supplement in 1986-87 that the grant to Birkbeck will fall by 5·5 per cent.—despite a slight increase in what the UGC has allowed for the college within the block grant.

The university argues that this action is forced on it by the stringency of the Government's funding policies generally. I shall come back to that point in a moment, for there is another aspect that also deserves mention. London university has been very active in rationalising its provision and in taking a whole host of measures to ensure that its available resources are used as effectively as possible. I applaud that, and there are a number of other universities that could well learn something from London. My point, however, is simply that if Birkbeck, as it claims, incurs costs which at other universities are not a charge on part-time provision, there may be some scope for increasing the co-operation between Birkbeck and other London colleges so as to spread those costs. Let me say rapidly that I do not know whether such scope exists, and I certainly have no package of new joint arrangements to offer. I suggest simply—as the UGC has already—that this is an area which should be investigated.

Before I dig myself deeper into territory which is not the Government's direct concern, let me return to some of the general issues. My hon. Friend will have heard me say on a number of occasions that the Government have a good record on student numbers. Home full-time numbers have increased by almost 80,000 since 1979 and the proportion

of 18 and 19-year-olds entering higher education has increased by an eighth. All very well, one may say, but in the context of a debate on Birkbeck, what about mature students and part-timers? Well, the news on those fronts is good, too. The number of mature entrants to full-time courses has increased by 15 per cent., and the number of part-time students is up by 60,000. Those figures speak for themselves. In describing the whole ethos of part-time education, my hon. Friend will be gratified to learn that it is vey much on the up and up. The Government's clear aim is that there should be yet further increases in the whole area of continuing education in every form.

Finally, I return as I promised to the general question of university funding. The Government have already announced their willingness to increase financial provision for the universities—provided that they demonstrate real progress in implementing and building on the changes that are needed. These changes include better management, improved standards of teaching, selectivity in research funding and rationalisation of small departments. We shall be discussing the way forward with the University Grants Committee and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals over the next few months, before future public expenditure plans are finalised in the autumn.

If the universities do commit themselves to the necessary changes, extra funds will be forthcoming. Without doubt some part of that addition will be allocated to London university. Together with the UGC's new arrangements for the funding of part-time students, that should help Birkbeck, but I stress that, whatever the level of funding, there will always be a need to get the relationship between full and part-time funding right, and that is what this dispute is about.

Mr. Stanbrook: Before my hon. Friend sits down, will he say something about the possibility of using Birkbeck, with its excellent traditions and high quality education, in the Government's future plans, especially to meet the particular problem in secondary schools by producing more science graduates?

Mr. Walden: As I believe a Welsh poet once said, I was coming to that.

My hon. Friend's typically imaginative suggestions about the Open University, the London Institute of Education and Birkbeck will be noted by the Government and certainly by the University Grants Committee which, in my brief experience, makes a habit of keeping a close eye on all debates on this subject in the House. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making such an interesting and constructive suggestion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) accurately anticipated my reply that this is an area where the prime responsibility is with the UGC and the universities concerned rather than with the Government, but he, too, made the point that he hoped that the UGC would take note of the representations being made in the House, and I can assure him that, on my experience, that will certainly be the case.

Finally, I point out, with all due respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington, that there seems to be no basis at all for the horror stories in the press about the possible closure of Birkbeck college. It is by no means the Government's wish that that should happen—quite the contrary. Our hope is that the good work done by Birkbeck will continue and that the college will continue to offer what are necessary opportunities for part-time study.

Coal Supplies (South of Scotland Electricity Board)

12.56 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I welcome the opportunity to raise in the House the agreement on coal supplies between the National Coal Board, or British Coal, as we now choose to call it, and the South of Scotland Electricity Board. That title is a little different from that on the Order Paper where the electricity boards are listed in the plural, but the obvious concentration is on the agreement that I understand was concluded on 2 July between the NCB and the South of Scotland Electricity Board on coal supplies.

The broad compass of that agreement shows that for the year 1986-87 the NCB will undertake to supply and the SSEB undertake to take something like 3·6 million tonnes to the year ending March 1987. That is in the public domain. What is not in the public domain is the price at which that agreement or quantity has been concluded. Therefore, we are a little suspicious about the Government's overall attitude and inter-relationship with the boards as to any measures that the Government might take or make to sustain coal output in Scotland.

I want to look briefly at the pattern of coal consumption by the SSEB over a varying period of years. If we take the average over the four previous years, the consumption by the SSEB has been in the region of 4·5 million tonnes. A longer time scale, over about 10 years, would give us about 6·4 million tonnes. However, if we take the coal and slurry delivered in 1985-86, the total taken by the board was 7·6 million tonnes Therefore, a straight interpolation of figures would give us a reduction against the 3·6 million tonnes of 4 million tonnes. The 7·6 million tonnes for 1985-86 reveals a level of restocking after the miners' dispute. It would not be unfair if we considered the range of reduction over the period to be between 2·5 million tonnes and 4 million tonnes. I shall not be surprised if the Minister disputes these figures when he replies. However, I would be grateful if he could give us his figures of the reduction in coal uptake by the South of Scotland Electricity Board.

What are the reasons for this reduction? Obviously, there are short-term market considerations. I have examined table 9 in the current issue of "Energy Trends". That table shows the figures for February to April 1986. I have deducted the England and Wales figure from the total United Kingdom figure in that table. That may be something of an interpolation. However, I suggest that the figures show that there has been a drop of nearly 44 per cent. between February and April in coal consumption by the SSEB and an increase of oil consumption of around 50 per cent. That appears to confirm reports that the SSEB is leaning in short-term considerations towards cheaper oil.

We all know that it is very difficult to forecast energy trends. I became interested in energy and specifically in oil matters in the 1960s. I have tried to keep up my understanding of what is happening in that market ever since. I remember a conference in London in December 1973 when I put a point to Sheik Yamani——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): Name-dropping.

Mr. Douglas: That is not name-dropping. Ministers must not put their prejudices on other people. They must try to resist that temptation.

I told Sheik Yamani that OPEC was embarking on a policy that would be severely detrimental to western industrial economies and to the international economy. He gave me a succinct reply. He said, "What do you want me to do? When someone offers me $15 for a barrel of oil, should I say no, I only want $10?" Repartee is the answer which you think of on the way home. I could not think of an immediate response to the Sheik. It is very difficult to think of an answer to that question, even today. However, the tables have been somewhat reversed. OPEC would now like to get $20 a barrel but because it cannot get its act together, the world is offering about $10 a barrel.

It would take a brave man to forecast the price of oil in six or 10 months' time. A few years ago people said that oil prices would double in real terms by the end of the century, My bookshelves are littered with books and studies by people of great repute worrying about a shortage of oil in the latter years of this century. That worry has now disappeared. I am not sure whether that is a short or long-term view, but it is extremely dangerous to suggest that the United Kingdom can operate wholly on market considerations in terms of energy policy.

We might arrive at the wrong energy policy but the Government do not have any kind of energy policy. I echo the words of the Fraser of Allander Institute:

"The drop in oil prices is the biggest immediate threat to the coal industry."

That drop imposes a temporary strain on the coal industry. It could be long-term unless the Government take action and give guidance.

What is the Government's attitude to the boards, especially the South of Scotland Electricity Board, reacting to the temptation to bring in cheaper oil-fired power stations at this time? What is their response generally and what discussions are taking place between Ministers? In this context, I welcome the presence of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland.

My. hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has been kind enough to give me a copy of a letter from the Secretary of State for Scotland dated 22 July. There has been a great deal of quoting both in and out of context in the House recently, but I hope that I shall not be accused of quoting the Secretary of State out of context on this occasion. In that letter the Secretary of State seems to take the view that

"The SSEB, like British Coal . . . must"—

I emphasise the word "must"—

"operate in the market as it exists at present."

What are the implications of that? Does it mean that the future of the coal industry in Scotland will be subject to short-term market considerations? If so, what view do the Scottish Office and the Department of Energy take of oil prices? The House deserves an answer. If the Government say that the industry must be subject to market considerations, what is the Government's view of the market? If the Government intend to adopt an arm's length position and say that that is a matter for the boards, what is the function of the Scottish Office and the Department of Energy? It is important to consider also how that view fits in with the longer-term attitude of other industrial nations inspired by the International Energy Agency which has sought to persuade industrialised

countries in particular to reduce their reliance on oil. Are the Government contracting out of that? The House and the nation are entitled to know the Government's view.

If the Government are adopting an arm's length, hands-off attitude and the Secretary of State for Scotland wishes his words to be taken literally, the whole Scottish coal industry is under threat because, despite improvements, it is a marginal coalfield with high production costs. I have put the point extremely fairly and we are entitled to a reply from the Minister. The recent agreement for 3·6 million tonnes shows the pressure placed on the coal industry by international oil market considerations. I do not expect the Minister to tell us today the price that has been negotiated, but if the price reflects international oil market considerations the Scottish coal industry will be denied the cash flow that is essential for future investment. Although the impact on individual pits is a matter for the Coal Board to determine, the Government must surely have a view.

I give a preliminary welcome to the change in management that is shortly to take place in Scotland. Mr. McAlpine is due to take up his duties on 1 August. We naturally give him a welcome. With great respect to Mr. Loudon, who is a gentleman with whom we have had many good discussions, the previous incarnation, Mr. Wheeler, was not beneficial to good industrial relations in the Scottish coal industry.

What cash flows are likely to be forthcoming to Mr. McAlpine through British Coal for investment in the Scottish coalfield? I am always hesitant about mentioning pits and activities in other hon. Members' constituencies. I welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who has miners in his constituency as well, but I think that it is only fair for me to ask: what are the implications in terms of investment policy for Seafield? We understand that some negotiations have been under way with the miners' union. What decisions have been made? What discussions have there been about Solsgirth? Over the water, what discussions and considerations have there been about Monktonhall and Bilston Glen, and, indeed, the Ayrshire coalfield?

I should like to refer to two pits in my area. The first is Castlehill colliery. During the strike, it was the subject of much publicity. There were photographs in the paper of the pit under threat. I visited the colliery on several occasions. It was saved by the activities of two individuals in particular—not constituents of mine, but constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill). That pit is returning to good productivity—indeed, excellent productivity. What have those two individuals got for their pains? Despite winning their cases in front of an industrial tribunal, they are still out of employment with the Coal Board. At present, if my figures are reliable, over 120 people who were dismissed during the strike are still not re-employed.

The second colliery that I should like to mention is Comrie. I was down in that pit a few weeks ago. I would not say that it would be the best job in the world. The face that I crawled along was in a pretty bad state. However, the longer-term prospects for that colliery will not be there at all unless there is investment in the five-ft seam. I am a realist. One should be honest and truthful with the 500 men who are there. I would not argue that people should work in terrible conditions just to have a job, but one cannot destroy men's bodies and morale by asking them to live from hand to mouth. They have to have a view of the longer-term employment prospects. The Minister and the Coal Board should give that now. Over and above that, I plead with the incoming director to wipe the slate clean in regard to good industrial relations in Scotland by bringing all those men, many of whom won their cases at an industrial tribunal, back to employment.

Something else that might have an impact on employment is the possible, indeed probable, bringing on stream of Torness. This is not the place or the time to develop all the arguments about nuclear power. I know that Scottish Ministers would say, "If you do not bring Torness on stream, the price of electricity will rise dramatically in Scotland." That may or may not be so. It depends on how one spreads the cost—whether it is on the SSEB's books or throughout the nation. But it would be prudent to call a halt to bringing Torness on stream in the light of what has happened at Chernobyl. Each day in the press there are new revelations about Chernobyl.

I put it to the Minister that the long-term prospects for new nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom are not good. I do not think that any Government could now embark—I will not anticipate the Sizewell conclusions—on getting sites in Scotland or anywhere else for new nuclear power stations. Thereafter, we have to turn back to coal. Indeed, the power station in my constituency, Kincardine, which is under-utilised, is an admirable site for the future development of a further coal-fired station. The problems of planning permission and other difficulties do not exist.

Perhaps I am asking for the moon. However, the Government, the SSEB, and the Scottish Office should be turning their minds to refurbishing stations such as Kincardine. I am not speaking for the Labour party in terms of policy but I am saying that we cannot subject coal mines and the coal industry in Scotland to short-term market considerations because one cannot mothball coal pits and then expect them to be brought into production over night.

In terms of morale, we have to have some guarantees for the present 6,000 to 8,000 people. The Government's policy if I read it right, allowing short-term market considerations to operate, would mean that the whole of the Scottish coal industry would go to the wall. We require some reassurance from the Government and some indication of what discussions are taking place between the Department of Energy and the Scottish Office.

1.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): I congratulate the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) on having been successful in securing this debate. The coal industry in Scotland, and its relationship to the SSEB, is clearly very important, and I am glad to have this debate.

In opening debates of this kind it is always difficult to strike a balance between recognising the contribution of the hon. Member and making life difficult for him in his constituency because of an excessive amount of praise from a Conservative Minister. However, I shall pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman. He is undoubtedly one of the energy experts in the House, and he is extremely diligent in promoting the cause of the dismissed miners. During the debate he managed to deliver a powerful plea for them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) has been in the Chamber since the start of the debate. He has listened carefully to all the points that have been raised and has expressed concern on several

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occasions about the need to guarantee the future of this important industry in Scotland. I am also pleased to see present the Parliamentary Private Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst), the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) and the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) who always expresses a great deal of interest in this great industry.

As the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West knows, I have visited the Scottish coalfield on a number of occasions since I assumed responsibility for this great industry. The Scottish coalfield—I must emphasise that I speak on behalf of my colleagues in the Scottish Office as well—is vital to Scotland. It is also vital to the coal industry and to the Government.

When I have visited Scotland, the people whom I have met have been anxious to tell me not only about what is going on in Scotland now but about plans for the future. Their determination to continue cutting costs and improving productivity is the best indicator that we could have of the future of the coal industry in Scotland. There is a great resolve among the people whom I have met to ensure that they get their industry on to a more competitive and profitable footing. I share their determination, and I believe that they can do so.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman's response to the appointment of the new director, Mr. McAlpine. I also welcome his praise for Mr. Loudon. However, he will not be surprised if I reject his criticism of the gentleman who I believe to be one of the most able directors in British Coal, Mr. Wheeler. A great deal of unwarranted criticism has been made of the recently concluded deal on coal supplies that has been struck between British Coal and the South of Scotland Electricity Board. I was pleased to hear that those two great industries had reached a mutually satisfactory outcome.

In the past, Labour Members have urged the Government to step in and tell the industries what to do and to impose some sort of rigid policy within which they must operate. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman strayed into that in his speech. There seems to be a feeling that the Government can see more clearly than anyone else what will happen in the future and should produce a formula that waves away the problems. I assure the House that the Government recognise that the long-term interests of industries, including nationalised industries, are best served if they are free to behave in a way that conforms to their commercial judgments and interests. That is how they will succeed. The SSEB and the NCB, trading as British Coal, have reached a satisfactory agreement which provides the prospect of a reasonably stable long-term coal take through to the mid 1990s and beyond.

The new agreement relates to the SSEB's requirement to meet the Scottish demand for electricity. In the present financial year the SSEB will purchase 3·6 million tonnes of coal from British Coal. That figure cannot be compared with the level of coal taken by the SSEB in the past, because it takes no account of the amounts taken into stock or of coal for use in exporting electricity to the CEGB system. In 1985-86 the SSEB total coal take from all sources, excluding coal slurry, was 7·2 million tonnes, of which 6·6 million tonnes were supplied by British Coal and 600,000 tonnes by private coal producers. The SSEB's total coal consumption was 6·3 million tonnes, of which 1·1 million tonnes related to exports of electricity to the CEGB. This year the level of electricity trading between the SSEB and the CEGB is a commercial matter for them, and, subject to price and other considerations, I understand from both boards that they fully expect this trading to continue.

The effect of the new agreement has been to allow the SSEB to maintain the reduction of about 3 per cent. in electricity prices which it introduced earlier this year to reflect savings in fuel costs. The hon. Gentleman will agree that that is good for SSEB customers. It is important to recognise that the SSEB has a statutory duty, in accordance with an Act of Parliament introduced by the Labour Government, to promote the economic generation of electricity. In pursuing that objective the board must take full account of the relative prices of primary fuels, including nuclear fuels, to achieve the most economic balance.

The SSEB, working closely with the North of Scotland Hydro-electric Board, has a good record over the years of building up a flexible, economic, generating system. That is reflected in the fact that average tariffs in Scotland are lower than those in England and Wales. Since 1981 electricity tariffs in Scotland have decreased in real terms. The benefits of that are felt by both domestic electricity consumers and the industry. It is important that primary inputs for industry, such as electricity, are priced as competitively as possible. Cheap electricity is vital if Scotland is to expand, retain its existing industrial face and secure inward investment.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the role of nuclear power, and it has an important part to play. Without it, electricity prices in Scotland would have to rise by between 25 and 30 per cent. Power from the new station at Torness should allow the SSEB to save some £130 million in system fuel costs. I recognise that the hon. Gentleman is realistic about the need for Torness, although I would not go so far as to say he welcomed it. To abandon Torness would mean abandoning £1·7 billion of public expenditure and the prospect of cheaper electricity.

The nuclear power station at Torness should be viewed, not as a threat to the coal industry, but as a welcome further source of cheaper power. Cheap power means more demand, and more demand will increase the demand for coal, if the prices stay right. The future balance of fuels is of course a matter for the SSEB, but it will depend crucially on the pricing position.

Any suggestion that the SSEB is seeking to destroy the coal industry in Scotland is completely unfounded. It is simply not in its interests to prejudice its future supplies of coal in this way. It is obliged to provide not only an economical but a secure supply of electricity. The SSEB sees an important and continuing role for coal-fired generation in Scotland for the foreseeable future, and British Coal clearly has a vital role. A healthy, robust coal industry in Scotland is what everyone wants to see.

This Government have contributed a substantial amount of money to the support of the coal industry in Scotland. The Scottish area has sustained substantial losses in the past. To some extent, this is a reflection of the difficult geological conditions at some of the pits. However, the Scottish area is still operating at a loss. The Government have underwritten those losses through the

provision of deficit grant. In addition, substantial amounts have been made available in social grants. This, too, has benefited the Scottish coal industry.

The hon. Gentleman raised with me the question of dismissed miners. As he knows, the dismissal of miners and their re-employment are matters for British Coal. Over half of those dismissed have now been taken back by the National Coal Board. I understand that in respect of some men who have been dismissed in Scotland the NCB has appealed against the judgment of industrial tribunals. I cannot comment on those cases. More generally, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the law does not require an employer to re-employ staff where this is the ruling of the tribunal, because compensation may be paid instead and there are certain rights of appeal. It is for management to decide which course to follow in each case, in the light of relevant circumstances, and the extent to which re-employment is possible when taking into account the effect on working miners.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I have asked and encouraged the mining unions to take cases to the industrial tribunals. Will the Minister take this opportunity to encourage the NCB, as a public body, to honour the decisions of industrial tribunals, which in many cases in Scotland have recommended reinstatement for dismissed miners?

Mr. Hunt: I recognise that on many occasions the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has pressed the cause of dismissed miners. I hope that, equally, he will recognise that my right hon. Friend and I have been consistent in stating that this is a matter for the management of the Scottish area. That answer may not please him, but I hope he recognises that it is an answer that I have consistently given. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West, who initiated this debate, recognised that fact by addressing his plea more to the new director than to me. It is a matter for the director of the Coal Board and for the management of the Coal Board in Scotland.

I think that the hon. Gentleman also recognises that the future of individual pits is a matter for the management in Scotland, in consultation with the trade unions, within the general colliery review procedures. I understand that reconvened colliery review meetings at a number of pits in Scotland are planned, but that is a matter for British Coal.

All this is perfectly in line with the board's policy of open communication with its employees. The hon. Gentleman was right to stress that it is vital that the men should be told exactly what the future holds, and I endorse that. I think he recognised that I would not be predicting the price of oil either today or on any future occasion. He said that it would be a brave man who would. We have made it clear that the board, like any other commercial organisation, has to respond to the market forces that are working around it.

In conclusion, I repeat what I said at the beginning. I firmly believe that there will continue to be a steady demand for Scottish coal, not least from the electricity industry, because I believe in the continuing determination of those in the coal industry in Scotland to maintain the progress made in cutting costs and becoming more competitive. That realistic approach makes me optimistic about the future. As the hon. Gentleman knows, where pits must close — as they have always had to close — there is record investment by British Coal Enterprise in Scotland. It has invested £2·2 million of the total £15·5 million to create more than 1,100 initial jobs and 1,700 job opportunities. That presents a balanced approach to the future of the coal industry in Scotland in the light of the latest agreement with the SSEB.

Terminally Ill Persons

1.30 pm

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): The purpose of this short debate is to focus on the growing awareness of the needs of the terminally ill and to highlight some of the problems that they face. The topic has implications for social security, health services and local authority social services. We have this desperately unfortunate group of people who, it is known, are likely to die within a short period, and the perceived need is to help them to die with dignity and to assist their families to cope with the harrowing later stages of terminal disease, the fact of death and the practical and emotional problems that surround it.

In dealing with the terminally ill, most emphasis is placed on cancer patients. It is estimated that 130,000 people die each year from various forms of cancer. Sixty per cent. die in hospital, about one third die at home, and the remainder die in hospices.

In the past, people in such circumstances were left to cope as best they could. In the close-knit communities that used to exist, the presence and practical help of extended families and neighbours frequently gave the emotional and material support that was needed. Families and communities are no longer so internally supportive, and there is a need for more organised help in our increasingly fragmented society. This is just one example of new pressure and demand for service provision within ever-growing resource allocations to the National Health Service and other aspects of social policy provision.

The initial response to the problem of terminal illness came through the remarkable growth of the hospice movement, which has mushroomed throughout the United Kingdom and which provides invaluable expert personal care. In that context, it is right to pay tribute to the unparalleled work of Dame Cicely Saunders in starting and leading the movement. She perceives the need for a liaison between the hospice movement and the community and for community nursing and other social services to become involved with the hospice movement.

I mention especially the Overgate hospice at Elland in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson), which serves his constituency and mine. In its case, as in the case of most other hospices, there are significant contributions from NHS funds. Nevertheless, the hospice movement is still essentially funded from voluntary donations. The volunteers who work at Overgate put in long hours and carry out excellent work in raising the bulk of the funds. That pattern is reflected throughout the country. The public have given generously, but often the financial base of hospices is precarious. One must also mention the Macmillan fund, which does excellent work for the terminally ill, especially in providing extra nursing services and a range of welfare assistance.

A relatively new development has been the creation of terminal care support schemes. They are called different things in different areas, but their essential approach is the same. There are now over 80 support teams throughout the United Kingdom. They are essentially advisory and aim to deal with the control of pain and symptoms for patients suffering primarily from terminal cancer. They seek to offer emotional and practical support to the families and carers of the patients. They will endeavour to co-ordinate the various agencies involved, and include general practitioners, community nurses and social workers. They will act as a bridge between hospital and community-based services. They are not intended to supplant the necessary nursing and medical care, but should provide supplementary services.

Terminal care support teams aim to provide the optimal relief of the distressing aspects of terminal disease, whether those aspects are physical, social, psychological or spiritual. Often, support for the family will continue after a patient dies, and that can be very important to many people, particularly where, for example, a relatively young parent or spouse dies from cancer, as regrettably happens all too often, or where an elderly person is left very much alone after the death of his partner.

Terminally ill patients often have a three-to-six months prognosis and may well be ill for a short time. During the time of their illness, their condition can change dramatically and they can deteriorate rapidly. Because of this frequent short time span of their illness, they do not fit into the accepted categories of the disabled and chronically sick as we have recognised them in legislation. The attendance allowance, the mobility allowance and, for carers, invalid care allowance are specifically geared to the needs of the long-term sick and so the terminally ill with the three-to-six months prognosis often do not qualify.

Those who are elderly, who would not in any case qualify for mobility allowance, may at times be in receipt of a supplementary pension, which would qualify them for a series of single payments whether for additional needs or lump sum payments. The nature of their illness and the circumstances surrounding it require speedy and sensitive treatment, which may not always be readily possible in the application of the complex rules and regulations which, of necessity, apply.

The patient of working age may find that he is terminally ill and that he must stop working straight away. This produces the first traumatic experience for the family. The spouse, whether in employment or not, needs to take a considerable share of the burden of caring for the family.

In many cases, there is a regular pattern of movement between hospital or hospice and home. Patients will obviously not be left in hospital unless they need to be there specifically for treatment purposes. They will often wish to be at home if there is no need for the intensive care provided in hospital or a hospice. The transition from hospital to home and back again, perhaps on several occasions, can produce its own emotional problems.

Not all patients have such a short-term prognosis. Some are able to obtain attendance allowance or other benefits. However, the pattern of moving in and out of the caring institution then produces its own difficulties. While in hospital or a hospice with NHS funding, which is usually the case, they cannot obtain social security benefits, as the taxpayer is meeting the cost, at least in part, of their care. That makes financial planning difficult for families and may mean delays in benefit payments.

Sometimes, the variety of problems—medical, social security and emotional—means that families cannot cope at all and patients spend their last weeks, or even months, in hospital, at an average cost of £1,000 per patient per week to the taxpayer. Ideally, there would be a weekly allowance payable to terminally ill patients prior to the time when they may qualify for attendance allowance. The allowance should take account of the need for additional nursing care, extra heating, extra bedding, telephone rental if necessary and any appropriate practical

aid and appliances. A single payment to cover such items in addition to a small weekly allowance would also solve the problem.

There are obvious and enormous obstacles to such an ideal solution, even though it might save the taxpayer money and provide the financial and emotional security that patients and their families need. Any such social security support would depend on the provision of a medical certificate stating that the patient was terminally ill. The first problem is to define a terminally ill person. It would have to be a person who is suffering from a progressive disease for whom treatment is no longer curative and who is likely to die in a short time—probably six months.

Medical science has advanced enormously and it may be able to make firm predictions, but it cannot always be so exact. People are individuals. Some fight cancer successfully and win through against the odds, some fight and lose and some give in as soon as they know that they are terminally ill. If an allowance were given, Parliament would have to approve a definition, and a doctor would have to write a certificate conforming to Parliament's specification. Whatever definition was made, there would be various interpretations of it and doctors' approach to signing certificates might vary, just as it does now with sickness certificates.

A person might rightly be defined as terminally ill but be psychologically unable to cope with the fact. Any terminal illness allowance would have to be paid to the patient, so there could be adverse medical and emotional effects on some. Relatives might not be able to cope with the fact of a loved one's impending demise, and receipt of a terminal illness allowance could add to the family's trauma. Nevertheless, terminally ill people need additional assistance.

The answer might lie in the social fund, which my hon. Friend the Minister has presented to the House while piloting through the Social Security Bill. The fund has been devised as a flexible response to a variety of urgent needs. It is well suited to assessments of individual circumstances. Social fund officers, perhaps working in liaison with terminal care support teams, could respond, having to hand expert medical, nursing and social work advice. There would not be the rigidity of an allowance, but there would still be the capacity to respond to different financial, family and medical circumstances.

There is a difficulty, in that we might already be expecting too much of the social fund. It might be seen as the solution to many problems. Thus far, however, the terminally ill have been a neglected group. That is especially true of those on a short-term prognosis. They could reasonably be considered as a priority claim on the fund's resources. The solution could be the allocation of a block of social fund money to a charitable organisation, which would administer it on behalf of the Government and supplement the charitable funds that are already available, although thinly spread.

I recognise that steady improvements have been made in regard to the disabled, the sick, carers and certain groups of disadvantaged people. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and his colleagues in the DHSS have done an extremely good job in recent years. We have seen the numbers of those receiving attendance, mobility and invalid care allowances grow substantially. The severe disablement allowance has helped an additional number of people. The payment of invalid care allowance to married women has been a great step forward. The two-tier disablement premium within the proposed income support system will be of great help to many.

Nevertheless, one seeks further improvements if resources permit. The needs of the terminally ill are clear and pressing. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will acknowledge the growing awareness of that group of people, and that if resources are available it will be possible to encourage the development of more terminal care support schemes and to use the social fund to give specifically targeted help to the terminally ill and their families.

1.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) has raised a matter that touches us all, and has done so in a gentle and sensitive way. I am glad that he has had the opportunity to do so while my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) is in the Chamber. Alas, to the loss of the House, he is silenced by virtue of his responsibilities as a Lord Comissioner to the Treasury. Both of my hon. Friends have a long-standing and deep interest in the care of the terminally ill, and I am grateful to them both for the representations that they have frequently made to me in the past. The sick are, indeed, fortunate to have such advocates in the House.

Terminal illness is one of the great fears that we all have. For both the sufferer and those who do the caring, it is a time of great emotional stress, quite apart from the sheer physical, practical and financial problems that are often involved. I share the admiration expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax for the work of the hospice movement and for its growth from the pioneering work done in London at St. Joseph's. My hon. Friend also rightly mentioned the remarkable work of Dame Cicely Saunders at St. Christopher's. The St. Helen's hospice for children also provides an excellent example of the dedicated work carried out to provide a tranquil setting for terminally ill patients.

In the area represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax, and specifically I think in that represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley, wonderful work is done at Overgate hospital, Elland, where the district health authority provides £44,000 a year—the equivalent of four beds in an eight-bed unit. I understand that that authority also supports the Sue Ryder home at Oxenhope.

Important as the hospice movement is, it caters, as my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax will know, for only about 5 per cent. of those who are terminally ill. About one third of all terminally ill people are cared for at home by relatives, and it is right that they should attract our heartfelt thanks for the tasks that they undertake on behalf of their families and of society as a whole. Caring involves a commitment of time, resources and energy, often at the expense of the carer's own social or working life. It is a wholly admirable commitment.

For that reason, as my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax said, several NHS hospitals have established teams of doctors and nurses to provide practical help in the management of the patients by providing a 24-hour on-call service and a support and counselling service for patients and relatives, and also the ward staff of the hospital. In addition, they co-ordinate the smooth transfer of patients

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from one setting to another, and help to train medical students and nurses in the care of the terminally ill. There are several terminal care support teams in Yorkshire: at Pinderfield general hospital, Wakefield; the Royal Hallamshire hospital, Glossop; and at the Doncaster Royal infirmary. Hull health authority also runs such a team, which is one of a range of services that the authority has available to meet local needs by mixing home and day or in-patient care as it finds most effective.

The Department's policy on terminal care was clearly and crisply set out in the 1980 Wilkes report, which recommended an integrated system of care to be developed by health authorities, with an emphasis on co-ordination between the primary care sector, the hospital sector and the hospice movement. A current departmental initiative began last December with a conference opened by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales and addressed by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health, which was organised jointly by the Department and the National Association of Health Authorities. The conference was aimed at promoting collaboration between the National Health Service and voluntary organisations in planning and providing services for the terminally ill. My hon. Friend will be interested to know that the proceedings are to be published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Other parts of this initiative include the promotion of medical and nurse training in terminal care; a scrutiny of regional health authorities' strategic plans to ensure adequate provision for terminal care; and the preparation of guidance to the NHS on planning services for the terminally ill. The Department is also working with the National Association of Health Authorities on the publication of a guide to good practice in terminal care, aimed for the autumn.

I have been speaking about services provided by health authorities and by voluntary organisations to care for people in hospital, in hospices and in their own homes, and of our efforts to improve these services. I turn now to another important aspect of the overall support for these households and families under emotional and practical stress—financial assistance through the social security system.

Many of those who provide care are married women, and I am glad that my hon. Friend has welcomed our initiative in extending invalid care allowance to married women. This extension will give an estimated 70,000 married women carers an allowance of their own for the first time and remove the discrimination which has existed in legislation since the allowance was introduced. As the House will know, we have backdated the extension to 22 December 1984 and any claims made by married women which we receive by 31 December this year will be backdated to 22 December 1984 if the conditions were satisfied then. This is a tangible illustration of our commitment to care in the community, and I know that it has been widely and warmly welcomed as a recognition of the role of carers and of married women in particular.

I shall now turn to the new measures on income support and the social fund. My hon. Friend will know that our proposals for income support are intended to ensure that disabled people receive help much more easily. We are moving away from the system of weekly additions for specific items, which has become complex and confusing, and in which help often depends on detailed, often intrusive, questions and out-of-date criteria. We intend that in future additional help will be based on clear, understandable and objective criteria, and disabled people will receive a new disablement premium. On the illustrative figures published with the White Paper, the overwhelming majority of people who qualify for the proposed new premium will gain. On average, those under pension age will gain over £4 a week and 90,000 people will gain over £5 a week. I know that my hon. Friend, who played a distinguished part in Committee on the Social Security Bill, will welcome this.

In addition, we have recently introduced a new element to income support, directed primarily at helping severely disabled people. This is in response to concern expressed about the small group of severely disabled people, particularly those who might currently receive supplementary benefit in respect of high additional requirements for domestic assistance. We have therefore announced that an additional premium will be paid to severely disabled people who are living alone if they receive the higher rate for attendance allowance and there is no one eligible for the invalid care allowance—or receiving it—in respect of that person's need for care. In that fashion we are directing help simply and without an elaborate assessment to a group of people most likely to need extra support care. We estimate that up to 10,000 people could qualify for this extra premium.

These improvements in income support are complemented by the recognition given in the social fund to community care objectives. My hon. Friend spoke about this matter, which has been the subject of some debate and some controversy in recent months.

From the beginning we have made it clear that, while payments from the social fund for other than maternity or funeral expenses should be recoverable from the person seeking help, this would not apply to payments made for the purposes of care in the community. I emphasise that point because the social fund is in two quite distinct parts. The part that deals with community care will be determined with grants and not recoverable loans. Those payments can cover a variety of contingencies and I shall certainly look most carefully at my hon. Friend's suggestion of payments to meet special needs faced by disabled or frail elderly people who might otherwise be forced into residential or nursing home care. I reiterate that in these circumstances a payment is likely to be a grant rather than a loan and therefore not recoverable. I am sure my hon. Friend will accept that and agree that it shows our concern to ensure that cash benefits remain in tune with our wider community care objectives.

I have listened with care and sympathy to my hon. Friend's remarks about the problems which the six-month qualifying period for attendance allowance can cause when terminal illness advances quickly and there is less than six months between the onset of disability and its conclusion. The proposal that there should be an easement for terminally ill people is one which I am sure attracts great sympathy, and cannot lightly be dismissed, but, as my hon. Friend said, the problem lies in finding a workable definition of terminal illness. Somebody diagnosed as terminally ill may decline rapidly within weeks, but may—and often does, with drugs, surgery and medical care—live for several months or years and need varying degrees of care during that time.

The main focus of concern is, of course, on those who die within six months, or so soon after that that attendance

allowance offers little or no support. To extend allowance to these people would entail some system where they could be formally diagnosed as terminally ill and thereby escape the present qualifying period. That would create considerable practical difficulties, despite its attractions. In some cases, the doctor may for good reasons withhold or delay telling the patient and the relatives about the diagnosis of terminal illness, because of the belief that they would not be able to handle the explicit recognition of a situation that they might not even suspect. There is also the problem of possible time limits — should the six-month qualifying period be waived only if death is expected within, say, a year or some other period? In many cases, doctors would be reluctant to commit themselves to such a firm prognosis, and, even if they could be persuaded to overcome that reluctance, there would be practical difficulties, a number of which were set out by my hon. Friend, if the prognosis proved incorrect.

We have considered very carefully the representations made to us. I fear that I can only confirm that we have found no workable departure from the principle — accepted for many years by successive Governments — that attendance allowance is for the additional costs arising from long-term disability, and that this necessarily entails a qualifying period of, currently, six months. I have no doubt that this is one of many aspects which the Government will have to look at again in their comprehensive review of benefits for disabled people, which we have proposed should take place when we have the results in 1988 from the current survey by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

The care of terminally ill people is clearly a deeply important and emotive issue, and I am glad that my hon. Friend has provided this opportunity to set on record what is being done. Obviously there is much more that can be done, but both in the field of services and of cash support we have substantial improvements in hand. But none of this can replace the care and devotion of both family and relatives in the home, and of skilled staff in hospitals and hospices, and it is right that I should close as I began by putting on record the debt of gratitude that we all owe to them.

Metropolitan Police

1.58 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The last words spoken in Parliament in this Session will be on the Metropolitan police. Had I been able to make the speech I wanted to in the debate on 11 July, there would have been no need to have applied for this Adjournment debate. That was not possible because there was not time. Members could take only a few minutes each, and some could not speak at all. That graphically underlines how woefully inadequate that annual debate is. It is farcical to pretend that it constitutes any form of proper accountability.

All authority in a democracy has to be legitimate and accountable. At present, the formal position is that the Metropolitan police is accountable to the Home Secretary, and through him to Parliament. That is the theory. The commissioner, when reporting to the Home Secretary, signs himself, "Your obedient servant". What has become clear to me as a London Member of Parliament is that this is hopelessly out of date and inadequate in modern circumstances. Parliamentary questions are frequently sidestepped, and no one can pretend that the annual debate we have had in recent years could conceivably constitute the effective police accountability we need.

We are obliged to ask: is there any accountability at all? It is certainly minimal as far as Parliament is concerned. There can be no doubt that things cannot be left like that. Parliament will have to devise another, better, more effective and more democratic system. Nor is there any reason to suppose that it will be against the interests of the police to have that, or that they would object. Doubtless we shall have to wait until after the next general election and a new Government for that.

Policing, particularly in London, is becoming increasingly problematical and complex in our modern society, especially since the huge increases in crime that we have seen since the Government took office and the collapse of their policies on law and order. Crime has increased by over 40 per cent. since 1979, including theft, burglary, violence to the person and criminal damage.

Last week, the report of the chief constable of Greater Manchester, Mr. James Anderton, said:

> "Burdens on the police have grown against the background of alarming unemployment . . . of more telling significance, from the standpoint of law and public order, is the fact that the figure for long-term unemployment among"—

what he called—

> "the crime-prone younger age groups . . . ranges from 50 per cent. to a staggering 80 per cent. or more."

He spoke of the difficulties

> "where almost the entire population is out of work and living on social security."

Unemployment, of course, cannot be blamed on the police. But they understand how it creates the conditions that nurture crime and disaffection. In "Thatcher's Britain", where bitterness and frustration are created among people living without hope in a society which rejects them, the fabric of that society can be ripped violently apart in disturbances, as we have seen. Those disturbances do not take place in the Home Counties or the wealthy constituencies of Home Office Ministers. As the poet Benjamin Zephaniah puts it,

> "You don't riot if you have a nice job and home to come home to at night, You don't riot if you are well fed And unemployment does not pressure your head ..You don't riot

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

if you have your share and by chance you have a lot You don't riot with a big bank account. With American Express you can always bail out."

But some people cannot bail out. As "Thatcher's Britain" becomes more unpleasant, more violent and more brutal, there are those in authority who see increased use of the police as the remedy to social problems and industrial disputes. They want to transform the nature of the police service and to escalate its use of force. The talk is of armoured cars, water cannon, CS gas, plastic bullets and NATO helmets. Instead of the neighbourhood bobby or the citizen in uniform, we are to have a paramilitary force to suppress the symptoms of social stress caused by Government policy.

As my text for this part of my remarks, let me give the words of David Webb, the ex-commander in Handsworth with 27 years in the force, writing recently in the Police Federation magazine. He said:

"We can only succeed if we retain the co-operation and collaboration of the public. We must not allow political parties to divide the police from the community they serve, or use them in a reactive way to keep the lid on a society angered and frustrated by their neglect."

He went on to say that he had campaigned to retain the traditional police role and that he thought that the vast majority of police officers preferred that.

However, David Webb is now out of the police and it is the paramilitary role that is being emphasised. Units now exist, equipped, trained and prepared to use unprecedented and quite frightening degrees of violence. They have already been deployed with great brutality against ordinary people such as trade unionists. That is a deplorable development.

It is not anti-police to discuss this. If we are to debate these matters rationally, it is absurd to do so in simplistic terms of being for or against the police. It is absurd to believe that the police, alone among our institutions, should be immune from scrutiny, investigation and accountabilty.

We must consider what sort of policing we want, how the service is run, its relations with the public that it serves and who pay for it, its effectiveness and to whom it is responsible. Only simpletons believe that to subject the police to scrutiny is anti-police. On the contrary, it is our duty as Members of Parliament to do so. The day that we are frightened to do so will be the day that we take a long stride towards a police state.

To say that the police never fall below the standard of perfection would be as silly as to say that they are all part of a conspiracy against the rest of us. I speak with feeling because I witnessed this paramilitary policing and excessive force at Wapping on the night of 3 May. I was shocked and appalled by what I saw and I have not yet recovered from that experience. I do not need to recapitulate all that happened on that night for I gave a full account to the House on 8 May. Suffice to say, the print unions had organised a May Day parade—as they had a perfect right to do—to greet those who had marched from Scotland in support of 5,500 of their colleagues who have been robbed of their jobs by Rupert Murdoch, a conscienceless industrial mugger if ever there was one.

There were two parades of men, women and children as is traditional. The police were waiting for them in ambush, already tooled up and raring to go. They needed no excuse. An incident occurred which lasted seconds. Immediately, and without any warning, the mounted police charged up and down the road called The Highway scattering everyone—men, women and children—who had come for a traditional May Day parade. They cleared the road and forced the people into Wellclose street and Wellclose square, where they constituted no conceivable danger to anyone. Then a squad of riot police who had been waiting in their outlandish paraphernalia appeared from Virginia street. They were just a few yards from me. They were in a "V" formation, evidently psyched up, jumping up and down with wild looks on their faces waving truncheons. Upon a signal, they charged into the people, knocking men, women and children to the ground indiscriminately. They regrouped and inexplicably, with no possible justification, repeatedly launched further baton charges causing many serious injuries and casualties among completely innocent people.

Most inexplicable of all, people were not allowed to leave Wellclose square. They were penned in, imprisoned by police, and subjected to repeated baton charges in a sickeningly brutal fashion for some two hours. I could not believe what I was seeing. I never thought that I would see anything remotely like it on the streets of London and I have not yet recovered from the shock. That is why I am making this speech. As a parliamentarian, it is my duty to do so.

I took a deputation, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), the constituency Member, and trade union leaders to the Home Office about this matter on 8 May. We saw the Minister of State. He told me that he

"accepted that there had been severe damage and injury to innocent people."

He also said that

"the police were only entitled to use minimum force."

Well, they used very much more than that. I have a record of what was said at that meeting taken by one of my colleagues. Brenda Dean is a moderate and measured lady, not given to hyperbole. She is reported as stating:

"Ordinary law-abiding citizens have been alienated against the police. People were in fear of their lives from the activities of the police on the evening in question. The police had clearly over-reacted."

Brenda Dean added that she was

"prepared to give eye witness evidence at any tribunal that was called."

She said

"People do not take their children to an event that is determined to be violent."

Brenda Dean said that she would welcome an independent inquiry into the policing of that evening.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene and I endorse every word that he has said as I was also there on 3 May. I was injured trying to escape from being run down by a police horse. Does my hon. Friend accept that it is the role of the police at least to be able, if necessary, to absorb a certain amount of intimidation or offensiveness from a crowd? I can tell the Minister that I saw a couple of missiles thrown at the police. The next thing that I saw was exactly as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) has described. There was an over-reaction. The police were wearing the kind of equipment that would allow them to absorb a certain amount of aggravation in a disciplined manner, before they reacted in the way that they did.

Mr. Leighton: My hon. Friend and neighbour is absolutely right. The police are now very highly paid professionals and we expect them to make an intelligent response, but their response that night was neither intelligent nor commensurate with what had happened and it was the police action that caused the problem. That is why I am making this speech today.

When the deputation met the Minister of State, the general president of the National Graphical Association, Bryn Griffiths, asked why the police kept people trapped in Wellclose square for approximately two hours. He told the Minister that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) had asked Inspector Goodall to remove his men so that people could leave the vicinity in a peaceful fashion but that the request was refused. Mr. John Gelelt, London region assistant secretary of the NGA, informed the Minister that access for ambulances to tend injured demonstrators was refused and that one ambulance was attacked by a policeman. Additionally, he and the general president had seen a television crew attacked by the police.

The Minister of State said that it was essential that a report of the meeting went to the police, adding that the permanent secretary would be seeing the commissioner the same afternoon to give a verbal report. The Minister stated that the unions had the right to demonstrate but that he did not feel it right to set up an independent inquiry and that his intention would be to have an internal inquiry.

We must make it clear that there is no confidence whatever in any internal inquiry. Why can we not have a public inquiry? What are the Government and the police afraid of?

Chris Robbins of SOGAT made the point that in relation to a police inquiry it is most difficult to identify police officers without numbers or means of identification. The Minister asked specifically whether the riot police had numbers on their uniforms and was told that they had not. The Minister said that for police officers to be on duty without numbers being shown was against regulations and that they would be told to put that right.

Those are just a few of the points that came out of the deputation and I am grateful to the Minister of State for receiving us so courteously. It was agreed that there would be a meeting between union leaders and assistant commissioner Wynn-Jones. The meeting took place, but what was the result the following Saturday? *The Guardian* headlined its report on 10 May:

"Wapping Peace Deal Batoned Down".

The report stated:

"Mr. Michael Britton, chief marshal of the pickets, who had been present at the talks earlier between Brenda Dean, General Secretary of SOGAT '82, and senior police officers, found himself pulled to the ground and stood on by police officers as he tried to tell his men to stay on the pavement and remain calm. 'It would appear certain officers had no control over what they were doing' he said. 'The agreement does not seem to have filtered down to the policeman on the line'".

As I have said, there was no proper accountability by the Metropolitan police to Home Office Minsters, who clearly had little idea what was going on. It was clear that the Minister of State had not known that no numbers were worn by the riot police and he seemed genuinely shaken and concerned at what we had to tell him. The Home Secretary has no inkling of what has been happening at Wapping. In the debate on 8 May, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield gave an accurate eye-witness account of what happened on 3 May, but the Home Secretary did not believe it. The Home Secretary's face registered incredulity, he began to laugh and then, with a gesture as if to say, "This cannot possibly be true," he ostentatiously walked out. From his position of invincible ignorance of what had occurred he simply could not believe what he heard, but his duty was surely to listen and to learn. Where is the accountability to Parliament if the Home Secretary does not want to know and does not even listen to a Privy Councillor?

If Ministers do not know what is happening on the ground, what about the senior police officers? Commissioner Newman was certainly not present on 3 May, but what about assistant commissioner Wynn-Jones, whose main contribution in return for a salary of more than £32,000 lies in the manipulation of propaganda? The following day, the Sabbath, he held forth at a press conference at which he is reported as saying:

"The police have been the victims of a determined and undeniably pre-planned attempt by many people to inflict as serious injuries as possible on unprotected officers".

If he was talking about the printing unions, he was either telling deliberate lies or did not have a clue what he was talking about. I was so astonished by his trumpetings that I wondered whether he could possibly have been at the same event that I witnessed. Accordingly, I put down parliamentary questions asking where he was positioned at 10 pm, 10.30, 11 pm, 11.30 and 12 midnight on 3 May. What did I discover? At all those times, he was in Leman street police station. In other words, he was not on the spot at all. He had not witnessed a single thing. He was not there. I was. He did not know what he was talking about.

I should like to raise another serious matter. I was approached by a London official of the NGA who told me something disturbing. I said that I was disturbed about it, and that if he wanted me to take it up, he must put it in writing because it was so serious. I have his letter here, and the Minister of State has had a copy. He refers to the

"police attending Wellclose Square at 9.30 a.m. on Sunday May 4th . . . the School Caretaker had witnessed the police carefully removing rocks and boulders from the centre of Wellclose Square from a contractors pile of such rubble. Clearly this was to be used in the Press Conference headed by Deputy Assistant Commissioner W. Jones later that day. More seriously, he witnessed the removal of a spear type railing from outside of the school at about the same time. As this railing was the only one removed he was surprised to see it displayed by Mr. W. Jones at the Press Conference on television later that same evening."

That school caretaker is prepared to give testimony to that effect. His name is David Boyle and he is the schoolkeeper at St. Pauls, Wellclose square, London E1. That is a serious matter, and should be looked at. It is one of the things that should be examined at a public inquiry.

Commissioner Newman, in his public order review, says that the situation often calls for

"the skills of a field commander dealing with public disorder".

I note the military terminology. Whoever was field commander on 3 May should be sacked. He should answer for himself at a public inquiry. There is absolutely no public confidence in an internal inquiry. In a parliamentary question, I asked who was in charge of the riot squad that night. I was not told. Why not? Why should we not know who was responsible for that intolerable behaviour? Why should he not be required to answer for himself?

I also asked who gave the order that the people penned into Wellclose street and Wellclose square should not be allowed to leave while they were being repeatedly baton charged. I was told in a parliamentary answer that no such

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order was given. Whoever drafted that reply simply did not know what he or she was talking about. That reply is either a demonstration of ignorance or a cover-up, because I was told on the spot that night by police that no one could leave because of their orders. So, in practice, parliamentary questions as a method of getting information about the police are a farce and completely ineffective. In the interests of everyone, including the police, there must be better and more effective accountability than that. Things went badly wrong that night. The lessons should be learnt and not swept under the carpet. I have in my possession a letter to the Home Secretary from my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) who is present. I was going to refer to it, but there will not be time. My hon. Friend has not received a proper reply.

Very, very much more than minimum force was used. Truncheons were used, not in self-defence, or to resist violence, but indiscriminately, and not just on the body but on the head as well. That was action outside the law. The riot police breached the law, and the peace; they did not defend them.

But has anyone been disciplined? What was the result of the internal inquiry? Is it not plain that no one has any confidence whatsoever in an internal inquiry? The only conclusion that one can come to is that on these occasions the Met is a law unto itself, and currently accountable to no one at all. I say that that is not acceptable, and must be changed. I also say that the riot squad acting as it did should never have been deployed against a May Day parade of men, women and children. That was a wicked and grossly mistaken act. Those responsible should be brought to book.

The present position is indefensible and cannot be allowed to continue. Far-reaching reforms must be made in the interests of both the public and the police. The only reasonable, sensible and practical solution is a democratically elected police authority within a framework set up by Parliament. If that is right for, say, education, it is right for the police service. Any possible scaremongering about "political" control is absolutely unconvincing. The Met is under political control now — that of the Home Secretary, who does not even come from London. Would those people say that Parliament should not be under political control, or the Government, or the Army? That would be ludicrous. As generals, admirals, air marshals and civil servants are all subject to elected accountability, why on earth should senior policemen be the sole exceptions? There is no public support for that. The sooner we get this elected accountability the healthier it will be for all concerned, and I intend to press for it energetically.

2.20 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) who has been using his rights as a London Member to deploy arguments in the House about policing in London has taken 20 minutes or more to do so which makes it difficult for me to respond to the points that he made. However, it is an eloquent testimony to the rights of Back Benchers and London Members to air their views about police accountability and police operational procedures, and it is an eloquent testimony to the efficacy of the present arrangements.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East is arguing for a different form of accountability. As he said, he wants to see an elected form of accountability to replace that which Parliament has bestowed upon the Home Secretary for upwards of 150 years. It is a system which has been in place, with the support of all parties in government, from both sides of the House, for a considerable time. Moreover, it is a system of accountability which was recently endorsed by the report of the Public Accounts Committee, which has just been published. It said:

> "In view of the special constitutional and operational responsibilities of the Metropolitan Police for policing the capital and seat of Government, and their additional national and international functions, the essential focus of accountability should be to Parliament not local authorities."

I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, North-East will bear that in mind.

The reason for the special relationship between Parliament and the metropolis and between Parliament and London Members lies in the nature of London itself. I do not want to go too far into that, because it is not a matter for discussion or dispute.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Shaw: I am sorry, but I shall not give way.

The fact remains that the accountability that is offered to Members of Parliament through the Home Office and the Home Secretary is very substantial in relation to Metropolitan police matters. In fact, the force is open to more direct questioning by Members of Parliament than is any other force. The Home Secretary and Ministers through debates in this House, and the commissioner through his report, are opening an accountability for scrutiny and public examination in the full light of media exposure which is frequently denied to many other persons who wish to expose policing matters in their provincial force. The Metropolitan police as a whole are very much exposed to full scrutiny on this matter.

I remind the hon. Gentleman of the steps that have been taken in that regard. In the Home Office we have the Home Secretary, who is the police authority for London, and we have other Ministers, who spend a significant proportion of their time on Metropolitan police matters. We have a deputy secretary in charge of the Police Department, one under-secretary, one assistant secretary, who have a considerable part of their responsibilities addressed to the Metropolitan police, and seven officials, including a senior principal, working exclusively on Metropolitan police matters. All those people are available to handle issues raised by hon. Members in the House.

A considerable number of questions have been asked in the House in recent weeks, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-East knows. We have had 76 parliamentary questions in one month to 18 July alone. Many of them are on detailed matters affecting the Metropolitan police. Therefore, it is wrong to impugn accountability, as the hon. Gentleman has done. He may prefer a different form of accountability, but the fact is that in London there is massive accountability through this House, the Home Secretary and in other ways.

Problems arise when local authorities set up police committees claiming to exercise responsibilities that they do not possess. The police cannot lend credence to such claims. The police may talk to any individual or group in the community about practical matters. However, police officers are right to be careful that they do not involve

themselves with committees claiming responsibilities and roles which they do not possess in ways which obscure the proper structures of accountability or undermine the role of the consultative groups which Parliament has so recently established.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that with the development of consultative groups under section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 there is now widespread in the Metropolis a much broader-based forum than councils alone can provide to ensure that policing is rooted in the local community. When the riots took place in Brixton last year the local police consultative committee met for three and a half hours to debate the police role on that occasion. The position in Brixton was restored to normal much sooner by the substantial exposure to police activities at that committee than might have been the case without it. I am confident that such an approach is important in establishing the accountability that the hon. Gentleman wishes to see.

I certainly agree to consider some of the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised separately. He asked what report would be made from the internal examination on the events at Wapping on Saturday 3 May and I shall respond to him on that. Regarding the wearing of numbers, not only did the commissioner remind all divisions of the necessity for doing that subsequent to the meeting to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but I went to Wapping to examine for myself whether the police were carrying out that instruction, and I saw that they were. I agree that that important matter was raised by the hon. Gentleman's delegation. The fact that he brought the delegation and that he could discuss the matters as he did is another potent example of the proper accountability of the Metropolitan police to hon. Members and to Ministers reporting to the House.

The wide range of Metropolitan police responsibilities, crime, the pattern of policing, and mobility stretch London wide. Therefore, I accept that there could not be any sensible arrangement between individual boroughs or any form of police arrangement leading from one borough to another. Policing has its ingredients London-wide. Therefore, it is right that from the centre within the Home Office there should be a London-wide responsibility which can be made available to the House and to hon. Members who represent London boroughs.

Hon. Members have influence and the right to consult, delegate and question the system for information, but they do not have control of the police service itself, other than through the controls provided by the Home Secretary to Parliament. There is no control of the police service through police authorities in the provinces either. It is a tripartite structure which rests fundamentally on the Police Act 1964, which gives operational independence to chiefs of police, including the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. That operational responsibility is not subject to the control of either the police authority outside or the direct control of the Home Secretary for the Metropolitan police. Operational decisions rest with the commissioner, where they belong. Those operational decisions lie at the basis of the concern expressed by the hon. Gentleman.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that in terms of accessibility and responsibility to the House and in relation to the London-wide nature of the responsibilities which the Home Secretary carries, we have a proven system which we have absolutely no intention of changing.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As the three hon. Members who represent Newham are present, would it be in order to wish you a happy, most peaceful recess? Long may we catch your eye and remain vigilant on behalf of the people of the London borough of Newham.

Mr. Speaker: I accept that as being wholly in order and I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman has said. Indeed, the proper role of all hon. Members is to be vigilant on behalf of their constituents.

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Finance Act 1986
Appropriation Act 1986
Crown Agents (Amendment) Act 1986
Gas Act 1986
Insolvency Act 1986
Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986
Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986
Wages Act 1986
Agriculture Act 1986
Social Security Act 1986
British Council and Commonwealth Institute Superannuation Act 1986
Dockyard Services Act 1986
Building Societies Act 1986
Ipswich Port Authority Act 1986
Alcoholics Anonymous (Dispositions) Act 1986
Bournemouth-Swanage Motor Road and Ferry Act 1986
Bromborough Dock Act 1986

Building Industry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): In the very last Adjournment debate of this Session of Parliament I congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, upon your timely selection, because what I have to say in a few moments' time will have a bearing on certain matters that are to take place within the European Community during the parliamentary recess.

I thank also my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment for kindly being here to reply to the debate. The subject which appears on the Order Paper — EEC infraction proceedings on United Kingdom zero-rating policy on value added tax for the building industry—is all very heavy stuff, but the subject of this debate is not to be taken lightly or wantonly by the private sector of the building industry, and in particular not by those who ultimately will wish to buy the houses that the private sector provides.

Hansard recorded in February 1984 that on the Adjournment I raised the subject of value added tax on construction work. On that occasion my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health, who was then Minister of State, Treasury, was kind enough to reply. I should place on record the fact that in one sense I am sorry that my hon. Friend who is now the Minister of State, Treasury is unable to be here to reply, but I am particularly delighted that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State is here to reply. I do not know, Mr. Speaker, whether in your office or elsewhere in the Palace of Westminster there is a league table of those of one's right hon. and hon. Friends who reply to Adjournment debates, but I am bound to say that if I were a betting man my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State would be nearly at the top, if not at the top, of that table because of the assiduity with which he attends Adjournment debates.

I was reminding him a few moments ago that during the seven illustrious years that he has adorned the Government Benches I have raised on the Adjournment of this House on Friday afternoons subjects which almost invariably have led to my constituents being satisfied. In the absence of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury, who, because of his responsibilities in Europe this week, is unable to be here to deal with this specific point of VAT on housing, I look to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for an assurance, as do my constituents and the construction industry, that certain matters that are now being considered by the European Court will ultimately be settled to Britain's satisfaction.

The matter to which I wish to refer is that of infraction proceedings. In an Adjournment debate in 1984 I said:

"I should not seek to raise this matter on the Adjournment"—

the matter was value added tax on construction work generally—

"but for a somewhat sensational article in *The Sunday Times*, Business News section, of 13 November last. Its front page lead read:

'A Common Market move to force Britain to levy value added tax on commercial and industrial property development could put thousands of jobs at risk'. The following Thursday 17 November, there was an article in the *Financial Times* which said:

'The European Commission is inquiring into the desirability of maintaining the zero value added tax rating for commercial and industrial property development in Britain.'"

As recently as 1983 and early 1984, neither the British public nor those great national newspapers believed that VAT might be levied on private housebuilding, let alone on commercial property development. At column 366, I said this:

"Since the introduction of VAT in this country more than 10 years ago, it has been clearly established and accepted on both sides of the channel that all new construction work should be zero-rated for VAT purposes. Goodness knows what our constituency mailbags would be like if we woke up one morning and found that new homes, domestic construction work, had a 15 per cent. VAT price tag placed on them. I hasten to add that these infraction proceedings, which are the subject of immediate concern to the construction industry, have nothing directly to do with new homes or residential construction work."—[*Official Report*, 29 February 1984; Vol. 55, c. 365-6.]

That was only two years ago.

VAT zero-rating is an option allowed under the rules of the EEC provided that it meets these two criteria: first, it must be for the benefit of the end user, who is the customer and the constituent of every right hon. and hon. Member; and, secondly, it must be within a social policy objective. Under that concession, the United Kingdom applied zero-rating to a range of goods from food to newspapers and including most building work. In 1984, to the great regret of many people on both sides of the House and outside, zero-rating was removed from repair, maintenance and improvement work.

A range of bodies, including the Building Employers Confederation, the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the British Property Federation and the local authority associations, blamed that removal for the increase in the volume of small building works now undertaken by the black economy.

As long ago as 1981, the European Commission expressed anxiety about the amount of zero-rating in the United Kingdom, and last year—five years later—it commenced infraction proceedings in the European Court. As a result, the Government have had to show that their zero-rating policy meets the tests of the two criteria that I mentioned: that it benefits the end user, and that it is within a social policy.

At the end of last month, no doubt after a robust defence by the Government, the European Commission told the court that it did not accept the Government's case on construction. Today's debate is timely, because the Government have until 4 September—almost equidistant between today and when we return on 21 October—to make their final submission to the court, following which the court's verdict will be known some time between the spring and autumn of next year.

To those of us used to Anglo-Saxon legal proceedings, evidence and pleading are public and open to cross-examination by both sides, whereas those of the European Court are obscure and secret, occurring behind closed doors. One hesitates to say it, but it smacks of Star Chamber proceedings. The proceedings are not as open and above board as they would be in a British court. Perhaps more importantly, some Conservative Members harbour the suspicion that the decision is based more on political objectives than on a balanced view. That is what the construction industry believes.

Although the loss of zero-rating would seriously affect all building work, with the consequence of increasing the cost to the consumer and, inevitably, reducing the workload in the industry still further, with the consequent knock-on effect on job vacancies, its consequences would be most severe on private housebuilding. The customer is not a large institution but the private individual. Inevitably, if VAT were to be imposed on private housebuilding, it would put the price up eventually, if not immediately, by 15 per cent. As night follows day, second-hand prices would rush to catch up and they, too, would be caught up in this house price inflation.

We do not know whether the European Court has it in mind to impose this VAT levy across the board for new housebuilding in both private and public sectors. If it is to be across the board, that will have the effect of putting up the cost of local authority housing, high as it is. Who is to define the social objective? The construction industry, whether private or public, is providing the same sort of commodity whether for the ultimate tenant or the ultimate purchaser. The private sector is taking up much of the responsibility that was once that of the public sector. Sheltered housing is now provided, to a large extent, by the private sector. What will happen if the European Court case goes against us in, say, just the private sector? What will happen to those properties being developed on what we know, colloquially, as the half and half scheme, where the private sector joins in partnership with the public sector to provide homes for those who want to buy part now and part later?

If the European Court decision went against the Government, it would be a fundamental challenge to the housing policies of the Government in the new build sector, particularly with its emphasis on the switch from the public to the private sector. This point was made last week by the president of the House Builders Federation in a letter to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I understand from the federation that it was invited by the Department of the Environment to discuss the defence of private housebuilding zero-rating and that it was satisfied with the case that it had prepared. It fully covered the range of social objectives sought by policies for both public and private housing and it made clear that the indivisibility of the housing market precludes any distinction between luxury and non-luxury housing. It may well be within a social policy objective to ensure a wide range of new houses built in an area, including luxury homes.

The United Kingdom places a far greater emphasis on home ownership and private housing than many of our European partners. If VAT were ultimately to be added to the private housing sector, this would discriminate against us as a nation and in favour of our European partners. I am thinking also of the inner cities and the role of urban development corporations such as those in London and in the Liverpool docks. In the revival of confidence in such areas, new housing across the price and social spectrum plays a large part. It is a major objective of social policy and for that reason, as much as for many others, this sector should be zero-rated.

Should the court refuse to accept the strong case being put up by my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General, the immediate difficulties facing housebuilders and purchasers of new homes, particularly first-time buyers, would be considerable. If VAT is added to the final price, it will immediately add to the cost and reduce the market, reflecting the scale of VAT that has been imposed.

As the president of the House Builders Federation wrote to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister:

"the imposition of VAT on new homes will requre higher selling prices where they are built on land bought at current prices. This will inevitably reduce demand — and hence output—quite considerably."

It will also reduce jobs.

"Moreover, the threat of its imposition will put builders who are in the process of acquiring land in great jeopardy, not knowing if VAT should be included in the residual calculation of value, and if so, at what rate. This will further reduce output and increase unemployment, in the short-term at least."

Some people will argue that the price addition due to VAT will be subtracted from the land price and that the market will quickly readjust, so that the short term referred to by the president's letter could be just that. That is theorectically a neat proposition but it leaves two major problems.

The first is the transition and the effects of output on land bought recently at current prices. That is what is referred to in the president's letter. How many housebuilders could be bankrupted in the short term and how many jobs could therefore be lost? Secondly, the practical effects on the market, even in the longer term, will not be quite so tidy. Housebuilders, and those of us with practical knowledge of the land market, know that the price of land is very sticky downwards. Land will just not be put on the market. As it becomes scarce, so its value will increase, thus adding to the upward pressure on the price of the house that is finally built on it.

Landowners take a long time to accept that land values have fallen. The first effect of falling prices, which could last some time, is that landowners will withhold that most essential commodity. The supply of land will simply dry up indeterminately. I understand that the purpose of the EC imposing VAT is to make every state capable of trading on fair and free terms. None of us would contradict that policy but harmonisation has no bearing on United Kingdom housing policy.

There is no question of competition between member states. There are no obstacles in Britain to European building firms. Housing markets are highly localised, even in the United Kingdom. Housing in Lichfield, Rugeley and Stone in my constituency does not compete with housing in Kent or Scotland or even with housing in Birmingham just 20 miles down the road. Still less does housing in those markets compete with housing in Hamburg, Paris, Rome or Madrid.

Once a European company is competing in a local market and everybody is on the same VAT footing, competition faces no obstacles, so the removal of United Kingdom zero-rating is harmonisation for its own sake. It serves no fundamental Community purpose. It would damage the British private housing market, probably for many years, without conferring any advantage on our European partners. It would be a tax on home ownership for the benefit of the European Community and not for my constituents or those of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State who is to reply.

I invite my hon. Friend to assure the House, the construction industry and the buyers of private homes, whom we all want to be properly housed and not to have to endure the long and frustrating wait for a key to a

[Mr. John Heddle]

council house, that the Government will submit a robust and positive defence to ensure that there is always a free supply of private houses to buy.

May I conclude, Mr. Speaker, by wishing you a happy and rewarding recess? I should like to associate with that sentiment my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Whip and all Officers of the House. I hope that we shall return in October renewed, refreshed and invigorated.

2.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): The House is very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) for raising today the important issue of the infraction proceedings being brought by the Commission against the United Kingdom, alleging that we are in breach of certain of our obligations under the treaty of Rome with some of our VAT zero ratings.

I was delighted to learn that I have been of some assistance to my hon. Friend and his constituents in the past, and I hope to uphold that record. Until now, I thought that infraction was something that happened when a straight stick was put into a bowl of water. However, I now understand that it is something wholly different and far more serious. I should like to make two points clear. First, the Government fully appreciate the great concern felt in the construction industry about this threat. We know the effect that it could have on the industry's work load. We share that concern, and my hon. Friend has dramatically outlined the potential implications.

Secondly, the Government are determined to fight those proceedings. We have been doing so all along, and that remains our position. My hon. Friend said a word or two about the timetable. We are seeking an extension until 4 October to lodge our rejoinder to the Commission's reply. I understand that, as I think my hon. Friend said, the oral hearing before the court will follow, but it is unlikely until March 1987 at the earliest, and the court's judgment will not be available until several months after that.

Perhaps I could say a word about the background of this. Zero rating of new construction in this country goes back a very long way. Indeed, it goes back to purchase tax days and beyond. When we joined the Community in 1972, it was recognised that there had to be transitional arrangements. These were provided for in the relevant VAT directive. There has never been any disagreement between us and the Commission that these zero ratings were in force at that time. They do not represent anything new or changed on the part of the United Kingdom. What has happened is that, for reasons best known to itself, the Commission has chosen to challenge those zero ratings. We do not think that it is right to do so, and we have said so very publicly. My hon. Friend will be well aware, looking specifically at the question of house building, which I know is of deep concern to him, of the letter of 5 July 1984 from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the then HBF president, Terry Royden. It is worth quoting that letter in full. It says:

"I am happy to confirm that we have no plans to alter either the present zero rating for new housing, or the current base of mortgage interest relief. We shall also continue to resist firmly moves within the European Community to bring the current VAT concession to an end."

That was what the Prime Minister said two years ago and that remains the Government's position. My hon. Friend will know that that stance was reiterated by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer very recently.

The current position is that the Commission has initiated proceedings against the United Kingdom in the European Court of Justice. We have lodged a defence for that case, the Commission has replied, and we are currently considering our rejoinder to the Commission's reply.

The Commission's case is based on the sixth VAT directive, which states that zero-rating may be applied only as a transitional measure

"for clearly defined social reasons and for the benefit of the final consumer".

The Commission contends that our current concessions for new construction do not meet these criteria. We deny that utterly. Whether or not we are in pursuit of a social policy must be for us to determine. It is a matter for our discretion. Moreover, we believe that it is for us to define what those social reasons are, and not to have our social policies determined by the Commission, nor even to have them challenged.

The same is true of our interpretation of the phrase "the final consumer". We do not believe that that can be narrowly equated with just the private individual who is the immediate recipient. "Consumers" can be defined more widely than private individuals — they are the people at the end to the distribution chain for a particular product, and that can be treated more widely than individuals.

The Commission's current challenge is to a wide range of goods and services. It is not restricted just to the construction industry. For instance, it covers news services, water for industry, protective boots and helmets for industrial use, and so on. I make that point to draw attention to the peculiarity of some of the Commission's current challenges.

When it comes to construction, there can be no doubt that it is for social reasons, and for the benefit of the final consumer. The built environment is one of the most important ingredients of our social fabric. What we see about us in terms of building, whether it is aesthetic, efficient and well maintained or ugly, inefficient and run down, has a big effect on the morale of the community and its power to earn its living with ability and enthusiasm. In that sense, a good working environment is essential to the contentment and social stability of society. More specifically, what happens when the working environment is run down can be seen in the examples of riots in our inner cities last year, in Brixton, Toxteth, Tottenham and elsewhere. My hon. Friend spoke of the implications of the Commission's action for our inner cities. A new tax on construction would be a deterrent to development where it is most needed.

I have spoken about the industrial and commerical sectors, but, as I am sure the Commission knows, the United Kingdom was the first country to industrialise. We still have a large stock of obsolete buildings, more than any other comparable country. In many parts of Britain, and especially in the north, there are vast areas, hundreds of acres of wasteland, covered with obsolete factories, warehouses and offices that can never be used again as

they stand. They must either be totally modernised or demolished and replaced if they are to play an effective part in the social and economic life of the country.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the renewal that we have seen in docklands and the renewal that we are trying to encourage in places such as Liverpool would be gravely prejudiced if we agreed to this measure?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire spent some time speaking about the work of renovation in our inner cities and he paid tribute to the work of the London Docklands Development Corporation and the Merseyside Development Corporation. He rightly drew attention to the barriers that would be placed in their path by this additional imposition. I totally agree with what he said.

House building is the most bizarre part of the challenge by the Commission, and I say that for three reasons. First, the Commission, almost as a throwaway line, casually lumps the £5 billion a year that we spend on new housing alongside safety boots and helmets. I do not decry the importance of safety boots and helmets, but I wonder whether the Commission really has any sense of relative values when it can lump those things in a flimsy, ill-considered and narrowly based approach.

Secondly, the Commission has simply asserted that it does not think that our zero rating is justified. This seems to be one of those occasions when harmonisation is being pursued for its own sake, without regard to the merits of the argument or any detailed consideration of what is involved. As my hon. Friend said, any builder in the European Community is perfectly free to come here, buy land and sell houses in competition with our domestic house building industry. One cannot trade houses across frontiers, and the moment one looks at the industry one sees that economic theory which may be valid for other goods and services does not apply to that industry.

Thirdly, I find the Commission's stance legally bizarre. The sixth directive is quite clear and says that zero rating may be applied

"for clearly defined social reasons and for the benefit of the final consumer".

What is more clearly for the final consumer than a house? All our houses are lived in by private individuals. I do not believe the Commission can, on any sensible grounds, challenge that part of it.

In terms of social policy, housing as a whole in the United Kingdom has for many years clearly played a major part in the broadly defined social policies of Governments of all parties. We had major investment in housing in the 1960s. We have the policy of subsidising rents through housing benefit, fixed rent levels, security of tenure and tax relief for owner-occupiers. All those things are designed to encourage either public or private sector housing through the use of taxation or other financial advantages for the good of the final user and in pursuance of social policies.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this subject. He has performed a service for the construction industry and I hope that what I have said will reassure him about the complete and utter rejection by the Government of the Commission's case. We have fought it steadily all along the line and will continue so to do.

As the final speaker before the House rises, I should like to extend to you, Mr. Speaker, and to your fellow occupants of the Chair our deep appreciation of the patience, good humour and impartiality with which you have supervised our proceedings, not least during July, when the temper of the House is often raised. We are also greatly indebted to the Officers of the House. As you cancel the papers and put out the milk bottles and go on your holiday, Mr. Speaker, you do so with the good wishes of the whole House.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Minister for his final comments, and I also thank the hon. Members for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). This is an admirable way in which to finish a very busy sitting. We have had hard-hitting debates, but they have been conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and good will. I hope that every hon. Member and every member of our staff, who serve us so well, will have a restful holiday.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock till Tuesday 21 October, pursuant to the resolution of the House yesterday.

House of Commons

Tuesday 21 October 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BLYTH HARBOUR BILL [*Lords*]
Order for consideration read.
To be considered tomorrow.

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*
Order for further consideration, as amended, read.
To be further considered upon Thursday.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration read.
To be considered upon Thursday.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday.

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL BILL [*Lords*] *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time tomorrow.

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*
Ordered for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday.

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session.

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table with the New Clause as added on Consideration of the Bill as amended.

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.
Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the British Railways (Stansted) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.
Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Children at Risk (Register)

1. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to seek to introduce for parents a right of appeal against their children's names being registered as at risk; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): No, Sir. The decision to place a child's name on a register is an administrative procedure which does not involve a change in the legal status of the child, and therefore a right of appeal is not appropriate. Good professional practice should, however, entail keeping parents informed and involved.

Mr. Stern: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that the placing of a child on the "at risk" register inevitably becomes known and puts its parents in an invidious position if the placing on the register has been inaccurate or based on false information? Will he consider issuing guidelines to social services departments to ensure that parents are adequately involved at the earliest possible stage and have an adequate chance to get their child's name removed?

Mr. Newton: I certainly accept that this is an area where great care is needed, and I shall consider my hon. Friend's suggestion. However, I hope he will agree that we should take proper steps to ensure the protection of children who may be at risk. The balance is a difficult one.

Mr. Baldry: At a time when there is growing concern about the number of children in danger, does not the "at risk" register provide a straightforward and simple way of ensuring some protection for children who might be in danger? Would not increasing the bureaucracy defeat the system, which is working well?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has confirmed some of the reservations that I express. There is a difficult balance here, and I note the point made by my hon. Friend.

Standing Charges

2. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from pensioners and others regarding the implications for the social security system of the payment by them of standing charges for gas, electricity and telephone; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. John Major): Representations are received from time to time that pensioners should not be required to pay standing charges for gas, electricity or telephones. These are matters for the industries concerned. The social system contributes significantly towards heating costs, including standing charges, through the indices used to set benefit levels.

Mr. Skinner: Do I take it from that answer that this Government, with the new caring image that they tried to portray at the Tory party conference, are not going to do anything about standing charges? Is the Minister aware that it would cost only about £300 million to abolish these charges for pensioners?

British Telecom allowed the City institutions to make a financial killing out of its privatisation and it is likely to be the same with British Gas. If there is enough money in the country to line the pockets of those crooks in the City, why do the Government not abolish standing charges for pensioners?

Mr. Major: On a point of information, the cost would be not £300 million but £600 million. The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind, on the question of caring, that supplementary benefit heating additions have risen by one and a half times the rise in fuel prices since this Government came to power.

Mr. McCrindle: If standing charges for social security recipients were abolished, would that not put up the unit costs of telephones, electricity and gas? How much benefit would that be to pensioners and others on benefits? If those costs were passed on to the population, would that not bring in many people on low incomes?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is right. He explains precisely why statutory industry consumer councils do not favour the abolition of standing charges. Abolition would increase unit costs dramatically, particularly for pensioners who use large amounts of fuel.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Minister accept that a Bill before the House would remove standing charges for pensioners without increasing the unit costs of gas and electricity? Does he further accept that this winter many pensioners will die from hypothermia because they are afraid to turn on their gas heaters and will not be able to pay their gas and electricity bills? Will the Minister abolish standing charges for pensioners so that they do not have to experience another freezing winter because they cannot pay their bills?

Mr. Major: I have made clear the Government's position on standing charges. The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind that heating assistance comes in a variety of ways. In addition to supplementary benefit and heating additions, I shall shortly be bringing before the House proposals to replace the previous exceptionally severe weather payments.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the Minister aware that in the first half of 1985 20 per cent. more pensioners over the age of 80 died of hypothermia than in the whole of 1984? Will he take action to prevent that and seriously consider abolishing standing charges to save old people from suffering?

Mr. Major: I have made clear twice that abolishing standing charges is not necessarily the way to deal with the problem. I share the hon. Gentleman's anxiety about hypothermia. That is why we have made significant increases in heating additions over the last few years. The Minister for Health is studying the figures for hypothermia for last winter to find out precisely why there was an increase in deaths from hypothermia.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: Is my hon. Friend aware of the deep feeling among many pensioners about the unfairness of standing charges? Is he further aware that the telephone can mean the difference between life and death for many elderly people living alone? Will my hon. Friend at least look at the problem in relation to telephones and the social security system?

Mr. Major: I understand what my hon. Friend says and I know of his long-standing concern about the problem, but the abolition of standing charges does not seem to be well targeted, and it is not necessarily the best way of dealing with the problem.

Health Authorities (Costs)

3. **Mr. Knowles** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further savings he envisages can be made by health authorities from cost improvement programmes in 1986-87.

8. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress made in obtaining value for money in the National Health Service.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): Health authorities in England have made substantial progress in obtaining improved value for money in recent years. Cost improvement programmes have yielded savings of over £250 million in the last two financial years. This is a direct increase in the resources available to develop and improve service to patients. For 1986-87, authorities plan further cash savings of some £150 million.

Mr. Knowles: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Would the public be right to conclude that the substantial savings already made—and those still to be made — have contributed to the largest ever capital building programme in the NHSS?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, Sir. Over £130 million is to be spent on the capital building programme this year. We are restoring the cuts in the capital building programme made by the last Labour Government. In view of the pathetic

story in the *Dairy Mirror* today, I must say that over the next three years we plan to complete more than 100 major new hospial schemes. Altogether, we have 380 hospital schemes in the hospital building programme.

Mr. Forsyth: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the contracting out process in the National Health Service has produced substantial savings which are being used for patient care?

Mr. Fowler: The latest figures show that that has produced £63 million, with about half the operation completed. All those savings are going into direct patient care, which shows the worth of the competitive tendering process.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Is the Secretary of State aware that the millions of people throughout the country who saw the television programmes broadcast last night and last week surely cannot believe a word that the right hon. Gentleman says about the NHS, either with regard to savings or any other matter? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that the evidence given in those programmes shows the rapid decay of the Health Service throughout the country?

Mr. Fowler: Record resources are being devoted to the Health Service. Even more important, a record amount of health care is being provided through the NHS under this Government. No amount of television programmes can deny that fact.

Mr. Pavitt: Has the Secretary of State studied the report of the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Nursing, which shows that cost efficiency savings—which are really disguised cuts—have reached the end of their lives? Therefore, would it not be absolute nonsense to suggest that in 1986 and 1987 there will be greater patient care from savings that simply cannot be made?

Mr. Fowler: Quite simply, the hon. Gentleman is wrong. The health authorities are planning on a cost improvement programme of £150 million for the year 1986-87.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Cuts.

Mr. Fowler: They are not cuts, but resources that are now being directed into patient care. I would have thought that that was what the Health Service was all about.

Mr. Sims: Has my right hon. Friend noticed that a number of hospitals in the private sector appear to be able to operate at lower true operating costs than hospitals in the public sector? Are there not lessons to be learnt from that?

Mr. Fowler: I am sure that there are lessons to be learnt, but, to give credit to the NHS, we must recognise the enormous improvements that it has made over the past four or five years in effectiveness, especially in management within the service.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Secretary of State aware that both the National Association of Health Authorities and the BMA believe that under current financing plans the NHS will be £650 million short this year to maintain even its existing standards? How will the Government pay for the promises made by the right hon. Gentleman at the Tory party conference to increase the number of hip operations, heart bypass operations, bone marrow transplants, cataract operations and cervical cancer screening, which, in total, will cost an additional £150 million a year? Why cannot the right hon. Gentleman be honest and admit that those improvements can be afforded only by major cuts elsewhere in the NHS?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman's claim is wholly untrue. The money and resources for those improvements are already in our plans and they build on the improvements that we have made since 1978. For example, since then heart bypass operations have risen by more than 7,000—an increase of 230 per cent. over the last Labour Government — hip replacements have risen by almost 10,000—an improvement of 35 per cent. over the last Labour Government — and cataract operations have risen from 35,000 to 55,000. All those are vast improvements over the last Labour Government.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Secretary of State aware that in Leeds and other areas hospital authorities are making savings in their budgets by giving patients prescriptions for only seven days, so that they have to obtain repeat prescriptions from a doctor at additional cost to themselves? Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that in some cases chemists are advising patients not to have their prescriptions dispensed but to ask their doctors for one prescription for a longer period to try to avoid the patient having to bear that additional cost? Surely it is nonsense to transfer money in that way so that in the end the patient has to pay?

Mr. Fowler: I shall certainly study any real evidence that the hon. Gentleman can supply on that matter. I know of no general evidence to suggest that prescription charges are having such an effect.

NHS Manpower

5. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further plans he has for the better use of manpower in the National Health Service.

Mr. Fowler: We are continuing to build upon the success already achieved in improving the use of National Health Service manpower to provide a better service to patients. This is part of a continuing process to improve the use of NHS manpower, and the proportion of staff working directly with patients increased from 58 per cent. in 1978 to 63 per cent. in 1985.

Mr. Favell: My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on the great strides that he has made in the contracting out of laundry and catering services. However, what plans does he have for contracting out medical services, especially where a health authority has long waiting lists and the private sector can provide a better and cheaper service than the health authority?

Mr. Fowler: I have no plans of the sort that my hon. Friend puts forward. However, we are in favour of there being the maximum co-operation between the National Health Service and the private sector.

Mr. Kennedy: Does the Secretary of State accept the analysis of the increases in nursing manpower levels which was presented in last night's "Panorama" programme, which showed that his claims, when analysed in depth, display a contraction of the degree of nursing available for patient care? If he does not accept that analysis, does he intend to take "Panorama" to court?

Mr. Fowler: I am not sure that the opportunity of taking "Panorama" to court arises, but I do not accept the statement as it has been repeated by the hon. Gentleman. Since 1978, almost 63,000 more nurses and midwives have been employed within the NHS.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend accept that although we agree that 66,000 more nurses and 22,000 more doctors have entered the Health Service over the past few years, hospital beds are being closed and our letter bags become fuller and fuller of complaints about delayed operations? Is it possible that hospital manpower is directed too much towards administration and not enough towards nursing? Is it not time that patients had more say in the matter than those who run the service?

Mr. Fowler: I have much sympathy with my hon. Friend's final point. The proportion of manpower involved in direct patient care—in nursing and so forth —has increased, not decreased. That is the emphasis of the manpower policy.

Mr. Dobson: In view of the "Panorama" programme last night and other evidence throughout the country that doctors are having to spend a vast amount of their time finding beds for patients who need them, would not the Minister's plans for the better use of manpower be more useful if he ensured that doctors are able to do the job for which they have been trained, which is curing patients, rather than undertaking the administrative task of finding beds and operating theatres to enable them to cope with patients' needs?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman knows that record numbers of in-patients are currently being treated within the Health Service, and hundreds of thousands more than were treated under the previous Labour Government.

North Western Regional Health Authority

6. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has had further discussions with the chairman of the North Western regional health authority about the authority's capital expenditure programme; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): My hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) wrote to my hon. Friend on 12 August setting out the state of play at that date. Since then we have had no particular meetings with Sir John Page, the chairman of the North Western regional health authority, on this subject, although I have met him several times, and I shall be in North-Western region tomorrow.

Mr. Thurnham: I welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box. Is she aware of the great concern in Bolton that there should be no delay in starting the new hospital building programme? Will she give a commitment that there will be adequate funds to ensure an early start to the building and operation of this much needed development?

Mrs. Currie: Yes, indeed. Despite the article in this morning's *Daily Mirror*, I am able to confirm that the programme of rebuilding the Bolton general hospital, to which I think my hon. Friend is referring, is due to start, as agreed, in September 1989. Some work is under way already. The region's plan to upgrade the X-ray department and to extend the pathology department at a cost of over £1 million is already out to tender, and work will start on site in April next year.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the hon. Lady aware that the United Kingdom regional development programme 1986, which has been published today in national newspapers, in commenting on health care in the regions of the north, said that the inadequate resources available to cater for people's health problems meant that the problems were not being resolved?

As the document is a Government publication and an admission that insufficient resources are made available, why do the Government not do what Conservative and Labour supporters up and down the country are demanding and spend more money on the National Health Service? Why does the Minister resist that and favour making stupid, pathetic statements in the north of England, which only serve to upset people, as part of her public relations self-promotion campaign?

Mrs. Currie: When the Conservative party came into office in 1979 the National Health Service in many parts of the country, including the north of England, was in a pathetic state. We therefore took on board the point that the hon. Gentleman failed to make at that time—that not enough money was being spent. I am glad to report that, in the north-west alone, we have spent £27 million on the Royal Preston hospital, and £17·9 million on phase 1 of Hope hospital, Salford. We are in the process of spending £12 million on phase 2 of Tameside general hospital and £19 million on phase 2 of Manchester royal infirmary. I have a long list of hospitals. If the hon. Gentleman wishes me to read out all of them, I shall do so.

As for the problems of health care in the north, it is a fact that there are many thousands of people in hospitals suffering from coronary heart disease, lung cancer and other illnesses which are preventable. I invite the hon. Gentleman to join us in our campaign to reduce that toll.

Mr. Sackville: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the north-west 10-year hospital building programme will cost in excess of £400 million? Will she ensure that all efforts are made to avoid any delays in start dates and that resources are made available to ensure that the revenue consequences of this huge programme are met?

Mrs. Currie: The north-west region has the second highest capital allocation in England. This year it is about £71·5 million. As my hon. Friend knows, that compares with the 1978 figure of only £36 million. In other words, under this Government, in cash terms, the figure has doubled. I take the point that my hon. Friend made about cash being made available to open schemes. That is the basis on which schemes are agreed. The problems to which he referred should have been eradicated.

Mr. James Lamond: Is the hon. Lady aware that my constituents in the North West regional health authority area are fed up with the boasting and complacency of the Secretary of State, now echoed by herself? My constituents measure value for money in a simple way: they have paid their national insurance contributions all their working lives, and when they need a cataract operation they are told that they will be placed on a waiting list of two to three years, unless they go private, when they can have the operation the following week.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman would not seek to deny that we are now looking after far more patients in the North West region, as we are throughout the country. Some of the waiting lists reflect the fact that services have been created where there were none before and that the operations are successful where they were less successful before. In other words, success is breeding its own demand. We are glad to recognise that and to provide the resources to meet it.

Mr. Robert Atkins: I add my good wishes to my hon. Friend in her onerous task. When she meets the chairman of the North West regional health authority tomorrow, will she express to him the concern expressed to me by my constituents and by many constituents of hon. Members on both sides of the House about the potential closure of the children's arthritic ward at Wrightington hospital, which is a regional specialty and could well be a national specialty? Will she express her concern, as expressed to her predecessor by a wide-ranging delegation, and assure me categorically that she will not take a decision to close that ward until she has had a chance to hear the views of those who care enough about the future of the hospital?

Mrs. Currie: I should be delighted to take the opportunity to meet and discuss this question with my hon. Friend and take into account the points that he has made. I am quite certain that whatever plans are arranged and carried through will be for the benefit of the children concerned.

Mr. Cyril Smith: Tomorrow, when the Minister enjoys her fish and chips in the north-west, will she take the opportunity to ask Sir John Page how the region finances its capital building programme, which was the point to which the original question referred? Will she ask him, for example, whether it is a fact that much of that capital programme is financed from existing services, with those services consequently having to close down to finance new capital expenditure? Will the hon. Lady ask the chairman of the region whether it is a fact that, if a district health authority in the north-west sells assets, only a proportion of those assets return to the district, the rest being taken to finance capital projects in other parts of the region?

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman has asked a number of questions. May I first remind him that I learnt to make fish and chips in the north-west, where I was born and brought up. A substantial part of the capital programme is intended, as the hon. Gentleman knows—indeed, he has called for this — to replace old and outdated facilities. It does not make sense for us to spend money keeping Victorian hospitals going when we could spend perhaps the same or only slightly more to create brand new facilities which will last well into the next century. That is the the view that we take. As far as I am aware, it has always been the case that capital is taken by the region and redistributed and that the districts have a substantial claim to that money. But if another district, which may well serve the hon. Gentleman's constituents, has a need also, it is right that the money should go there.

Supplementary Benefit

7. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants in Islington, North are currently in receipt of supplementary benefit; and what is the equivalent figure for June 1983.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Lyell): Islington, North is one of six constituencies served for social security purposes by the Department's offices at Finsbury Park, Highgate and Hoxton. In May 1983, 41,373 people were receiving supplementary benefit from these three offices. In May this year this figures was 50,530.

Mr. Corbyn: Would the Minister care to reflect on the fact that that represents a grave increase in poverty throughout the area concerned? What staffing cuts have there been at the three offices? Does the hon. and learned Gentleman accept that the staffing cuts have led to a high level of rent arrears among people on housing benefit and often to claims being wrongly assessed because there are insufficient staff to deal with them, leading consequently to great misery among the people of the area and to unacceptable delays in dealing with queues of urgent cases involving supplementary benefit allocations?

Mr. Lyell: On the question of overall poverty, the hon. Gentleman should remember that since 1979 the volume of social security spending has risen by 35 per cent. and that nearly half that spending represents real increases in the average benefits paid to meet those needs. We recognise the staffing problems to which the hon. Gentleman referred. As a result, we have increased the complement for those three offices from 500 to 582 staff, and we are building towards that figure.

Mr. Chris Smith: Does the Minister realise that the staffing increases proposed by his Department are totally inadequate to provide a proper, prompt and decent service to claimants in those offices serving not only the northern but the southern part of Islington? What are the hon. and learned Gentleman's proposals to ensure that claimants are treated decently, properly, and promptly rather than as Dickensian supplicants?

Mr. Lyell: We are anxious that all claimants should be treated properly, but I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman that an increase of 82 on 500—an increase in complement of some 25 per cent. at the Finsbury Park office — is totally inadequate. We are taking steps to ensure that the refurbishment of that office, which was improved last year, is maintained.

Mrs. Beckett: As many of those in greater poverty are the long-term unemployed, as their numbers are increasing and as the Government have told the Common Market, whatever they may tell the people of this country, that they expect that to continue, can the Minister tell us when the Government expect to pay the long-term unemployed the long-term rate of supplementary benefit and bring them up to the poverty line?

Mr. Lyell: Our whole objective is to target our benefits towards those in real need. Those have been identified, above all, as families with low incomes. The House will know that our benefits have been targeted in that direction.

Day Nurseries

9. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many new day nursery places have been provided by social services departments in the year 1985-86.

Mrs. Currie: There were 28,870 day nursery places provided by local authority social services departments in

England at 31 March 1985. Final figures for 31 March 1986 are not yet available. However, the returns received so far show that the number of places increased in 19 authorities, decreased in 15 and remained the same in 57. Overall, there were a similar number of places at 31 March 1986 as the year before.

Mr. Boyes: Does that not show that the situation is inadequate if one considers that the number of children subjected to physical and sexual abuse is increasing and that that leads to an increased demand for day nursery places? For example, in Sunderland the number of non-accidental injury registrations has increased by 50 per cent. over the past three years. What is more, Sunderland has a known demand that it cannot satisfy. Are not the care and protection of our children essential elements in a democratic society? What is the Minister going to do about the problems of Sunderland and other local authorities in a similar position?

Mrs. Currie: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we take the problem of child abuse very seriously. It is a matter of increasing worry and concern. The number of places nationally should be set in the context of the 28,000 places I have just mentioned, 24,000 places in voluntary and private nurseries, 42,000 full-time and 224,000 part-time places in nursery schools and nursery classes run by the local education authorities, 58,000 childminders, with places for 126,000 children and more than 400,000 places in playgroups. I consider that diversity and volume of services to be adequate.

Mr. Galley: I warmly welcome my hon. Friend to her new post. As she has now been in office for a few weeks, may I ask her what plans she has developed to encourage social services depts to use registered childminders as an adjunct to and replacement of day nurseries, because the cost per place is more than half of day nursery provision? In that way she will be able to help twice as many children for the same resources.

Mrs. Currie: I agree with my hon. Friend that childminder provision is most important. I can speak on that from personal experience. We are delighted to see that the number of childminder places went up by 29 per cent. between 1982 and 1985, and we encourage local authorities to improve that provision.

Ms. Harman: Is the hon. Lady aware that the DHSS under-fives initiative ends in April next year? Will she make a statement about the future of projects financed under that scheme? Is she aware that a number of projects providing services for children under five are at risk because they are located in council areas — [*Interruption.*] Is she aware that those projects at risk include three childminder support projects? They are at risk of closure because they are located in boroughs which are being subjected to severe spending restrictions by the Department of the Environment. Will the hon. Lady, at the very least, consider a joint transitional funding arrangement so that her Department can pay half if local councils pay half of the cost of those projects which end in April next year?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appeal to the House to listen to the answers and questions.

Mrs. Currie: I thank the hon. Lady for drawing attention to the Government's under-fives initiative. We have spent some £6·5 million over the past three years funding 110 different projects with 15 different agencies. The whole idea and intention was that it should be a pump-priming exercise. Many of those schemes have proven their worth and already have guaranteed funding from next year onwards.

Board and Lodging Allowances

10. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the changes introduced in the board and lodgings allowance system.

Mr. Major: We have received representations from various interested individuals and organisations about the ordinary board and lodge system and I have recently met the National Confederation of Registered Rest Homes Association to discuss the residential care sector.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister accept that these new regulations are a disgrace, and are particularly vindictive against young homeless people? This is typified in the case of an 18-year-old who has lived in Burnley and Accrington all his life, but left his parents at the age of two, is no longer able to live with the people who were caring for him, and has now been told that after a certain number of weeks he must move on from Burnley if he wants to continue to receive his benefit? Is this not a disgrace, and should not these regulations be changed?

Mr. Major: I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. I am familiar with the particular case that he raised, about which we have been in correspondence, and I am glad to say that the young man concerned is now in full employment. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's criticisms. We have carefully monitored the results of the board and lodging regulations, and many of the fears expressed when they were originally introduced have not come to fruition.

Mr. Malins: A great number of people in receipt of board and lodging payments are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Is this not unsatisfactory, and should we not move to abolish it at an early opportunity?

Mr. Major: That is not a matter for me, but I am aware that local authorities have strong powers concerning bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Where appropriate, I hope that they will exercise those powers.

Mr. Hugh Brown: In the process of monitoring the operation of the board and lodging regulations, has the Minister found any evidence that unscrupulous landlords are switching to providing furnished accommodation? Has the Minister any knowledge of a recent programme on Scottish television which highlighted abuses in this sector, particularly of young people?

Mr. Major: I have not seen the Scottish programme to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but if he gives me details I shall endeavour to do so. I am concerned that in certain areas there may have been an element of collusion between the landlords and the tenants over the regulations. There is some evidence that, as a result of our new regulations, many rental charges have been held, or in some cases reduced.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Does my hon. Friend consider that a private landlord is placed at an unreasonable

disadvantage compared with the local housing authority in the matter of direct access to reimbursement of benefit for board and lodging?

Mr. Major: It would be a generally attractive notion were the privately rented sector again in a position to offer more accommodation, particularly for young people. I hope that we shall soon reach that position.

Hospital Closures

11. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to which hospitals in the London area are currently under consideration for closure.

Mr. Newton: In the London area, and I refer to the former GLC area, there are five hospitals whose total closure is either under formal public consultation, or where the consultation procedure has been completed but no final decision has yet been taken.

The hospitals are Neasden hospital in Brent, the West London hospital in the Riverside health authority, New Cross hospital in Lewisham and north Southwark, St. James' hospital in Wandsworth, and New End hospital in Hampstead.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Minister aware that many of my constituents are very angry at the threatened closure of St. James's hospital because of the valuable service that it provides, and, furthermore, that they are angry at the misleading way in which the Secretary of State bandied lists of hospital openings at the Tory party conference? Will he confirm that the truth about the hospital openings and closures list is that since the Government took office, 53 hospitals have opened or are planned to be opened, while 217 have been closed? That is the list, in my hand.

Mr. Newton: I accept that the Government are carrying through a larger than ever building programme in the National Health Service system. I noted in the *Daily Mirror* this morning the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) expressing some doubt about whether that programme would be completed. There is no doubt that his remarks are a throwback to his experience with the Labour Government.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Is my hon. Friend aware that over the past 20 years millions of people have moved out of London, and that the extra resources that are needed in constituencies such as mine, because people have moved there, must come from their getting a fairer share of the money? Is it not the case that the inefficiency of many London hospitals is responsible for squeezing resources in our areas?

Mr. Newton: I certainly endorse the thrust of my hon. Friend's remarks that it is right to continue to ensure an equitable distribution of health resources around the country.

Mr. Meacher: Why does the Government's health record always involve fiddling the statistics? Is the Secretary of State aware that his deputy, the then Minister for Health, stated in a parliamentary answer on 4 July that the total number of building projects under this Government was not 380, as the Secretary of State boasted at the Tory party conference, but only 153? Is he aware, as the *Daily Mirror* correctly stated today, that many of those projects will not start until the mid-1990s and that many will probably not start at all? Why cannot the Secretary of State be more honest and inventive about running the Health Service and less anxious about trying to save his political skin by fiddling the statistics?

Mr. Newton: Before the hon. Gentleman accuses anybody of fiddling the statistics, I invite him to recognise that he has compared figures for projects of over £2 million with projects of over £1 million. Let him stop fiddling the figures. The Government have no need to fiddle the figures. The hon. Gentleman has to resort to fiddling because he is so ashamed of the record of the Government of which he was a member.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 October.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with President Soares of Portugal. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. O'Neill: In the light of the increase in mortgage rates announced today, will the Prime Minister tell the House how much of the £4 billion that her Government borrowed in September was used to shore up the pound during the Tory party conference in Bournemouth?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is well aware that it is not the practice to comment in any way on intervention. Naturally, we are reluctant to increase interest rates, but when it becomes necessary to do so in order to keep downward pressure on inflation, we do not hesitate to take that step.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity today to congratulate the city of Glasgow on being the United Kingdom's nominee for the European city of culture 1990? Will my right hon. Friend also refute the absurd allegations by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh that Edinburgh's bid failed for political reasons? Is it not the case that Glasgow's bid was simply miles better?

The Prime Minister: I gladly respond to my hon. Friend's invitation to congratulate the city of Glasgow on winning the accolade of the city of culture and wish it well.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister recall saying just 11 days ago at the Conservative party conference that she wanted to conquer unemployment, north and south? How does she reconcile that with her Government's admission to the European regional development fund that, with unchanged policies, the future is frighteningly bleak, or with a policy of cutting public investment by more than 10 per cent. during the next two years? How can she say that she wants to conquer unemployment when unemployment is the weapon which she has mercilessly used for the past seven years and which she intends to go on using?

The Prime Minister: The report to which the right hon. Gentleman refers was compiled from submissions from local and other public authorities designed to support their bids for grants from the European regional development fund. The figures to which the right hon. Gentleman refers are the very same planning assumptions which appear in

the public expenditure survey, and there is nothing new. It is those figures applied to existing differentials. We have followed the practice of previous Governments in this.

Mr. Kinnock: None of that alters the fact that that document is a devastating indictment from within the Government of the Government's own record. If the right hon. Lady is concerned about unemployment, why does she not take the hint from that report and undertake public investment in Wales, in Scotland and in the north-west, north-east and south-west of England, to generate jobs now and provide a foundation for employment in the future instead of following the policy on which she insists?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman is tackling our record on providing capital expenditure for infrastructure, I remind him that the last Labour Government cut public sector capital expenditure by 20 per cent., National Health Service capital expenditure by 30 per cent. and expenditure on roads by 36 per cent. It is we who have restored many of those public sector programmes.

Mr. Kinnock: Nobody believes that. Will the right hon. Lady say whether she is prepared to accept the statement of the CBI that unless the Government take the initiative now on capital projects the United Kingdom will lose its chance and slip further behind in the competitive league? If she will not listen to the demands from all over England, Wales and Scotland, from the Opposition and from many others, will she accept the demands of the CBI?

The Prime Minister: May I say exactly what has happened with regard to spending on roads — *[Interruption.]* The Opposition do not want to hear the facts. Capital spending on motorways and trunk roads has increased by 25 per cent. in real terms to £900 million, National Health Service capital expenditure has increased by 22 per cent. in real terms since 1979, there has been investment of £2½ billion in railways and £5 billion on fixed assets in the gas industry, and capital expenditure on housing renovation is up 54 per cent. in real terms. Which of those figures does the right hon. Gentleman say is wrong?

Sir Peter Hordern: In considering the Peacock committee report, will my right hon. Friend uphold the recommendation about the need to improve the standards of service of the BBC, which have sunk to an all-time low so that, far from following the public service concept of informing, educating and entertaining, the BBC is now guilty of misinformation and even libel? Does not a heavy responsibility rest on the chairman and governors of the BBC to root out those responsible and to improve the standards of the corporation generally?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that the chairman designate of the BBC will wish to do everthing possible to achieve the highest possible standards for the BBC, which is the point of my hon. Friend's question and the wish of everyone.

Dr. Owen: Will the Prime Minister confirm the statement that came out of No. 10 Downing street yesterday from Mr. Bernard Ingham that the Government will not enter the EMS until after the next election? As our non-membership of the exchange rate mechanism has cost us so heavily, will the Prime Minister give some comfort to the millions of people who face a 1¼ per cent. increase in their mortgage rate?

The Prime Minister: As I have said to the right hon. Gentleman before, there is no change in the Government's position in relation to the EMS. I should point out, however, that although many of those who ask to go into the EMS think that it is somehow a soft option, we should probably have sharper and more rapid increases and decreases in interest rates if we belonged to the EMS than otherwise.

Mr. Jackson: In view of my right hon. Friend's special responsibilities for science, will she take the opportunity today to look into the damage being done to the science budget by the impact of international exchange rate fluctuations?

The Prime Minister: We have been as generous as we possibly can with the science budget. As my hon. Friend is aware, we have made provision for more expenditure in the universities, especially for young people who hitherto were not able to have their theses considered. I will certainly look into the point raised by my hon. Friend, but I do not think that it is possible to compensate for it.

Q2. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cunliffe: Will the right hon. Lady quote from that part of the United Kingdom regional development fund report which deals with the north-west and Greater Manchester as a whole, and which speaks of the terrifying prospect for the future for the unemployed and the imminent collapse of the infrastructure services in that area? Is that not a result of the Government's senseless and ruthless economic policies, and what is the right hon. Lady prepared to do to remedy that state of affairs?

The Prime Minister: No. I indicated that that report was compiled from submissions from local and other public authorities. It was designed to support their bids for grants from the European regional development fund. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to look at it he will find a copy in the Library, together with a copy of all previous reports under this and previous Labour Governments.

Mr. Dickens: As the Opposition have given notice at their party conferences that they will abandon our nuclear defences, does my right hon. Friend consider that the red rose of the Labour party should be replaced by the white feather?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that the Labour party will ever win an election, but if it did it would be catastrophic for the defences of Britain.

Mr. Rowlands: Will the Prime Minister spend some time today thinking about Aberfan and considering the needs of a community which, over the past 20 years, has rebuilt its future after the tragedy and disaster of 20 years ago this week?

The Prime Minister: I most certainly will. I was shadowing the Ministry of Fuel and Power when that tragedy occurred. I took part in the debate on that occasion and it is etched on my mind.

Mr. Hannam: Has my right hon. Friend seen the report in the *Sunday Times* showing that the reductions in taxation on the top earners in Britain and in the United States since 1979 has resulted in an increase in revenue to

this country? Does not that expose the fallacy of the Labour party's policy, which presumes to raise £3·5 billion from an increase in the level of taxation on top earners?

The Prime Minister: Yes. A reduction in the top rate of tax increased the yield from the top tax earners. We also need those top tax earners if we are to create the new businesses upon which new jobs depend. I agree with my hon. Friend.

Q3. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Flannery: In view of the sympathy which the Prime Minister has extended to the Prime Minister of Mozambique on the untimely death of President Samora Machel, can we expect her to tell the Government of South Africa that if they take steps to use this untimely death to further destabilise Mozambique the eyes of the world will be upon them and the whole situation in southern Africa — not merely South Africa — will deteriorate in an international way?

The Prime Minister: The death of President Samora Machel was a great shock and a great tragedy, not only for the people of that country, but for the whole of southern Africa. Naturally, we shall be watching the situation very carefully indeed. Our views on South Africa are well known. We dislike and deplore apartheid, but we wish its abolition to come from negotiation and not from sanctions.

Mr. Jim Spicer: My right hon. Friend may have read a report about the ill-timed visit of the Leader of the Opposition to Berlin and West Germany last week. Will she take every opportunity to reassure the people of Berlin, West Germany and our own armed forces that the Government and the people of the United Kingdom will never betray them?

The Prime Minister: I made it very clear when I went to Berlin that the defence of the West within NATO is indivisible and that we stand by our guarantee to Berlin.

Q4. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lamond Will the right hon. Lady be taking time today to have discussions with the chairman of the Conservative party, in an effort to clear him of the allegations that he has been leaning heavily on Tory Members of Parliament in an attempt to prevent them from giving evidence in the BBC libel case?

The Prime Minister: I do not answer questions about party political matters from this Dispatch Box — *[Interruption.]*—and I do not necessarily accept what the hon. Gentleman says.

Q5. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Forsyth: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that if she acceded to Opposition requests to cancel the Trident programme, thousands of jobs would be lost in Scotland, including at the Ravenscraig plant, which supplies the steel for Trident submarines? Do we not hear double standards from the Opposition on the issue of unemployment as well as on defence?

The Prime Minister: I should make it clear that Trident is a vital part of our defence, and this Government will go ahead with the Trident programme.

Q6. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some monents ago.

Mr. Wardell: What guarantee can the Prime Minister give that anyone needing a blood transfusion will receive blood that is AIDS-free?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Health is doing everything that he can to ensure that that is possible.

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise directly out of questions?

Mr. Ashton: Yes, Sir. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) asked the Prime Minister a specific and important question about allegations in the press that witnesses have been interfered with by the chairman of the Conservative party. Is it in order for the Prime Minister to refuse——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that I am not responsible for the answers that are given.

Mr. Williams: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, which arises out of questions. During Question Time my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition referred to the United Kingdom's regional development programme. It is the first time that the Government have spelt out the stark future facing all our regions. The Prime Minister replied by trying to fudge the importance of the document and said that it was a compilation of the views of various regional and local authorities. In paragraph 1.3 of the Government's own submission it says:

"The United Kingdom Regional Development Programme sets out the economic difficulties of the regions and the Government's policies for alleviating these difficulties."

For that reason, I submit that the Prime Minister has misled the House, and that there should be a statement on this point.

Mr. Speaker: If the right hon. Gentleman made an application for a statement to be made it might be considered, but that point is not a matter for me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise directly out of questions?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The point of order arises from a matter raised at Question Time. You have repeatedly told the House, Mr. Speaker, that you would deprecate any action on the part of an hon. Member that brought the House into disrepute. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) raised a question involving the possibility that the House had been brought into disrepute by a right hon. Member who is also a member of the Cabinet. Would it not be wise of you to

use whatever means are open to you to ask the Attorney-General to come to the House to answer questions about influence being exerted by a Cabinet member on Back Benchers and others, which might well be contrary to the law and which might lead the Attorney-General to want to make a statement?

Mr. Speaker: It is not for me to ask Ministers to come before the House to answer allegations which, judging from what I hear and read, are pure speculation.

Lord Maybray-King

3.34 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have a short statement to make.

The House will have learned with sorrow of the death, during the summer recess, of Lord Maybray-King, Speaker of this House from 1965 to 1970.

First elected to the house in 1947, Horace King quickly established himself as a highly respected Back Bencher. After 10 years' experience as a Chairman of Standing Committees, he became Chairman of Ways and Means in 1964 and a year later was elected Speaker, the first holder of that office to be drawn from the Labour party. Much of the respect and affection in which he was held by members of all parties derived from his instinctive sense of community with Back Bench Members, from among whom he was directly drawn as Speaker, and with whom he never lost touch.

Several Members present may recall his farewell speech to the House in December 1970. In a striking sentence he said:

"The bedrock of this House is allegiance not so much to the individual in the Chair as to the stored wisdom, the procedure, customs and courtesies of which he is the guardian and the exponent".—[*Official Report*, 10 December 1970; Vol. 808, c. 671]

This blend of personal humility and pride in the office of Speaker was typical of the man. His ever present sense of humour and feel for the House enabled him to defuse difficult, even menacing, situations with the lightest of touches.

We salute his memory and extend to his family our sincere sympathy in their loss.

Visas

3.35 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about visas.

As the House will know, I announced on 1 September that the Government had decided, in principle, to impose visas on citizens of Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Nigeria and Pakistan. On 6 October I announced that the change in respect of the Indian sub-continent would take effect from 15 October. For Ghana the date of implementation will be 23 October. It will be some time yet before the necessary arrangements for staff and accommodation can be completed in Nigeria, and we shall announce a date later for implementation. The necessary changes to the immigration rules have been presented. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will find time for them to be debated before Parliament is prorogued.

Four of the five countries I have mentioned already require visas of British citizens. We would have preferred to continue to allow their citizens to come here without prior examination, requiring pre-entry clearance only for settlement, employment and similar purposes. But the pressure on the immigration control made that arrangement increasingly unsatisfactory and occasionally unworkable. The volume of traffic and its difficulty alike increased. Excluding British and other European Community nationals, the number admitted grew from 6 million in 1981 to 8·5 million in 1985. Whereas 13,000 of these passengers were refused admission and removed from the United Kingdom in 1981, the figure was nearly 18,000 in 1985 and rose to 22,000 in the 12 months ended June 1986.

Passengers from the five countries constituted a significant proportion of these refusals: 49 per cent. in 1985 and 53 per cent. in the year ended this June. There has been no change in the qualifications for entry or in the practice of immigration officers. So these figures reflected the growing pressure of people not eligible for admission seeking to come to this country. The need to examine more passengers in detail at the port of entry submitted not only them but others to delay. While passengers were being examined, they had either to be given temporary admission, often at risk to the control, or to be kept in detention, neither of which was satisfactory.

When those seeking entry as visitors from a particular country include a sizeable minority who may be trying to come here for other purposes it is, in our view, much better that the necessary inquiries and authorisations should be made before the journey starts rather than under pressure at the port of entry.

In order to safeguard the interests of bona fide visitors, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has strengthened the staff of our posts in the sub-continent so that visas can be issued in an orderly manner.

During the four days before the introduction of visas, there was a sharp increase in the number of passengers from the sub-continent arriving at London Heathrow. Included among these were a substantial number of young men, particularly from Bangladesh, who were clearly trying to use the last days of the old system to take advantage of its weaknesses. Despite the acute physical difficulties, I decided that these men should not all be

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

temporarily admitted at once but should be examined in the usual way. I am glad to report that, thanks to much patient hard work by the immigration service, this process is now virtually complete. Since the introduction of the new system last week, incoming flights have included only a handful of people from these countries without visas, and the system is now working satisfactorily.

For the countries concerned, it will now be at our overseas posts, and not at the ports of entry, that the main decision will be made. The guidelines on the handling of Members' representations will in our view need altering to reflect this. At the port of entry, the immigration officer will normally no longer have to exercise a judgment on whether a passenger—claiming, say, to be a visitor—is bona fide.

That judgment will now be exercised when the visa application is considered. There is, of course, a right of appeal against refusal of a visa. I do not believe that, in addition to this safeguard, the airlines or travel operators should be led to believe that individuals arriving here without visas will be automatically admitted if a Member of this House intervenes on their behalf. This is a matter which the House will want to discuss, and I shall accordingly place the necessary amendment to the guidelines in the Library and the Vote Office tomorrow. I shall not implement this change regarding Members' representations until the House has had an opportunity to discuss it.

In conclusion, I wish to record my warmest thanks to all of the various services at Heathrow and elsewhere who rallied with speed, resourcefulness and efficiency to cope with the intense pressures of last week. The outcome, I believe, is that we have introduced what will prove to be a major improvement in the working of our immigration control. As the new system settles down it will improve the position of all bona fide travellers and ease the strains, particularly at Heathrow, which have gradually built up over the last year.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Hon. Members will know that almost the first thing seen by people arriving at Heathrow airport is — [AN HON. MEMBER: "You".] It is certainly not the Home Secretary, who never bothered to go and look at what he had done. What the Home Secretary and the rest of us can see at Heathrow is a huge sign proclaiming, "Welcome to Britain". Last week, the Home Secretary ensured that, for large numbers of people arriving at Heathrow, including hundreds whom the Home Office subsequently recognised as bona fide visitors, the welcome to Britain was personally humiliating for the visitors and shaming to this country's reputation.

Why, in the first place, did the Home Secretary last month decide to impose visa requirements for just five countries? The number of visitors to Britain from those countries is less than one third of those from Australia, New Zealand and Canada, and it has risen proportionately much less during the past three years than has the number from Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The Home Office cites the growing refusal rate, but it is not some act of God. Rather it is a deliberate policy of the Home Office. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Hon. Members are right to applaud that, because it is true.

Can the Home Secretary deny that the Foreign Secretary was opposed to the imposition of these visas? A month ago, the Home Secretary made a speech in which he moaned about the baleful influence of pressure groups —"serpents" he called them. Is it not a fact that he has himself caved in to blackmail from one such pressure group—the breakaway immigration service union, the spokesmen of which have, during the past few days, made statements that have bordered on racialist?

Of course, the reason for imposing these visitors' visas is not one of administrative necessity but one of racial discrimination. That racial discrimination has been highlighted by the degrading scenes at Heathrow airport during the past few days. Anyone could have forecast that the announcement, several days ahead, of the imposition of a visa requirement would lead to a last minute rush. Indeed, I was told by senior immigration officials at Heathrow last week that such a rush was actually anticipated.

The Home Secretary claims that contingency arrangements were made. Did those contingency arrangements allow for almost intolerable pressures on the staff of the British Airports Authority, to whom I pay tribute for the way in which they sought to cope with those pressures? Did those contingency arrangements include cramming 300 people into one small gate room? Did those contingency arrangements include holding in police cells people accused of no crime? Did those contingency arrangements include accommodating other detained people in expensive hotel accommodation with the taxpayer having to foot the bill?

Is the Home Secretary aware that if he were a local councillor he would be surcharged for that wasteful expenditure, because that chaos and that expenditure are the fault of the Home Secretary who decided the policy and chose the date?

Will the Home Secretary give us some information about arrangements for issuing visas in the country of origin? Why is that by last Wednesday, six weeks after the decision to impose visas, the extra officers had still not been sent out to those countries?

The Home Secretary spoke about interference with the stop system for hon. Members. Is he aware that the leaking to the press of that proposed restriction of hon. Members' rights was highly offensive to the House? Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that on 26 March this year he pledged to the House that there was no suggestion of denying to hon. Members what he called the "valued" stop facility? How can he, in honour, break that undertaking?

Is not the Home Secretary also aware that under the visa procedure the stop facility will still be needed in emergency circumstances——

Sir John Farr (Harborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would not it be more appropriate for these detailed and minor points to be made during the debate that we are to have?

Mr. Speaker: I suspect that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) will shortly be coming to a close.

Mr. Kaufman: But, Mr. Speaker, there are large numbers of people in this country who have the right to hear the answers to the questions that I am putting and who will take it ill if hon. Members are not allowed to make representations on their behalf.

Is the Home Secretary aware that last Wednesday, Mr. John de Llanos, the assistant chief immigration officer at terminal 3, told me that possession of a visa would not of itself guarantee entry to this country—despite what the Home Secretary had said?

Is the Home Secretary aware——

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is not this a gross abuse of the House? Do not the same rules about tedious repetition apply to Front-Bench speakers as to the rest of us?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman was a Minister and he knows that it has always been the case that a certain latitude is given to the Front Benches. Nevertheless, the House listened to the Home Secretary with care and will know that there is to be an early debate.

Mr. Kaufman: We are indeed dealing with an abuse, but it is an abuse of the human rights of large numbers of people. Conservative Members are showing, in the way in which they are treating these exchanges, that they give a damn only for the human rights of those with white skins. The Home Secretary has treated people who went to the airport and their relatives, who had come here on visits, as was shown by the Home Office decisions in a majority of cases, like second-class human beings. He would not have done so if their skins had been white, and hon. Members know that.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Member is, of course, entitled to ask his questions, and I shall try to answer them, but first I must say that the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends cut ludicrous figures as they ambled about Heathrow asserting that all the young men there from the sub-continent were genuine tourists. What total twaddle that was. Are we really asked to believe that those young men all happened to choose the third week in October to come and see the tower of London? The truth is, as has emerged in all our debates on the subject, that the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues want to tear a hole in immigration control so wide as to make it meaningless.

I shall deal with the specific questions asked by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). The five countries which I listed were chosen because they are countries from which come a substantial but growing minority of people whose claim to come here simply as visitors arouses doubt. They are the only five countries to each of which 1,000 passengers were returned last year.

Hon. Members will find in the Library a list of countries from which we require visas and those from which we do not. It shows how absurd it is to claim that the restriction is racialist. I do not feel racially aggrieved, nor did the Leader of the Opposition when he went to India, to find that an Indian visa is necessary. I am sure that as the new system settles down Indians will not feel racially aggrieved either.

We switched 54 extra staff from the immigration service to Heathrow to cope with the situation. If we had followed the advice in which I continue to get in letter after letter from Opposition Members, we should have experienced rush and pressure, not for two or three days, but for two or three weeks, or longer.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned detention costs which do cause concern. Last year we got back about three quarters of those costs from the airlines under existing arrangements. They will be billed again for the events of last week. The problem of detention and detention costs is one reason—not the main reason—why we are doing away with the present system and causing the discussion and argument, if any, to be resolved before the journey begins rather than when it ends at Heathrow, with all the problems that that brings.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about staff overseas. A total of 39 extra staff are being sent—16 are already there and four more are going today.

The right hon. Gentleman's researches into *Hansard* did not carry him far enough. He quoted my remarks, but when we discussed the matter in March I was very careful not to rule out further change. That is why I deliberately said:

"we shall have to keep a close watch on the way in which that position develops during the summer and be ready, if necessary, to adapt further our arrangements and systems."
—[*Official Report*, 26 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 958.]

The right hon. Gentleman reasonably asked about the operation of the new guidelines which I shall table tomorrow. The House will want to look at them carefully and to debate them. I accept that there will be exceptional circumstances as well as normal circumstances and that we shall have to define what they are.

I think that it is a substantial advance that in normal circumstances judgment should be exercised in a calm atmosphere overseas rather than in a hurried and pressured atmosphere at Heathrow.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that there will be a debate on the subject before we prorogue. I appeal to hon. Members to ask questions and not to make comments that they might make in that debate.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Is it not sad between two senior Comonwealth countries that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi should accuse the Government of racism because they have followed India's example in requiring visas? Is it not common sense that much disappointment and unnecessary trouble can be avoided for poor people in these countries if their position is clarified before they leave home?

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. As I have a very high personal regard for the Prime Minister of India, I can assume only that when he made that remark he was deeply disinformed about the position.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Is it not true that the Home Secretary under his suave exterior, is presenting an extremely ugly policy that is, in essence, a message to foreign visitors that black faces are not welcome here? How, otherwise, were seven students who arrived here from Chad last week—invited by the British Council and paid for by the Government—refused entry by immigration officials at Heathrow and sent back to Chad at British taxpayers' expense?

Mr. Hurd: I shall certainly look into the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised, which is new to me. However, it has nothing to do with my announcement today. I hope that he will do me the courtesy of looking at the list, when it is available, of countries from which visas will be required and those from which they will not be required. He will then realise how ludicrous it is to suppose that it was drawn up on a racial basis.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a warm welcome for this reform,

[Mr. Ivor Stanbrook]

which is long overdue and which will relieve pressure on the vastly overworked immigration service at Heathrow? Is not that service entitled to our thanks and gratitude for its work on this problem during the past few months?

Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that Members of Parliament do not want to act as a court of appeal for the decisions of immigration officers? Will he consider whether the benefits of the visa system should be extended to every country outside the Common Market? There are many advantages to be gained from that, especially for security and the prevention of terrorism. It would also make clear, once and for all, that this reform is not in any way motivated by racial considerations.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support. When the European Ministers met yesterday, we set in hand the formation of a working group to study the sort of problems that he mentioned. We all tend to think of these matters in terms of our own circumstances, but in fact there is hardly a country in Europe that, in different ways, is not feeling the pressures to which Britain has had to respond.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Home Secretary recall that soon after he was appointed I wrote to him suggesting that he visited Heathrow to witness the delays and difficulties? Had he done so, he would have recognised what the rest of us recognised a long time ago —that the delays and difficulties could be overcome by the appointment of more immigration officers, and more interpreters and the provision of better accommodation. Indeed, that could have been done for a fraction of the £14 million a year that the visa system will cost.

Does not the Home Secretary understand that the objection to the visa system as being racist flows from the fact that white South Africans, Americans and Australians are not required to have visas to come to Britain for a holiday, but Pakistanis, Indians and Bangladeshis who wish to come here on holiday are so required? That is why the measure is seen as a racist and offensive move. It is doubly offensive that the Government sought to introduce it when this House was in recess and therefore unable to debate it, still less to approve it.

Mr. Hurd: Visitors from the Caribbean do not require visas in most cases, while visitors from eastern Europe do require visas in most cases. Will the hon. Gentleman please look at the list to which I have referred, as he will then realise the nonsense of his remarks?

I have visited terminal 3 and the immigration control at Heathrow, although not specifically in response to the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. He knows as well as I know that it is nonsense to argue that the problem could be solved by increasing staff, building new detention centres and employing more interpreters. As the hon. Gentleman knows from his constituency post bag, the problem is one of occasional surges. They have occurred at various times during the past few years, and unless we staff up at Heathrow to an incredible and wasteful extent we would still have the pressures which, at particular times, make the system unworkable. Therefore, the more we consider the problems to which the recently buried system gave rise, the more sensible it seems to exercise a judgment overseas and not at the airport.

Sir Reginald Eyre (Birmingham, Hall Green): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he is right to move to reduce the chaos that has existed at Heathrow airport in recent months? Does he appreciate that the visa system will be of advantage to Birmingham families and to visitors from the countries referred to because of the certainty that will exist, providing that my right hon. Friend can ensure that emergency cases relating to bereavements or illness, for example, are dealt with efficiently?

Mr. Hurd: There must, of course, be scope for dealing with emergency cases speedily, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has that in mind. My hon. Friend, who speaks from long experience, has it exactly right. One of the groups which has suffered most from occasional pressures at Heathrow has comprised the friends and relatives of bona fide visitors to this country from the sub-continent. This group has had to wrestle with uncertainty and delay, and the problem of Members' representations. [HON. MEMBERS: "What problems?"] I hope that as the new system settles down those who comprise this group will find that they are among the chief beneficiaries.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Is it not appalling that the reason given for the introduction of the policy that the Home Secretary is seeking to defend today lies precisely with the policy and practice of the Home Office? Of almost 500,000 visitors in 1985, there were only 182 eventual overstayers.

Is it not the case that masquerading as expressions of fact are expressions of opinion? For instance, it is said that there has been no change in the practice of immigration officers. We have no proof of that and nor can such proof be adduced. The Home Secretary has said that temporary admission was a risk to control. Again, that is an expression of opinion and not of fact. He has said that the recent increase in the number of immigrants from the subcontinent was the result of a move to take advantage of the previous system. Again, that is an expression of opinion.

Has not the change in policy, which will be so divisive to communities in urban areas, been caused by the Home Secretary's own policy, which he is now seeking to be confirmed by his expressions of opinion?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there are those on the Opposition Benches who will not accept that a policy is justified by what other countries do to us? It seems appalling that fellow members of the Commonwealth are not allowed into Britain when representatives of South Africa are.

Mr. Hurd: I think that the hon. Gentleman is wrong on all counts. The number of absconders is substantially higher than he stated, and it has been growing. At terminal 3, it was 255 in 1985 and 430 in the year to June 1986. The number of absconders would have been substantially greater if we had not had the detention arrangements which the Opposition have criticised continually. If we had followed their advice and given temporary admission to everyone who came to Britain as a visitor, I have no doubt that the absconder figures would be substantially greater.

I believe that the arrangements which we have made will, as they settle down, prove to be of major benefit to bona fide travellers, who represent more than 90 per cent. of those who arrive from all the five countries which I have mentioned. Those who suffer from them will be only those

who try to take advantage of the arrangements to sneak in for other purposes and those on the Opposition Benches who prefer a system of immigration control which is feeble and cosmetic.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): Will my right hon. Friend be reassured of the rightness of his decision to curb this random activity by hon. Members? May I remind him that not two weeks ago, having received a representation to put a stop on a deportation and having considered it most closely and declined to intervene, the Leader of the Opposition's office was on to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office within an hour demanding that action be taken without having made any checks on the validity of the representation? Is not this exactly the sort of misuse to which my right hon. Friend is now trying to put a stop?

Mr. Hurd: I think that all right hon. and hon. Members have had difficulty in using the stop facility. They have had difficulty in judging when to impose a stop and when not. There was a justification for the facility—the unique ability of an hon. Member to change an administrative decision—when immigration officers at Heathrow were making judgments on the worth of stories, which obviously were value judgments. In those circumstances, there was a reason for having a unique facility. In the majority of instances that will no longer be the position. The judgment will be made overseas, and there will be the right of appeal against it. At Heathrow the question will be whether a person has arrived with a visa. That will change the entire situation as far as the House is concerned.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Despite the gloss that the Home Secretary has put on this issue, he must be aware that in a multiracial area such as Brent, South, where 50 per cent. of the population is black, the new system will be seen as racist. This will be a great blow to the passive integration that we have secured over a period. Why have relatives of some of my constituents been put into prison at Leamington? Is he aware that if a person has been in prison, despite the fact that no crime has been committed, the family will be aware for ever after that the individual has been in prison? Was there no other accommodation available apart from that at Moreton?

Mr. Hurd: If a measure, regardless of the merits of it, is described by enough people as racist, there will be those who believe that for a time. I believe that as the system operates that belief will subside and will be shown to be nonsense.

I sympathise with what the hon. Gentleman has said about the circumstances of detention. There are now between 80 and 90 Asians currently detained, some in a detention centre and some in a youth custody centre. All of them are there because right hon. and hon. Members have imposed a stop. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members who are in that position will make their representations quickly so that these cases can be properly determined.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends will welcome some reduction in our duties in asking for a stop order to be made when we have no means of checking satisfactorily the facts that are put to us? We realise that when we make representations they must inevitably on occasion lead to overstaying and evasion of the Immigration Act.

Mr. Hurd: I think that many hon. Members on both sides of the House have found it extremely difficult to judge when to exercise a unique right which has been theirs. When we debate the matter, as we obviously should, we shall have some further examples and illustrations to give and to make on how difficult things have become, and the House will then make up its mind.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): If the Home Secretary had spent much of the past nine or 10 days at Heathrow, as many hundreds of Asian families have, perhaps he would not be so complacent. If he had spent five of those days constantly speaking to his office over the telephone trying to ascertain whether his constituents' relatives were being held in some of the places to which he has referred, again perhaps he would not be so complacent. Perhaps then, like families in Coventry, he would have recognised this apartheid in tourism to be the racist measure that it is.

Why are the Government using this racist card unless they are worried about their prospects over the next few months or unless they are trying to support the campaign of the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Star* and *The Sun*? What about compensation for the loss of earnings, for accommodation costs and the cost of petrol to travel up and down the motorways over the past 10 days that have been incurred by families who have been so worried about their relatives that they have turned up at Heathrow every day? When will the Home Office cough up and compensate these families?

Mr. Hurd: Without knowing it, the hon. Gentleman has made a powerful case for abolishing the system which we have just demolished. It is partly because of the inconvenience to sponsors and relatives in Britain, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) has said, that the present system is open to criticism. It is precisely because neither my hon. Friend nor I is not in the least complacent about the way in which the system has worked with increasing difficulty over the past year or so, despite the efforts of the immigration service, that we have changed the system.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that most reasonable people of all races will think that the visa scheme is a good scheme? Why is it necessary, with the visa scheme, to retain the Member of Parliament stop system? Apart from the fact that an hon. Member cannot really judge a case, when he is faced with a problem and rings an immigration officer at Heathrow, the immigration officer has no idea whether he is a Member of Parliament or not. Surely it is high time that the stop system ceased.

Mr. Hurd: There is a lot in what my hon. Friend has said. When he considers the change in the guidelines which we shall table, I think that he will satisfied with the outcome.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): How do the Government expect to create a multiracial society when they continue to discriminate on racial lines against the relatives and friends of many of their citizens of non-white origin?

Mr. Hurd: There is a major difference between the Opposition and the Government in that respect. I am absolutely convinced, as I have been for many years, that we shall not get harmony in our cities or good race relations in constituencies such as that of the hon. Gentleman unless people feel that there is firm but fair immigration control. The Labour party, in all its policy pronouncements, especially those of the Leader of the Opposition in his irresponsible statements in India, has opted for the repeal of the immigration legislation. The right hon. Gentleman, quite foolishly, has committed the Labour party to returning to a non-visa system. Labour Members seek to build, in their own minds, a control which is simply cosmetic and which would have so many holes in it that it would not serve any useful purpose. Instead of being a recipe for harmony in our cities, it is a recipe for greater tension and more bitter feeling.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I was in Colombo last week and that I asked of Sri Lankans whether the visa control system, which has been in force for some months, was working to their satisfaction? The answer I received from Tamils, Sri Lankans and other members of the community was that it was working perfectly well. Is that not a portent for the workings of the system in Bangladesh, India and other countries that have been mentioned?

Mr. Hurd: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. More than a year ago we had to impose visas rather suddenly on visitors from Sri Lanka. The system has settled down satisfactorily since then. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's confirmation of that.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): What practice will the Home Secretary adopt for people coming to Britain to seek political asylum who, by their nature, will not have a visa? Is the Home Secretary aware of the immense practical difficulties for students from west Africa who quite properly come here as visitors to fix up their colleges and from whom we earn millions of pounds in foreign exchange? Will the Home Secretary be relatively generous on the issue of entry certificates for visas for students who can then convert them to full-time student visas when they arrive in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hurd: My announcement does not affect our obligations as regards asylum. I shall look into the point about students. Only two of the five countries are in west Africa. People must be able to show—I am sure that in the majority of cases, students or not, they will be able to do so—that they are bona fide visitors. I shall consider whether there are any particular problems regarding Ghana and Nigeria. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to press his point, I shall be grateful for details.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Surely there can be no question about the requirement of visas for foreign visitors when countries as far apart as the United States and Bangladesh demand them for our citizens. I add my plea to those of my colleagues who feel that the system should be extended to all countries outside Europe. Fully supportive of my right hon. Friend, I ask him whether he has a rough idea of how long it will take to process ordinary visas on the sub-continent.

Mr. Hurd: I think that it is too early to say. For the reason that I gave in answer to one of my hon. Friends, there must be a procedure for dealing quickly with urgent applications. I believe that some of the press stories about the length of the time that will be taken are greatly exaggerated. Not all applications will have to be dealt with by way of interview. It should be possible to deal with many by post. There will be problems as we shift from one system to another. My right hon. and learned Friend, with my support, has increased the staff available. I believe that there is a good chance of the system settling down with delays that do not go beyond those which most people encounter in making other arrangements for a journey.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Does the country of origin depend on someone's passport or the country from which the journey began?

Mr. Hurd: It depends on a person's passport. As I have said, the five countries were chosen because they were the five countries in which there was a still small but growing minority of people who presented themselves as visitors but about whose bone fides as visitors there was doubt.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the introduction of visas will be a major benefit to all bona fide visitors, and it is only those with whom we should concern ourselves; that the maintenance of firm and fair immigration control is in the interests of all our constituents, especially those in the ethnic minority communities; and that the promises of the Opposition parties to remove immigration control threatens the excellent community relations that are enjoyed in Slough and most other towns in this country?

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Home Secretary aware that what occurred last week at Heathrow airport illustrated the sheer incompetence and hysteria of Government policy on this matter, and that the misleading impression was given by the Government, and certainly by the Tory press, that people who arrived during those few days came here for settlement when that was clearly not the case? Why should the right of hon. Members to take up matters on behalf of their constituents be taken away, even if it displeases some immigration officers at Heathrow? If our constituents, despite what is being introduced, want us to take up matters concerning relatives and friends, why should we not be in a position to do so in the same way as we take up issues concerning housing, supplementary benefit, and so on? Our rights should be protected, or we shall resist what the Home Secretary has just stated.

Mr. Hurd: If the Government's proposals are accepted, the hon. Member will be in exactly the same position as regards immigration cases as he is as regards housing and social service cases. If the House approves our proposals, he will not be able to exercise what is a unique facility and change an administrative decision before his representations are considered. If an hon. Member writes to a council and suggests that somebody deserves a council house, that person is not given a council house while the hon. Member's representations are considered. That is the difference. There is no way in which we should diminish the right of hon. Members to make representations. What we are simply saying is that, in the new circumstances, we need new procedures and that the automatic stop exercised at the port of entry is no longer appropriate.

The hon. Member's view of what happened over the past few days is quite different from mine. It is clear to me

that what we saw was the last throes of a system that had ceased to work. It was not the first time that that system had come under pressure. It came under pressure in the spring and summer of last year, the summer of this year, and again last week.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Apart from the manifestly good sense of the proposal, is it not much kinder, more considerate and more humane that genuine visitors should know, before they leave their country, that when they get here there will be no hassle? Will not the measure cut out much of the criminality that goes on in countries with the bogus sale of passages? Is not the synthetic indignation of the Opposition an indication that they care more about those who are not genuine visitors than those who are?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. and learned Friend is right. One of the bad features of the system which we have changed was the opening it gave to unscrupulous travel operators in the sub-continent to fill young people with bad advice as to what would happen at Heathrow, with results with which all right hon. and hon. Members are familiar. That is one of the bad features which we have done away with.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Are not young men just as eligible for admission as visitors as any other group? Is it not likely that the large number of those who turned up recently at Heathrow were there simply because they knew and their relatives knew that, once the introduction of the visa system had been accomplished, they were the people least likely to be allowed entry?

Mr. Hurd: Of course, there is no reason why young men should not come here as visitors. What staggers belief is that such a large number—several hundred young men from the sub-continent—should decide that the third week in October was the time to make the visit. I believe from the inquiries which are being made that among those people—not the lot—were a large number who would have come anyway in coming months, hoping to take advantage of the old system. When they realised that the old system was going to change, they thought that they would try it on straight away.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the humiliating and degrading scenes to which the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) referred in a staggeringly inappropriate question are the products of the present system? Will my right hon. Friend accept that many of us who have urged constantly upon him that he introduce a system that avoids precisely that humiliation and those degrading scenes are delighted that he has done so and that we now look forward to enabling bona fide visitors to this country to enter without any discrimination applying to them on the basis of their counry of origin—entirely as all hon. Members would wish?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. I have been rather impressed, despite all the obfuscation, at the number of people from the ethnic minorities who, in one way or another, made that point to us in the past week.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is to be a debate later on this matter. I have received no fewer than five applications under Standing Order No. 10 and there is also a ten-minute Bill on the Order Paper. If hon Members will look at the provisional selection of amendments on the Bill, they will see that we have a very long day ahead of us. I shall allow questions on the statement to continue until 4.30 pm, but then, I am afraid, we must move on.

Mr. Cyril Smith (Rochdale): Is the Home Secretary aware that many of us view the introduction of visas with deep concern and apprehension, and a little suspicion, perhaps because it applies only to coloured people? Will the right hon. Gentleman convey to the staff at the office of the Minister of State—the hon. and learned Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington)—the thanks of those who have had this task for the courteous and helpful manner in which they have always dealt with our telephone calls and inquiries? Will the right hon. Gentleman undertake to return to the House when the system has been working for a few weeks to clear up many of our concerns and the questions which he has not been able to answer this afternoon—for example, what will happen in an emergency and what will happen to students? Will he undertake to make a further statement when the scheme has been working for a few weeks?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he has tackled this matter and especially for his thanks, which my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State will be glad to pass on to his staff. Of course the House will want to keep this matter under its eagle eye. We can do better than the hon. Gentleman suggested. We clearly need to have a debate earlier than he suggested to deal with those questions, especially representations by hon. Members. Thereafter, let us see how we get on. The House will certainly want to be kept informed.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Does my right hon. Friend understand that his statement will be widely welcomed by all sections of opinion? Will he disregard the Opposition's protests, which are not supported outside the House and which, I believe, are not supported by many ordinary Labour voters?

Mr. Hurd: After the fulminations of last week, I have been struck by the lack of real emotion on this subject felt by Labour Members, which bears out my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is the Home Secretary aware that at a well-attended public meeting called by the London borough of Newham there was unanimous opposition to and great resentment about the imposition of visas? Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise that a correct and cheaper solution would have been to employ more immigration officers at Heathrow? Does he realise that this scheme will cause great hardship to thousands of relatives of my constituents who now fear that they will have to make long journeys and endure long waiting periods to obtain visas? What specific assurances can the right hon. Gentleman give on that last point? How long will people have to wait for their visas?

Mr. Hurd: So far, the average handling time in the sub-continent has been within the same day. We shall see how we get on. This shows that adequate preparations have been made. There will be a settling down period, but I should be genuinely disappointed if the hon. Gentleman were able in a few weeks' time to make a genuine complaint on that point.

Mr. William Shelton (Streatham): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. Will he comment on the suggestion that those with visas might not be able to enter the country when they arrive?

Mr. Hurd: In all normal circumstances, the possession of a visa will bring about entry. The law does not actually guarantee that. It puts the legal duty on the immigration officer, as the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) knows. The whole point of the visa system, which will certainly operate in this way, is that normally in the overwhelming majority of cases the possession of a visa will bring about entry.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): I thank the staff of the Department for being very helpful. If Ministers were half as helpful, we would not have our present problems. Is the criterion by which a visa is issued simply that a person is a genuine visitor or will this machinery be used, as machinery has been used in the past, to produce an unofficial quota system?

Mr. Hurd: The criteria will be exactly the same as in the past. There has been no alteration in the criteria or definition. The change will simply be that discussion will take place overseas and not here.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the visa system just introduced has been widely acclaimed because it is seen as just and fair to the genuine visitor while at the same time it combats illegal immigration, which many believe is often aided and abetted by Labour Members? Will my right hon. Friend pay particular tribute to many of my constituents who work in the immigration service at Heathrow airport who have been put under intolerable strain in the past two weeks and who have been working long hours in difficult circumstances?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That is one reason why I specifically mentioned those officers in my statement. The views of those who have to operate the immigration service should not be decisive in the forming of policy, but I see nothing wrong in my hon. Friend or myself paying careful attention to what they say.

Mr. Ernie Roberts (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Will the right hon. Gentleman give instructions to his junior Ministers and his officials to treat visitors to Britain more humanely? Since last year, I have dealt with hundreds of cases, as Ministers know. I have been appalled at the way in which those visitors have been treated in the past two or three weeks. They have been given inhuman treatment. They have not been allowed to know where their relatives are. They have been refused answers on the telephone. They have made numerous visits but still have not been given the information that they require. These visitors have had insults piled upon their injuries. Will the Home Secretary ensure that instructions are given so that these unfortunate people are treated in a much more humane and decent way? Will he ensure that they are given the information to which they are entitled and, more importantly, that Members of Parliament are given the information to which they are entitled about the whereabouts of the people on whose behalf they are trying to act?

Mr. Hurd: I reject the tone of what the hon. Gentleman has said. I think that, on reflection, he will regret some of the words he used. Of course, any system works better when it is not under the extreme pressures which the former system has been under several times in the past two years. That is one reason why we have changed it.

Mr. Roberts: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take the point of order later.

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): Will my right hon. Friend accept that most of the concerns of my Asian constituents derive partly from irresponsible scares put around by Opposition Members as to the length of time they will have to wait to get a visa and partly from the lack of information as to who needs a visa? Therefore, will he undertake to mount an extensive publicity campaign, particularly through the ethnic minority press, to reassure my constituents? They are now asking, for example, whether they need a visa if they have indefinite leave to remain. Will he undertake to review the appeal system because of the length of time it is currently taking to deal with appeals and the extra burden that the new system is bound to throw upon it?

Mr. Hurd: Obviously we have done our best to inform all the organisations in this country which might be interested and we will continue to do that because we have to clean up after statements which misrepresent the facts and reassure genuine travellers and their families. Let me look at my hon. Friend's point about appeals. Obviously there may be an increase in the number of appeals and the machinery may need to be strengthened to cope with them.

Mr. Norman Atkinson (Tottenham): Is the Home Secretary aware that the sheer machanics contradict the assurances he has given in regard to same day issue of visas, justice, equality and all the other aspects which he has mentioned? Is he aware that his own staff plus those in the Foreign Office have said that the extra burden amounts to at least 20,000 hours per week if each application is given only 10 minutes? Yet the right hon. Gentleman has just announced that only 39 additional staff are going overseas in order to deal with that extra burden. Is not the real reason for the policy to cut by half the number of visitors who are coming to this country?

Mr. Hurd: No. Indeed, that would be absurd given that the overwhelming majority—more than 90 per cent.—of visitors from the countries I have mentioned are clearly welcomed as bona fide visitors and there is no difficulty for them. I said—I do not wish to be misrepresented—that the record to date is of same day issue. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary will do his best to ensure that the delay in obtaining visas, whether issued by post or after interview, will be kept to a minimum. That is why the staffs have been strengthened.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. Friend accept that his statement will be widely welcomed throughout the country, and especially the assurances he has given on the length of time people will be kept waiting for visas? It will be unlike the position of 53-year-old Mr. Surendra Biswas of Middlesbrough, who has been waiting 14 weeks for the Indian embassy in this country to acknowledge the fact that he has applied for a visa to visit his parents in India.

Mr. Hurd: The House will be interested in that anecdote.

Mr. Kaufman: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that he is completely misunderstanding the stop system if he

says that it changes an administrative decision? It does no such thing. It makes sure that no irrevocable action is taken while the decision is properly considered. If a visa is not accepted, as the Home Secretary says that it may not necessarily be, will the stop system operate? What will be the position of returning residents? They are in doubt about their position. Will they need visas? If they are not allowed in, will the stop system operate on their behalf? What about somebody with an urgent family emergency, for example, with news of the impending death of a relative while the embassy is closed at the weekend? Will they be able to get on a plane, come here and make contact with their relatives if they are stopped and if there is a prospect of their being returned? People need to know. These are human predicaments.

Mr. Hurd: The specific questions asked by the right hon. Gentleman are perfectly reasonable. I can confirm that returning residents will be exempt from visa requirements. There will be exceptional cases which the House will want to discuss when we debate the guidelines. Members will naturally want to make representations because there will be cases where, in spite of the visa system, for special reasons it will be for the immigration officer to make a value judgment. Those are the sort of detailed but necessary points that the House will want to discuss, and we will want to put our detailed proposals to the House. I hope that debate can be arranged quickly.

Mr. Speaker: I will now take the point of order from the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Mr. Roberts) if he wishes to raise it.

Mr. Ernie Roberts: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In reply to my observations, the Home Secretary said that I would be sorry about raising the questions that I raised. I want to know whether the Home Secretary was making a threat.

Mr. Hurd: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I assumed that the hon. Gentleman was capable of second thoughts.

Sir John Farr: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I suggest that a statement of this importance on visas is not complete without a question from an hon. Member from the county or city of Leicester where the biggest impact of Asian immigrants has been felt recently? It might complete the proceedings, Mr. Speaker, if you were to extend the time for questions in order to enable at least one hon. Member from Leicester to put a question to the Home Secretary.

Mr. Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, It is extremely difficult for the Chair when such a large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part. All I can say is that those hon. Members who are unable to put a question on the statement are always given priority when the matter is subsequently raised. I keep careful lists on these matters.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman was called, of course.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You asked hon. Members to restrict their questions because of the debate intimated by the Home Secretary. Are you in possession of any information to show that the debate will take place before the 23 October introduction of further visa restrictions on Ghanaian nationals, otherwise the problems experienced today in attempting to raise points could be repeated?

Mr. Speaker: As I understand it, the Home Secretary said that he would seek to ensure that we had a debate before the House prorogued.

Lamb (Radiation)

4.37 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the persistent effect of radiation on agriculture in Gwynedd and elsewhere."

This matter is specific because the problems are defined in specific areas in Gwynedd, north-west England and the south of Scotland and they relate to specific farms. The problem is not one of a danger to the general public from eating lamb. Indeed, I should like to make it clear that there is no danger to the general public because the lamb reaching the shops has been subject to the tight screening procedures that take place.

The matter is important because the effects of radiation are still running at an alarmingly high level. Readings in my county of Gwynedd this month have shown levels of radioactivity in lamb running at 4,000 bq/kg. That is four times higher than the Government's own alarm level and it will take six to nine months for the level of radiation to decay to a level that will allow the lifting of the ban.

Readings of radiation in silage during the Recess have shown a level as much as five times higher than that which is acceptable in fodder given to milk cows. However, the Government have given the go-ahead for the silage to be used without any certainty of testing to show that there are no genetic problems or danger to the animals.

The matter is also important because the compensation provisions brought forward by the Government, while having helped some farmers very much indeed, remain a matter of rough justice. There are massive loopholes, especially for those farmers who waited over three weeks after the end of the ban before marketing, which led them into extreme cash flow problems.

The matter is urgent because many hill farmers in Gwynedd are facing the prospect of a whole winter without the ban being lifted. They have grave worries about the genetic effects on animals. They have severe cash flow problems and many are wondering whether it is Chernobyl that caused this radiation or whether the sources are nearer home. The matter is of great anxiety to my constituents, who have waited all through the summer recess for an opportunity for these points to be raised in the House.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the persistent effect of radiation on agriculture in Gwynedd and elsewhere."

I fully appreciate the concern expressed by the hon. Gentleman, but he knows that my only duty is to decide whether this matter should take precedence over the business set down for today. I much regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Bedford Commercial Vehicles

4.40 pm

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement last month by Bedford Commercial Vehicles that it was to phase out the production of its medium and heavy duty trucks with the result of a reduction in the work force of 1,450 people spread between Dunstable and Luton."

The matter is urgent because it follows an earlier announcement by General Motors of hundreds of other job losses as a result of rationalisation at the Luton and Dunstable plants. This not only causes a further shrinking of Bedfordshire's manufacturing base, but will have a serious effect on other local businesses as well as on suppliers of and dealers in Bedford commercial vehicles throughout the country.

The matter is also urgent and should have precedence because when a blow to employment of this magnitude occurs in an area which, since the war, has provided thousands of jobs in manufacturing industry, the House should abandon other business and allow a debate on this matter, given the serious effects that it will have on employment in Bedfordshire and other parts of the country.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement last month by Bedford Commercial Vehicles that it was to phase out the production of its medium and heavy duty trucks with the result of a reduction in the work force of 1,450 people spread between Dunstable and Luton."

Again, I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman in his concern for his constituents, but I regret that I have to give the same answer that I gave before, which is that I do not consider that the matter is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Immigration Rules

4.42 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the statement of change in the immigration rules, Cmnd. 9914, and the rights of Members."

The exchanges that have taken place this afternoon on the statement made by the Home Secretary illustrate vividly the widespread concern in the House at the Government decision made earlier this month to introduce visas for citizens of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh wishing to visit this country. In the view of many, that decision was racist, will do severe damage to community relations in many areas in Britain and will damage already poor relations between Britain and Commonwalth countries. I am sure that many of us were concerned to hear Prime Minister Gandhi condemn this decision as "racist" and "very sad".

The nationals of the countries concerned very much resent that they are now required to obtain visas to visit this country, and it is important that we should remember that most people concerned in this are visitors. It is also important to remember that this decision has effectively abolished the right of children of British citizens to be able to come to this country and to claim the right of entry, and if refused to remain in this country pending appeal. It is also creating difficulties for students because now they will be given visas to come to this country only if they possess a letter of acceptance from a college admitting them to a course of study. It is also causing deep resentment among nationals of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh who have lived in this country for many years — many of them have lived in your constituency, Mr. Speaker, for many years — and who are now required to have a visa exemption stamp in their passport if, on the advice of the Home Secretary, they are to avoid difficulties when they return to this country. We, as their representatives, regret that they have to go to the time, trouble and inconvenience of obtaining that stamp.

The Government's policy is clearly aimed at stopping a number of black and Asian people from being able to visit this country and preventing a number of Members of Parliament from assisting their constituents when their relatives and friends experience difficulties in being admitted to the country. The Home Secretary has said that a debate will be held. If you are in difficulty in agreeing my application, Mr. Speaker, I ask you in the name of Lord Mowbray-King and in the spirit of the words that you uttered earlier about the importance of the office that you hold concerning the rights of Members, to put pressure on the Government to ensure that the debate will be a full debate, and not a late night hour and a half on a Thursday night, which will deny all of us the opportunity to put our case against this move.

It should be a debate in which the Government are called to the House to account for their actions. We can quiz them on their decisions and——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has had more than three minutes.

The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the statement of change in the immigration rules, Cmnd. 9914, and the rights of Members."

I have to decide whether this matter should have precedence over the orders set down for today. I regret that I do not consider that the matter is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit the hon. Gentleman's application to the House.

British Leyland

4.46 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the major job losses in Coventry because of privatisation from British Leyland."

Coventry Climax, a large firm in Coventry South-East, went into receivership three weeks ago, putting 900 jobs at risk. Two weeks ago the receivers, Price Waterhouse, axed 170 of those jobs, which added to the 200 jobs lost in July. The scale and impact of those redundancies — brown envelopes for the sack, white envelope for a reprieve — is something with which we are becoming depressingly familiar in Coventry, a city that has lost 62,000 manufacturing jobs in the past 10 years.

The specific need for the debate flows from the flood of promises made by successive Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry to the House on the benefits of privatisation, particularly with regard to British Leyland, one of the largest employers in Coventry, which has suffered a haemorrhaging of jobs. Another part of British Leyland, Self-Changing Gears, which was privatised through the back door three months ago without any announcement in the House, cut 20 per cent. of its jobs two weeks ago. This is despite a letter from the managing director speaking about the company being

"backed by the resources of a major international company".

The then Minister of State at the Department of Trade and Industry told me in a written answer that privatisation was in

"the best long-term interest of the company." — [*Official Report*, 14 May 1986; Vol 97, c. *481*.]

The matter is important because not only will the debate register the anger of working people in our city against the callous indifference of the Goernment, it will ask one or two searching questions about the dubious financial practices at Climax in recent years. Five years ago it was privatised by British Leyland and since then not one penny has been paid to British Leyland. Is it a coincidence that, six weeks before the first £1·6 million was due for the purchase of that company, those who bought it packed up and ran, and handed the company over to a receiver?

Are we witnessing the break-up of Climax? Is it a coincidence that Price Waterhouse is sending out three memoranda of purchase for parts, spares, engines and trucks to prospective purchasers? Is it breaking up that firm and putting the 900 jobs at risk?

If you were to grant a debate, Mr. Speaker, that would give me the opportunity to put forward the only solution to the problems affecting Alvis, Jaguar, Self-Changing Gears and Climax since their privatisation. That solution is the re-nationalisation of those firms, the restoration of manning levels and the offer of jobs to the redundant workers and those who have been sacked.

I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to respect the feelings and the wishes of the families in Coventry who have lost their jobs in the past three months because of the Government, and at least grant us a debate.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing an important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the major job losses in Coventry due to privatisation from British Leyland."

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will find other ways of bringing this matter before the House, because I have to rule that I do not consider that the matter is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Rate Support Grants Act 1986
2. Western Isles Islands Council (Berneray Harbour) Order Confirmation Act 1986.

Unborn Children (Protection) (No. 2) Bill

4.51 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the law relating to human embryos produced by *in vitro* fertilisation; and to make additional provision in relation thereto.

Eighteen months ago, the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) introduced the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill. It is a great privilege for me this afternoon to follow such a distinguished and respected Member of this House. I cannot match his eloquence, but I can perhaps match his strength of feeling.

During the past 20 years, the House has been instrumental in passing a series of laws which have devastated and, in some respects, barbarised our society. All attempts to fight back have been blocked by the use of parliamentary procedure accompanied by jingoistic rhetoric in which precisely the same formula is used in statement after statement. Every Bill which attempts to reverse this so-called permissive legislation is described as ill thought out or hastily drafted. All manner of sinister motives or abuses are outlined.

Having sat through a number of debates on ethical issues, I sometimes feel as though precisely the same statements and press releases are used with simply the headlines and nouns changed to alternate between abortion, pornography, sex education and the use of the embryonic human being as a guinea pig. The whole matter would be laughable were it not for the fact that the tactics none the less succeed in ensuring that the will of Parliament is thwarted by the minority.

Britain must be the only country in the western world in which Bills which have a huge majority do not reach the statute book because of the tactics of the minority. When the right hon. Member for South Down presented the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill it was given a Second Reading by 238 votes to 66. There is still a huge majority in the House and elsewhere in favour of legislation which will protect the human embryo from non-therapeutic experiments. However, when I presented the measure as a private Member's Bill earlier this year, it soon became obvious to me and to the other supporters of the Bill that our opponents were determined that there would not be a debate, let alone a vote, on the subject.

We have no intention of seeing democracy baulked any longer, and we are determined today, even at this late stage in the parliamentary year, to have a vote to show the British public that the majority in the House is concerned to see something done to protect the human embryo. Any party or Government which pays lip service to democracy has a duty to defend democracy and to protect the House and the country from campaigns which seek to obscure the truth about what is happening.

It is fair to say that the Government set up the Warnock committee when they recognised the dangers of the developments in embryology in an attempt to clarify the position. The Government deserve to be congratulated on that. But let us be frank. All the members of the Warnock committee admitted at the outset that they favoured the use of the human embryo for experiments. However, even they were forced to admit that the human embryo is undeniably a member of the human species. Page 65 of the report states:

"From the moment of fertilisation there is no particular part of the development process which is more important than another; all are part of a continuous process and unless each stage takes place normally, at the correct time, and in the correct sequence, further development will cease. Thus biologically there is no one single identifiable stage in the development of the embryo beyond which the in vitro embryo should not be kept alive."

The report of the Australian Senate Select Committee on human embryo experimentation states:

"In this situation prudence dictates that, until the contrary is demonstrated 'beyond reasonable doubt' . . . the embryo of the human species should be regarded as if it were a human subject for the purposes of biomedical ethics."

Every declaration of medical ethics — be it the Hippocratic oath or the updated declaration of Geneva —categorically states:

"I will maintain the utmost respect for human life, from the time of conception: even under threat, I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity."

The declaration of Helsinki, adoped by the 18th World Medical Assembly in 1975, to provide guidelines for doctors in biomedical research involving human subjects, states:

"In research on man, the interests of science and society should never take precedence over considerations related to the well-being of the subject."

Yet what do we witness happening in this country? Scientists can carry out open-ended research on embryonic human beings with no legal upper limit. Even the Warnock committee urged that a legal limit of 14 days should be imposed. Every argument favouring the use of the embryonic human being for experimentation includes a rosy picture of the benefits for society if only we allowed scientists freedom. There would be cures for cancer and muscular dystrophy. According to some of the world's most outstanding scientists in this area, these claims are highly suspect, if not downright ridiculous. In finding cures for genetic diseases by gene manipulation, one has to be able to assess the effect on the target tissue, which in no case is present by 14 days — the limit recommended by Warnock and supported by some members of the Medical Research Council.

Moreover, I stress that those of us who oppose the destruction of unborn children, at all stages, for reasons of handicap, are at least equally concerned to find cures for genetic diseases as are those who oppose us. Having failed to convince the public with their justifications for using the embryo, scientists have now resorted to the invention of a new word — "the pre-embryo" — to describe the human who has not yet implanted in his or her mother's womb, albeit that they cannot deny that from the moment of conception it is an individual and genetically unique human which, if safeguarded, will develop its full potential just as a new-born baby will.

The term "pre-embryo" is a Humpty Dumpty word. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, how in "Alice in Wonderland", Humpty Dumpty used all manner of words wrongly, justifying himself by claiming, "I pay 'em extra". The term is used persistently by the Medical Research Council, I regret to say, to diminish the status of the newly conceived embryo in the minds of the public and so justify its actions.

However, David Davies, the former editor of *Nature* magazine and a member of the Warnock committee—who is certainly not sympathetic to my case—stated in *Nature* on 20 March 1986 that the term "pre-embryo" was never used or put before the Warnock committee, and he added that the scientists using the term "pre-embryo" were "manipulating words to polarise an ethical discussion."

[Mr. Ken Hargreaves]

I have tried to address myself to criticisms made by opponents of the Bill and to show that we are beyond doubt talking about a human being when we refer to an embryo of the human species and that cures for genetic diseases will not be forthcoming from experimenting on human embryos.

The other major claim made by the opponents to the Bill is that it will put an end to in vitro fertilisation and prevent an infertile couple from having a much-wanted child. That is not the intention of the Bill, nor would it be its effect. Last year the right hon. Member for South Down said that the Bill does not in any way interfere with the procedures which are at present in use for enabling a woman, who could not otherwise do so, to bear a child. The Bill was deliberately and carefully drawn so as not to interfere with those procedures, and that view was confirmed by the Department of Health and Social Security. I deeply regret that infertile couples have been worried by some of the claims made about the Bill.

The use of the embryonic human being is without doubt one of the most dangerous developments facing humanity this century. We in this House have a duty to protect society and humanity. The consequences of doing nothing will be far-reaching. The Bill in no way restricts existing IVF procedures and it does nothing to prevent the discovery of cures for genetic diseases, but it gives the human embryo the right to the legal protection that the rest of us enjoy. It has the support of many organisations, from the Salvation Army to the Royal College of Nursing and Women for Women, and it has widespread support throughout the country. We have an opportunity to give a moral lead to the world. Passing the Bill today would be a first step. I commend the Bill to the House.

5.1 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I wish briefly to oppose the Bill. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) on gaining time for a ten-minute Bill, but I regret that I cannot agree with the proposals that he has put forward because they fly in the face of the vast majority of medical opinion not only in this country but in all countries. The Fertility Society of America has followed the recommendations of the Warnock committee, and those recommendations have also been accepted in Australia, where a great deal of work has been done. Having visited Japan last week, I can also report that the Japanese Academy of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists also approves the work and recommendations of the Warnock committee in seeking to continue research into the causes of infertility and congenital handicap and to provide treatment for those who suffer.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn speaks for a vociferous minority fomented by religious doubters, but he flies in the face of majority public opinion which has been expressed clearly in favour of human embryo research aimed at prevention of congenital handicap. I speak today for the silent minority who suffer grievous personal hardship through problems of infertility or inherited disorders. One in 50 of all children born suffers from a congenital handicap. I wish to speak especially for the forgotten minority of children so handicapped that their parents are unable to care for them—children who are therefore in institutional care. It is surprising that those who express so much concern for the human embryo have not been able to band together to offer fostering or adoptive homes for those children so deserving of parental love and care, as children born with such grievous handicaps should surely have even more parental devotion and loving care than normal children.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) has spoken of the dignity of man and his instinctive repugnance for research, but what dignity is there for those handicapped children for whom society is unable to care as it should? God gave us heads that we should use them and not bury them in the sand. Religious objections have been mentioned, but my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn should remember that the Church of England Synod rejected a motion calling for a ban on research. Father John Mahoney, president of the Catholic Theological Association, has written an excellent book on "Bioethics and Belief". I am sorry that Cardinal Hume has had to withdraw his imprimatur, showing the depth of division within the Catholic church.

Of course there should be limits. The Warnock committee put forward strict guidelines and called for a statutory licensing authority. In the absence of legislation, a voluntary licensing authority — a uniquely British institution—has been set up, composed of eminent lay members and representatives from the Medical Research Council and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. That authority, which is the envy of the world, has visited 24 IVF establishments in this country and its work has been praised by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I hope that Members on both sides will join my right hon. Friend in praising its work in authorising research in this country.

No research means no test-tube babies. My hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn seems to think that test-tube babies can be produced without research. This country leads the world in pioneering research in this area. The establishment at Bourne hall has now announced the thousandth successful pregnancy. As there have been only 3,000 worldwide, that shows the extent of our lead in this area. Does my hon. Friend wish our research teams to have to go abroad to continue their work, which is so urgently needed to improve the success rate of IVF, currently only about 20 per cent., and to discover possible methods of preventing congenital handicap through embryonic biopsy? My hon. Friend seems unaware of the significance of recent developments in genetic diagnosis for cystic fibrosis and muscular dystrophy.

I thank the 150 right hon. and hon. Members who supported my early-day motion 32 on the prevention of congenital handicap, drawing attention to the launching of the Progress group which brings together 41 organisations concerned with medical charity work and medical work generally which support the need for further research.

I ask the House to reject the Bill and to await the Government legislation that has been promised as soon as possible and which I hope will be along the lines of the Warnock committee's recommendations.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and Nominations of Select Committees at Commencement of Public Business):—

The House divided: Ayes 229, Noes 129.

Division No. 281] **[5.10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bright, Graham
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Donald
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hill, James
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
McGuire, Michael
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNamara, Kevin
McQuarrie, Albert
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Park, George
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowlands, Ted
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stokes, John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Tinn, James
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
White, James
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Wilson, Gordon
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Woodall, Alec
Woodcock, Michael
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Hind and
Mr. Ian Campbell.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adley, Robert
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Buchan, Norman
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dorrell, Stephen
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Farr, Sir John
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Forth, Eric
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gourlay, Harry
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haselhurst, Alan
Heffer, Eric S.
Hicks, Robert
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Knowles, Michael
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Madden, Max
Maples, John
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*

Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nellist, David
Nelson, Anthony
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prescott, John
Raffan, Keith
Raynsford, Nick
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soley, Clive
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Thurnham, Peter
Wainwright, R.
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Welsh, Michael
Wiggin, Jerry
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Mikardo and
Mr. Dafydd Wigley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Ken Hargreaves, Mr. David Amess, Mr. A. J. Beith, Sir Bernard Braine, Mr. Peter Brunivels, Mr. Ian Campbell, Mr. David Evennett, Mr. Michael Hancock, Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman, Dame Jill Knight, Mr. James White and Mrs. Ann Winterton.

UNBORN CHILDREN (PROTECTION) (NO. 2) BILL

Mr. Ken Hargreaves accordingly presented a Bill to amend the law relating to human embryos produced by in vitro fertilisation; and to make additional provision in relation thereto: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 24 October and to be printed. [Bill 220.]

Orders of the Day

Education Bill *[Lords]*

As amended [in the Standing Committee], further considered.

New Clause 38

School transport

'In section 55 of the 1944 Act (provision of transport and other facilities), the following subsection shall be added at the end—

"(3) In considering whether or not they are required by subsection (1) above to make arrangements in relation to a particular pupil, the local education authority shall have regard (amongst other things) to the age of the pupil and the nature of the route, or alternative routes, which he could reasonably be expected to take."'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

5.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take the following:

New clause 23—*Choice of school and concessionary travel—*

'(1) The duty imposed by section 6(2) of the 1980 Act that a local education authority and the governors of a school shall comply with a parental preference shall apply notwithstanding the provisions of subsection 3 (*a*) of that section where the choice of school involves travel from home to that school by the child of a greater distance than would be involved in travel to another school within the local education area.

(2) A child shall be entitled to concessionary travel for the journey to and from school notwithstanding the fact that the school is not the nearest school to his or her home, that child attends that school as a result of a preference expressed pursuant to section 6 of the 1980 Act.'.

New clause 24—*Transport facilities—*

'Notwithstanding the provisions of section 55 of the 1944 Act, a local education authority may establish arrangements for travel to and from school and payment of travelling expenses of any pupil in attendance at any school within the local authority area on the basis that each pupil will be required to pay a flat charge for contribution towards the cost of each journey.'.

New clause 25—*Safe walking distance to school—*

'At the end of section 39 of the 1944 Act, the following words shall be added—

"Provided that no child shall be expected to walk to school on a route which is inadequately lit uses unmetalled roads or is in any other way hazardous."'.

New clause 31A—*Safety in walking to school—*

'At the end of section 39 of the 1944 Act the following words shall be added "provided that the local education authority shall have full regard to safety as well as distance when determiing that route."'.

New clause 33—*Transport facilities—*

'Where the education authority, in any rural area, provides transport facilities there shall be a requirement that at least one adult supervisor be carried throughout the journey in addition to the driver.'.

Mr. Dunn: I am aware of the concern that hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed about children's safety on their journeys between home and school. In recognition of this, and in response to the Law Lords' judgment, the Government have proposed a new

clause to clarify certain of the circumstances which a local authority must consider before determining whether transport arrangements are necessary. By making section 55 of the Education Act 1944 more specific we aim to ensure that local education authorities across the country exercise their duty consistently.

I understand that there has been some concern that it was not possible for the Government to consult the local authority associations, as we might have done. The House will know that the Government could take no action until the judgment was delivered in another place on 16 October. Consequently, I hope that the House will accept that we are grasping this opportunity to make a late change to the Bill in response to the Rogers judgment and to the views expressed in the House and outside by hon. Members. Clearly, until we knew what the judgment was to be, we could not have attempted a change in the law.

New clauses 23, 24 and 25 are all concerned in some way with school transport and concessionary travel. I shall be seeking to press the House not to accept those new clauses but I hope that the House will accept new clause 38 in the name of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): We appreciate what the Under-Secretary said about the shortage of time since the Rogers judgment on 16 October, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will not dispute that this is another instance of something being hastily tacked on to the Bill. We have had cause during the course of the Bill to complain about that.

The Under-Secretary said that he hopes that the new clause will clarify the situation and make more specific the duty on local education authorities. However, the new clause is surprisingly vague and we should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would amplify it. I was expecting him to say a little more in defence of the new clause and to explain the Government's reasoning.

As I understand it, the education authorities will not be much wiser unless they are far more versed in the law than my hon. Friends. The new clause says "have regard to", but it does not seem to place any obligation on local authorities and even that one proviso is weakened by the words "amongst other things". The Under-Secretary has not specified what other things the Government have in mind.

One of the things that should be taken into account is the age of the pupil and that is already covered by section 39(5) of the Education Act 1944. The nature of the route, as the noble Lord Ackner made clear in his judgment, would appear to be irrelevant in coming to a decision.

In asking the House to support or understand their new clause the Government must make clear the terms of any circular that they will be sending out to local education authorities which informs them of their new obligations and also whether they will be asking those local education authorities to find ways to explain to all parents what their rights are as a result of the new clause.

Without some guidance from the Government about the terms of any circular which will clarify the change in the law and without some assurance that local education authorities will be obliged to pass on that explanation to parents, we shall remain unconvinced of the need for the new clause, and, indeed, the haste with which it is being introduced. We wait to hear more from the Government on that point.

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): First, I warmly welcome new clause 38. Those of us who have expressed concern about various matters relating to school transport over the years are grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for bringing the new clause forward. Nevertheless, there are one or two points of concern relating to the new clause which link in with new clauses 23, 24 and 25 and which, in turn, range over potentially wider ground. I want to make some comment on those and I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to make some useful comments in response.

The concern which led to the tabling of new clause 23 relates essentially to parental choice. Section 6 of the Education Act 1980 laid a duty on local authorities to enable parents to express

"a preference as to the school at which he wishes education to be provided for his child".

The local education authority and the governors must comply with that preference unless — it is a very big unless—

"compliance with the preference would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources".

There is the rub. In other words, there is not much choice and the local education authority's view of what is and is not efficient is paramount. The producer decides and if someone does not like it it is pretty tough. Some can have choice by paying twice, first in their taxes and secondly by going to a private school. Sometimes there is an element of choice in a particular local authority area and children may go some distance to a school, but the parent must pay for that transport. Some can afford to do so and some cannot. Choice depends very much on the ability to pay.

That brings me to a specific point relating to my constituency, but similar points have arisen in other parts of the country. In the Calderdale metropolitan borough council area we have grammar schools in the Halifax constituency and comprehensive schools in the Calder Valley constituency. Parents who wish to send their children to a grammar school but live in an area with comprehensive schools cannot do so unless they can afford the transport costs, which can be substantial in a local authority area that is 20 miles from end to end.

The same applies to parents who wish to send their children to a comprehensive school when they live in an area of selective education. The children must, according to the local education authority, go to the nearest suitable school, and what is suitable is decided not by ability or aptitude or choice but by the local bureaucracy.

If a child living just inside an area of comprehensive education wants to attend a grammar school and is suited by ability and aptitude to do so, he or she cannot unless the parents foot the bill for the transport and overcome a number of other hurdles placed in their way by the local education authority. Yet their friends living but a few hundred yards away may go to grammar school and perhaps receive a bus pass. That is grossly unfair and militates against good education. In the politically controlled system that we have, the bureaucrat is king.

Local education authorities have some discretion in whether to grant bus passes but so far that discretion is rarely used to improve parental choice and to give assistance with transport costs to relatively low income families to allow them to make a choice on behalf of their children, so easing the restrictions upon choice. Will new clause 38 allow — indeed, encourage — local education

[Mr. Roy Galley]

authorities to use their discretion more widely, bearing in mind parental choice and the ability and aptitude of the child? I should be grateful for an assurance from my hon. Friend on that point.

One appreciates that this issue is the central dilemma of our education policy in that the consumer has little opportunity to influence events. We have taken some measures to overcome the problem, but we must go further. Until we grapple with the question of transport costs, there will not be the wide range of choice that the vast majority of people require.

We have given those who express a preference on religious grounds a wider range of choice without necessarily the requirement to pay extra and that is right. But we need to extend that principle to give people choice on educational grounds as well as on religious grounds. New clause 23 is an attempt to overcome that problem which has reference to the Halifax area and other parts of the country. I should be grateful to know from my hon. Friend the Minister whether new clause 38 goes any way towards meeting those concerns.

The financial and educational implications of new clause 23 may be very wide, which is why we have tabled new clause 24. Local education authority resources are bound to be strictly limited and it is obviously legitimate to argue that if further resources were available, assistance with transport costs to facilitate choice would not necessarily be the number one priority. That money might be well spent by allowing real choice and the consumer rather than the producer to determine what goes on in our schools and how the money is spent. But one must live with the financial realities. As new clause 24 suggests, a flat rate charging system could have a neutral effect on LEA budgets, instead of allowing free travel beyond the statutory limits set down in the Education Act 1944 and could provide no assistance in other cases. The new clause would institute, at the local education authority's discretion, a flat rate charging system for all children attending maintained schools in a local education authority area. The Minister may have some sympathy with that principle, and I hope that the Government are prepared to move in that direction in due course.

5.30 pm

Flat rate charging for school transport has long been considered by Governments of both parties. In 1973 a working party recommended it. In 1975 the Labour Government discussed a proposal. This Government against considered it in 1980. But the idea has been abandoned on each occasion because of the opposition of vested interests in local education authorities. This Government do not often bow to vested interests. Indeed, they quite rightly seem to take delight in taking on those vested interests in the national interest. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to take on flat rate charging with, of course, some modifications that may lead to banding of charges for very short or long journeys and with especial reference to those on supplementary benefits, family credits, and the handicapped. Generally, it would be a fairer system for the majority and would allow greater choice for all when combined with new clause 23.

New clause 25 covers the same ground as the Government's new clause 38. The Government should be congratulated on having accepted the deep anxiety of many parents throughout the country about the lack of any cognisance of safety in the rules relating to bus passes. But new clause 38 is not very specific about safety. My new clause 25 and new clause 31A make specific reference to safety and to non-hazardous routes. I would have been much happier if my hon. Friend the Minister had presented proposals which made specific reference to safety as a factor which the local education authority should take into account. There are occasions when the routes prescribed by local education authorities are isolated and dangerous because of traffic or possible attacks upon children. There are routes in my constituency and in many others which may just be feasible for an adult on a summer day but which are not feasible for a child on a dark winter's night. No reasonable parent would allow his child to walk such routes. Yet it is not always feasible for parents to accompany their children on walks to and from school. The Rogers case brought all those issues before the courts, the House of Lords and now this House.

I am worried that the Minister's proposal in clause 38 may not resolve all those difficulties. Will he assure us that where a hazard exists to children on a route, it will be the local education authority's duty to take into account the safety of a child walking that route? If my hon. Friend can allow some concession on the matters that I have raised, I shall withdraw those new clauses and not force them to a Division.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I compliment the Minister on his fast reaction to the case. I am a co-signatory of new clause 25, and I believe that the words

"which he could reasonably be expected to take"

which supersede the previous "availability" are sufficient for any sane local education authority. No parent will be expected to take his child to school or to allow him to go on his own to school on a route which is as dangerous as many routes are in the rural constituencies.

I hope that the Minister will accept that everyone is angry about arbitrary limits such as two or three miles. It is extraordinarily easy for the Opposition to complain about finding a reasonable distance, but I am content with what is happening now. The House should be grateful to the Minister for his new clause. Even though it is yet another clause which was not previously in this hotch-potch of a Bill, I welcome it. But I hope that he will bear in mind that when routes are dangerous and transport on them must be provided, the money comes from the local education authority. Yet the LEAs are strapped for cash and are penalised for spending it. I hope that if exceptional circumstances arise, they will be met with exceptional generosity for those areas that need safe routes, that is, routes that one could reasonably expect children to take on their way to school.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) has clearly outlined the issues that still cause anxiety. I should like to place on record the continuing anxiety of those parents who have selected a religious-based education for their children, but who find their children attending schools of a different denomination, and, who therefore are segregated in the award of bus passes. During the past two or three years there have been many complaints about what is quite simply religious discrimination. Such discrimination is unjust, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will address himself to that. I also wish to place on record my

thanks for the extremely courteous and sympathetic way in which my hon. Friend the Minister has listened to the representations of myself, my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) and others during the recess and the manner in which he has responded to the anxieties expressed to us by many parents. I know that those parents will be grateful, and hon. Members should be grateful, to the Minister for the way in which he has responded.

I do not seek to press my amendment to a Division.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Moorsholm is right on the Yorkshire moors, or at least it was in Yorkshire, until some bureaucrat decided to put it in Cleveland. If the children in Moorsholm were still under the North Yorkshire education authority, they would be provided with escorts on the buses, but because they are in Cleveland they are not. That is now a political hot potato, unfortunately based on the death last summer of an eight-year-old constituent. The Conservative Members in that area have been pressing for an amendment, or a voluntary submission, for an additional person by Cleveland education authority. At the relevant sub-committee that was carried by a combination of wise Conservative and Left-wing Labour members. However, at the full education committee, it was referred back for reconsideration. I am talking about one escort on one bus that goes into the middle of the North Yorkshire moors. As we all know, that area suffers from extremes of weather and in the winter conditions are often untenable. Nevertheless, parents rightly wait at the roadside to meet their children.

The bus driver has responsibility for the lives of those children, yet there is often mayhem behind him. Children will not always behave like little choir boys or angels, so what is a driver, who is driving in the snow and dark, to do when something happens? Is he to stop and thus risk skidding? It is surely essential for another adult to be on the bus. Is it not criminal that we should allow education authorities to have the right to make such a decision? Parliament must step in and say that when buses are provided from public funds to take children to school, it is unreasonable to expect the driver to accept total responsibility. After all, many schools are closing and children are now having to travel greater distances by bus.

Rightly, parents are not allowed to travel on the buses. But there is ample provision in Cleveland for lollipop men and women in the urban areas, so money cannot be the issue. The issue is whether there is the political will to provide escorts on buses. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to accept the amendment. In the area immediately south of mine, my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) has the benefit of children being escorted. I hope that that will be extended to the children in my area. Parents can then feel happy when they release their children's hands in the morning. However, if the amendment is not accepted, I shall press it to a Division.

5.45 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I compliment my hon. Friend the Minister on introducing new clause 38. He will know that my concern about these issues is long-standing. I first raised the matter in an Adjournment debate in 1984, and last year I introduced the Education (Costs of School Transport) Bill. On both occasions I focused on the problems arising from choice. Under section 6 of the 1980 Act, parents can exercise the choice to send their children to a school other than that chosen by the local authority.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give an assurance that

"shall have regard (amongst other things)"

includes the exercise of choice under section 6 of that Act. I hope so, because otherwise the concession, while worthwhile and welcome, will leave a lacuna which many of us do not want to see.

My Bill concentrated on the problems of choice, but there are also problems of distance, which were highlighted in the case involving Essex county council. I must disabuse hon. Members of the idea that that was an isolated case. In my constituency the chairman of the alliance-controlled education authority decided some months ago to withdraw concessionary bus passes from some children because it was found that the distance was 176 yards short of two miles. It at least made a welcome diversion from the alliance's policy of destroying Devon's grammar schools, but it would have meant that children were condemned to walk along a narrow road between Hawkmoor and Bovey Tracey. The visibility is bad on that road and there are numerous bends. Indeed, the road is so dangerous that if my car broke down in broad daylight, I would not attempt to walk along it. Yet apparently the chairman of the education authority thought that it would be quite suitable for young children to walk along it on a dark winter's evening.

It should not be necessary for legislation to deal with that sort of problem, but I know from my constituency experience that it is. However, on that occasion the problem was resolved probably because of the furore that occurred when the chairman made that attempt and because the Essex v. Rogers case then seemed to support the proposition that that could not be done. But there is now no reason to think that that decision could not be reversed. Consequently, I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for introducing this new clause affecting the distance travelled, but I hope that he will be able to offer some reassurance about section 6 choice.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for introducing new clause 38, which takes into account the sort of road that children must walk along. For years we had a running battle with Lancashire county council, because although children could walk along an awful road to school from the outskirts of a little village called Galgate, no one in his right senses would attempt to do so. However, the other route that could have been used was a little too long to qualify. Happily the dispute is now resolved.

In another part of my constituency some of the scholars are on the wrong side of the A6. I am glad that they will be brought within the ambit of the new clause. It is extremely dangerous for children to cross the road. Thus, I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for taking account of the tremendous anxieties felt, particularly by those parents who have more than one child. Sometimes their children go to different schools, and as a mother has only one pair of hands and one pair of feet, she can accompany children to only one school at a time. This new clause will remove much anxiety.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): I am very sympathetic to new clause 33, although I have a slightly different reason for supporting it. My reason is nevertheless significant and I commend it to the House.

Some weeks ago a group of parents drew my attention to the fact that smoking on school buses was getting out of hand. Although children are being taught in school about the evils of substance abuse and, in particular, smoking, they can come out of their health education lessons and light up on their school buses. I took up the matter with the chief education officer, and yesterday he replied:

"The driver of a vehicle is not permitted to smoke. This is included in the transport contract. However, it would be asking too much of them to discipline pupils who might smoke."

Thus, we have another example of the sort of problem that can arise particularly on single-man operated buses in rural areas. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider that point carefully. It is in the children's best interest that there should be as little smoking as possible on buses, particularly on school buses. For many years we have muddled through with kids smoking on buses, but we must carefully reconsider this situation.

I am glad that the Government have reacted so swiftly to the Suffolk case. I warmly welcome new clause 38 which answers many of the queries which have arisen in my constituency over a long time. The Select Committee on Education, Science and Art has investigated achievements in primary schools, and from time to time it has considered the problems of school transport. Many of us on that Committee will be delighted that this new clause has been moved by the Government, and I heartily support it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) drew attention to the changed circumstances in rural areas. The speed, size and quantity of vehicles on the roads has increased a great deal. We can all recount the tragic circumstances of deaths which have resulted from changes in driver and transport patterns. Only a few weeks ago there was a tragic death in the village of Downton in my constituency. At Britford, hundreds of parents and children are at risk twice a day due to the increased traffic to the cross-Channel terminal—the roll-on roll-off port of Poole. We face an increasingly violent society. Parents think twice about sending their children along roads which, when the 1944 Act was put before the House, were quite different.

Over the years the closure of many rural schools has led to children travelling greater distances to school. My hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) has mentioned the injustices which have resulted because of the two or three-mile rule. There is the injustice of one county having a two-mile rule while the neighbouring county operates a three-mile rule. Such rules can even split a village in the middle of a high street. That is patently ridiculous. I press the Government to go further down the road which they have bravely started to tread.

Wages are often lower in rural areas. In such circumstances, even concessionary bus fares are a major hurdle every week for a family with two or three children. For such families there is no option but the bus. The family car will be used by the bread winner who, in country areas, must drive many miles to work. Mothers cannot always accompany their children, especially, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) rightly said, when a family has children at different schools.

In rural areas, many children must undertake long journeys to school. It is not uncommon for children in my constituency to travel an hour each way. Bus deregulation has meant that some of the schedules have been changed and some children now face longer journeys than they did last term. They have not moved, but the rules have changed. That is not the fault nor the choice of parents in rural areas. It is a situation which has been imposed upon them for the administrative convenience of local education authorities.

Over the years, the goal posts for rural school transport have been changed. For that reason, there is a good case to be made for free school transport. That would be an important and radical step for the Government to consider. I can see the attraction of the proposed flat rate in new clause 24. Nevertheless, I congratulate the Government on moving new clause 38, and I warmly commend it.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I do not wish to rehearse the arguments in respect of school transport and the problems relating to distance. I wish to take the opportunity to thank the Minister for receiving my hon. Friends and myself when we made representations to him concerning these problems.

It was with a certain amount of malice aforethought that my hon. Friends and I tabled these amendments in July, bearing in mind the proximity of the Essex *v.* Rogers judgment. At that time we thought it appropriate that the Government should be prepared to act quickly should the judgment come down in favour of what is, in effect, parenthood. I, and no doubt many of my constituents, appreciate the speed with which the Government have acted on this occasion. They have not been dragged, kicking and screaming, to enact legislation; they have recognised a long, pent-up demand and acted quickly upon the judgment of the law.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), my hon. Friends and I would appreciate further explanation of "(amongst other things.)" I would also appreciate it if the Minister could confirm—I think he said this in his opening remarks—that the question of safety is important.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I congratulate the Minister on these enlightened provisions. There have been problems in my constituency, and we are greatly indebted to him for the speed with which he has acted on this occasion.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): The deregulation of buses affects urban as well as rural areas.

A Catholic convent in the Wirral peninsula has found that it is extremely difficult for some of the girls to reach the convent because of bus deregulation changes. The school has studied the option of providing a bus of its own—the local authority providing the appropriate passes for pupils—but the school would have to find £30,000 for that purpose. I bring this to the attention of the Minister.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: For the past four years my county council has been studying the question of bus deregulation and school transport. It has found that by co-ordinating school transport, the services it wishes to provide and the bus pass concept, it has not only improved school transport but made substantial cost reductions. I wonder

whether my hon. Friend's local authority would like to get in touch with Hereford and Worcester county council to see what can be done.

Mr. Porter: I am grateful for that suggestion. I am sure that my local authority could learn a great deal.

I hope that the Minister can confirm that there is serious consultation between the Department of Transport and the Department of Education and Science on this matter and that it will come to fruition in the next three or four weeks. Indeed, I am sure the Minister will give that assurance. I have listened with interest to this debate, and I add my congratulations to the Department for this new clause, which is absolutely right.

Mr. Dunn: I wish to correct one omission, and that is to welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) to the Front Bench in her new capacity. I have known her for many years, and I have enjoyed working with her in the short time since her appointment.

I thank the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) and my hon. Friends the Members for Halifax (Mr. Galley), for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd), for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman), for Salisbury (Mr. Key), for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) for their remarks about the speed with which we have introduced this new clause.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): As the Minister is dishing out mutual congratulations to everybody, will he pass on his congratulations to the Members of the House of Lords who kept school transport in the Bill against the wishes of the Government?

Mr. Dunn: I was about to say that I thought the debate had been good and even tempered and that it could only get better, but then the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) intervened.

The new clause is in response to the views expressed by hon. Members before the House rose for the recess. We also received a number of representations during the recess. It was my recent pleasure to meet hon. Friends to discuss this matter. Consequently, for many, the new clause will not appear to cover new ground.

The new clause uses the specific words,

"the local education authority shall have regard (amongst other things) to . . ."

to specify the need to look at the transport arrangements for individual pupils. If the clause had specified only certain situations it would have had the effect of excluding other circumstances as and when they arose.

6 pm

The new clause enables local education authorities to consider other circumstances which they regard as significant in the context of local conditions. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central asked for qualification and an example. The health of a child might be a significantly important and relevant circumstance. We have said previously that post-Act guidance to local education authorities will be published. That could cover several of the issues that the hon. Gentleman raised.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax for his comments about the Front Bench responding so quickly, following the decision in the House of Lords. I can tell him with some pleasure that the "nature of the route" in new clause 38 includes safety matters. Local education authorities will be under a new duty to consider that when deciding the necessity for and incidence of school transport.

My hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge asked me to comment on the application of section 6 of the Education Act 1980 to the new clause. The House will remember that section 6 concerns parental choice of school. New clause 38 relates solely to section 55 of the Education Act 1944, which provides for local education authorities to make arrangements for school transport to facilitate the attendance of pupils at schools. I am afraid that the cross-reference that my hon. Friend would like me to make is not there.

Although I appreciate the thrust of the intention behind new clause 23, I have to observe to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax that the new clause would encourage parents to opt for distant schools because, for any school other than the nearest one, the local education authority would be debarred in any circumstances—not just in the provision of transport — from invoking the relief provided by section 6(3)*(a)* of the Education Act 1980, under which it need not meet a parental preference for a school if doing so would prejudice the provision of efficient education or use of resources.

Mr. Nicholls: I understand what my hon. Friend is saying, but surely that would apply only if a parent had chosen a school unreasonably far away. If parents chose a school six miles away, for example that would not prejudice the provision of efficient education. Surely it is not beyond the wit of parliamentary draftsmen to devise a formula which takes account of the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley).

Mr. Dunn: In a blinding intervention—it was one of his usual flashes—my hon. Friend has enabled me to say that I am here today to comment on the proposed new clause. I can only tell him in the nicest possible and gentlest way that the clause would revoke certain aspects of existing legislation which, in normal circumstances, he might not want revoked.

The policy that I have outlined is legitimate, but I am aware, as my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax said in an apposite speech based on what is happening in Calderdale, that his local authority has recently changed its policy on free school transport I quite understand his anxieties about that but some of these matters must be left for local decision.

I believe that I might be able to help my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge a little in regard to new clause 24. It is already open to local education authorities, under section 55(2) of the Education Act 1944, to arrange for home to school transport to be free or at a reduced price. It is also open to local education authorities to arrange for the reduced price to be a single flat rate, but they might well consider that it is not unreasonable for those who travel the furthest to pay the most. My hon. Friend will understand my interest in this matter. I do not see why local education authorities should be prevented from acting on that view.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh — I think that I now have the pronunciation right—

Mr. Holt: I am most grateful for yet another opportunity to put on record that my constituency is pronounced as though there were an "F" on the end.

Mr. Dunn: This is not just a debate on education; it is an education in itself.

New clause 33 concerns supervision of local education authority-provided transport in rural areas. The right for such supervision already exists under section 55 of the 1944 Act. I believe it best that any exercise of the power should depend on the test that the local education authority should consider it necessary. The new clause would seem to require adult supervision on rural, but not more urban, routes, and on local education authority-owned vehicles, but not on those run by other transport operators. I am always conscious of the overlay of extra responsibilities in terms of their financial implications for local education authorities. Ultimately somebody has to pay.

Mr. Holt: Does my hon. Friend agree that the cost of a full-time professional assistant to the leader of Cleveland county council would more than cover the cost of any body to help save the lives of these children?

Mr. Dunn: I am sure that that point is well heard in my hon. Friend's constituency.

We have moved forward a great deal in this matter. The House has, I believe, accepted the Government's motives. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friends will accept new clause 38 and not press their new clauses.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 6

NATIONAL EDUCATION COUNCIL

'(1) A National Education Council shall be established—

(a) to monitor curricula, teaching methods, examinations and methods of teacher training and in-service training;

(b) to assist, by co-operative study and co-ordination, the development of curricula, examinations, teaching methods and methods of teacher training and in service training;

(c) to publish its reviews and report annually and to promote good practice in the areas described in paragraphs *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* above;

(d) to publish its reviews and report annually and to promote good practice in the

(e) to assist the fostering and development of links between schools and the communities in which schools are placed.

(2) The membership of the National Education Council should be drawn in equal parts from the teachers' unions, representatives of local education authorities, the Department of Education and Science, parents' organisations and the churches.'.—*[Mr. Radice.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take the following: New clause 14 —*Human rights in schools*—

'The local education authority by whom any county, voluntary or special school is maintained, and the governing body and the head teacher of the school, shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that the understanding and experience of human rights is encouraged in schools in accordance with the provisions of Schedule (Human Rights in Schools).'

New clause 17—*Record of achievement*—

'The Secretary of State shall establish arrangements under which all pupils leaving school will be provided with a record of achievement which should detail successes in public examinations, educational attainments and personal qualities and should be as full a record as possible of the positive achievements of each pupil.'.

New clause 35—*Competitive sports*—

'(1) Local education authorities shall ensure that each school in their area after consultation with its governing body makes proper provision for the coaching and playing, by pupils over the age of seven, of competitive sports either on their own premises or otherwise:

Provided that the expenditure of a local education authority under this section in any financial year shall not exceed the product of a rate in the pound for their area determined by that authority with the approval of the Treasury for that year or, if some other amount whether higher or lower is fixed by an Order in a Statutory Instrument made by the Secretary of State, shall not exceed the product of a rate of that amount in the pound for its area for that year.

(2) The product of a rate in the pound for any area shall be computed for the purposes of this section by reference to the product of the rate of 1p in the pound for that area as determined for those purposes in accordance with the rules made under section 113(1)*(c)* of the General Rate Act 1967.

(3) In this section "competitive sport" means sports specified by Order in a Statutory instrument by the Secretary of State after consultation with local education authorities and such persons or bodies as are, in his opinion, appropriate.

(4) A Statutory Instrument containing an order under subsections (1) and (3) may apply to all local education authorities or may make different provision in relation to different local education authorities and any such instrument shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a Resolution of either House of Parliament.'.

Amendment No. 61, in clause 17, page 20, line 21, at end insert

'after consultation with headteachers, teachers, teachers' organisations and other such bodies as it sees fit to consult—'.

Government Amendments Nos. 62 to 65.

Amendment No. 68, in clause 18, page 21, line 4, leave out 'in their opinion' and insert

'in the light of the principles for the curriculum set out by the local authority in pursuance of section 17(1) above'.

Government Amendment No. 69.

Amendment No. 70, in clause 18, page 22, line 9, at end insert—

'*(d)* to determine and direct the school's curriculum, in the light of the principles set out by the local authority under section 17(1) and the aims of the governing body in sections 18(1)*(b)*, to fulfil those agreed aims.'.

Government Amendments Nos. 71 and 72.

Amendment No. 147, in clause 42, page 46, line 41, at end insert

'the following activities where they fall outside the statement of curriculum policy published by the local education authority under section 17 of this Act.

Amendment No. 148, in clause 42, page 46, line 42, leave out paragraph *(a)*.

Amendment No. 223, in clause 42, page 46, line 42, after 'by', insert

', or involving, or otherwise seeking to influence,'.

Amendment No. 149, in clause 42, page 47, line 3, leave out subsection (2).

Government Amendment No. 151.

Amendment No. 152, in clause 43, page 47, line 19, at end insert—

'(2) The local education authority, the governing body and the head teacher of the school shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that, before pupils reach the age of 16, they shall have been given an introduction to—

(i) The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the European Social Charter;

(ii) the system of national and local government in this country;

(iii) the views of the main, national political parties;

(iv) the legal system;

(v) the welfare state and the system of benefits within it;

(vi) their legal and civil rights and responsibilities;

(vii) the world of industry and commerce;

(viii) the system of trades unions, and the rights and responsibilities of trades unions within the law; and

(ix) the work of charities and the voluntary sector.'.

Amendment No. 189, new Schedule—HUMAN RIGHTS IN SCHOOLS—

1. *Human rights in the school curriculum*

(1) The understanding and experience of human rights is an important element of the preparation of all young people for life in a democratic and pluralistic society. It is part of social and political education, and it involves intercultural and international understanding.

(2) Concepts associated with human rights can, and should, be acquired from an early stage. For example, the non-violent resolution of conflict and respect for other people can already be experienced within the life of a pre-school or primary class.

(3) Opportunities to introduce young people to more abstract notions of human rights, such as those involving an understanding of philosophical, political and legal concepts, will occur in the secondary school, in particular in such subjects as history, geography, social studies, moral and religious education, language and literature, current affairs and economics.

(4) Human rights inevitably involve the domain of politics. Teaching about human rights should, therefore, always have international agreements and covenants as a point of reference, and teachers should take care to avoid imposing their personal convictions on their pupils and involving them in ideological struggles.

2. *Skills*

The skills associated with understanding and supporting human rights include:

(a) intellectual skills, in particular:

— skills associated with written and oral expression, including the ability to listen and discuss, and to defend one's opinions;

—skills involving judgment, such as:

—the collection and examination of material from various sources, including the media, and the ability to analyse it and to arrive at fair and balanced conclusions;

—the ability to analyse it and to arrive at fair and balanced conclusions;

— the identification of bias, prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination;

(b) social skills, in particular:

—recognising and accepting differences;

— establishing positive and non-oppressive personal relationships;

—resolving conflict in a non-violent way;

—taking responsibility;

—participating in decisions;

understanding the use of the mechanisms for the protection of human rights at local, regional, European and world levels.

3. *Knowledge to be acquired in the study of human rights*

(1) The study of human rights in schools will be approached in different ways according to the age and circumstances of the pupil and the particular situations of schools and education systems. Topics to be covered in learning about human rights could include:

(a) the main categories of human rights, duties, obligations and responsibilities;

(b) the various forms of injustice, inequality and discrimination, including sexism and racism;

(c) people, movements and key events, both successes and failures, in the historical and continuing struggle for human rights;

(d) the main international declaration and conventions on human rights, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

(2) The emphasis in teaching and learning about human rights should be positive. Pupils may be led to feelings of powerlessness and discouragement when confronted with many examples of violations and negations of human rights. Instances of progress and success should be used.

(3) The study of human rights in schools should lead to an understanding of, and sympathy for, the concepts of justice, equality, freedom, peace, dignity, rights and democracy. Such understanding should be both cognitive and based on experience and feelings. Schools should thus, provide opportunities for pupils to experience effective involvement in human rights and to express their feelings through drama, art, music, creative writing and audiovisual media.

4. *The climate of the school*

(1) Democracy is best learned in a democratic setting where participation is encouraged, where views can be expressed openly and discussed, where there is freedom of expression for pupils and teachers, and where there is fairness and justice. An appropriate climate is, therefore, an essential complement to effective learning about human rights.

(2) Schools should encourage participation in their activities by parents and other members of the community. It may well be appropriate for schools to work with non-governmental organisations which can provide information, case-studies and first-hand experience of successful campaigns for human rights and dignity.

(3) Schools and teachers should attempt to be positive towards all their pupils, and recognise that all of their achievements are important — whether they be academic, artistic, musical, sporting or practical.

5. *Teacher training*

(1) The initial training of teachers should prepare them for their future contribution to teaching about human rights in their schools. For example, future teachers should:

(a) be encouraged to take an interest in national and world affairs;

(b) have the chance of studying or working in a foreign country or a different environment;

(c) be taught to identify and combat all forms of discrimination in schools and society and be encouraged to confront and overcome their own prejudices.

(2) Future and practising teachers should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with:

i. the main international declarations and conventions on human rights;

ii. the working and achievements of the international organisations which deal with the protection and promotion of human rights, for example through visits and study tours.

(3) All teachers need, and should be given the opportunity, to update their knowledge and to learn new methods through in-service training. This could include the study of good practice in teaching about human rights, as well as the development of appropriate methods and materials.

6. *International Human Rights Day*

Schools and teacher training establishments should be encouraged to observe International Human Rights Day (10th December).'.

Mr. Radice: I congratulate the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) on her new appointment. We shall miss the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), but we are pleased to welcome her.

New clause 6 would establish a National Education Council on which the Secretary of State, local authorities, teachers, parents, churches and others would be represented. Hon. Members will agree that, relative to our main competitors, we are an under-educated and under-trained nation. On most indicators, whether nursery school places, the staying-on rate, the opportunities for training or qualifications at 16 and at degree level, we are

[Mr. Radice]

well down the league table. It is clear that we need a major national effort to raise standards and improve education opportunities. A national programme on such a scale requires consensus, co-operative effort and partnership. Unfortunately, far from encouraging partnership, the Government have undermined it.

The Secretary of State, as a former Secretary of State for the Environment, bears some responsibility for the fact that the Government have been locked in conflict with local government for a number of years, mainly because the Government have deliberately starved local government of resources—a cumulative total of £17 billion has been lost from central Government support since 1979.

After at least two years of dispute and uncertainty, the teachers remain alienated and demoralised. It is not helpful that the Government have still not made their attitude clear to the Coventry heads of agreement. They must bear some responsibility for the difficulties that are now faced.

It is no wonder that parents and voters are so worried about what is happening. According to a recent poll, more that two thirds of those questioned disapproved of the Government's handling of education. There were big majorities in favour of more spending on education and only 6 per cent. believed that the Government had succeeded in raising education standards.

Far from trying to recreate the partnership which has broken down in recent years, the Government have responded to their unpopularity by putting the blame on local education authorities and teachers. They are also attempting to distract the voters with gimmicky initiatives.

The launching of the so-called city technology colleges is typical of the Government's approach. It is interesting that the Secretary of State has not attempted to win support for the initiative. Instead, he is trying to impose the CTCs outside the local education authority system and without the backing of teachers. I believe that the CTC proposal is educationally unsound, technologically illiterate and socially divisive. If the Secretary of State had consulted the education partners, they would have told him why the proposal will do nothing to improve educational prospects, but the right hon. Gentleman is charging ahead regardless, intent only on providing his party with an electoral fig leaf.

If we are to raise standards and improve educational opportunities, we must, as a matter of urgency, reforge the educational partnership. Our system is a decentralised one and it is right that it should remain so. It would be undesirable and impracticable to try to run all our schools from Elizabeth house, which is what some Tories seem to suggest.

If we are to move forward, we need to bring together what the Secretary of State calls the users and producers in education, for the benefit of the community as a whole. That is the case for setting up a National Education Council on which the main education partners would be represented.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the city technology colleges have received widespread approval? They will bridge the gap between industry and education and will be a useful benchmark against which other schools may be judged. The hon. Gentleman is wrong to assume that there is a feeling on the Conservative Benches that all schools should be administered from Elizabeth house. That has not been suggested.

Mr. Radice: There is a later amendment on that issue, and I think that some Conservative Members would like that system to come about.

The problem with the CTC proposal is that, because it will involve 1,000 pupils in an area where there are, say, 5,000 pupils, it is bound to cream off pupils and scarce teaching resources. Therefore, the proposal must be at the expense of other schools. The proposal has not been widely welcomed by teachers or local education authorities and doubt has been expressed by industrialists as well. I would not make the bold claim that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) makes.

6.15 pm

The purpose of the National Education Council would be to get agreement on matters of major educational importance, such as the curriculum, the exam system, teacher training and minimum standards of educational provision. There is far too wide a gap between the authorities that are doing the proper job of ensuring reasonable spending and a reasonable pupil-teacher ratio and those with a much worse record. We need to get an agreement on a minimum standard of provision and a National Education Council would help us to do that.

Of course, a National Education Council could not, by itself, guarantee consensus or change, but it would make those aims far easier to achieve and would certainly offer a more constructive way forward than the authoritarian and strident approach displayed by the Prime Minister in the interview published in today's *Daily Express*. We need something very different from that approach. If we are to succeed, we need a new approach based on co-operation and consensus, and I believe that the setting up of a National Education Council would be an essential ingredient in that strategy.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I thank the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) for his kind words in welcoming me to my new post in the Department. I acknowledge that it will be difficult for me to follow the high standards set by my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten).

The hon. Member for Durham, North introduced his new clause with some interesting arguments and justifications. My experience over the past few days shows that it is typical of the Opposition to attack the imaginative city technology college initiative for the maintained sector. We rarely hear from Opposition Members about any new initiatives to help the maintained sector and improve the lot of the children in that sector.

The hon. Member for Durham, North spoke about the notion that there should be a sort of parliament for education. That proposal is included in his recent Fabian pamphlet "A Socialist Plan for Education". The proposal appears late on in the pamphlet—on page 19, I think—but it is central to his plan that we need to set up a parliament for education.

It may surprise some hon. Members, including those who serve on the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts, which looks at education, and whose membership includes Opposition Members, that the

Opposition do not believe that the House is an adequate place to be an education parliament. That is a bit of a shame.

Of course, we recognise that education is a partnership. I have been on the other side of the partnership and often negotiated with the Government about the allocation of resources——

Mr. Radice: The hon. Lady had some tough things to say.

Mrs. Rumbold: Indeed, I did, because that was my job at the time. I have been tough about the allocation of resources and in negotiations with the teachers. All those matters continue in negotiations and in partnership with central Government. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State regularly consults his partners in the local authorities and the teachers' organisations on all these matters. He also consults a wide range of other interest groups in the education and other areas on specific policy developments, as the occasion requires. My right hon. Friend also receives advice relevant to the exercise of his functions from Her Majesty's inspectorate and other bodies such as the Secondary Examinations Council and the Schools Curriculum Development Committee, but, of course, my right hon. Friend properly is accountable to the House. I hope that that is what we all want. Local authorities are accountable to their electorates. We support that. We do not suggest that the Department of Education and Science should do all their work. As a result of the Bill schools will be the responsibility of local authorities. There is ample space for dialogue and discussion, but no space for the new type of quango that the new clause urges upon us.

Both sides agree about some matters. I shall explain some of the useful amendments to clauses 17 to 19 which are based upon suggestions made in Committee. I shall not dwell upon them because they involve little dissent. The first group of amendments is designed to ensure that local education authority and governors' statements on the curriculum are widely and freely available. Amendments Nos. 62 to 65 and Nos. 69 and 72 secure that. Both the LEAs and the relevant governors' statements will be available for consultation in all county and controlled schools. I expect that in practice they will be more widely available, but that will depend upon local interest and other factors.

In aided schools LEA statements will always be available, but under the Bill there is no requirement that aided school governors should make any written statement of their curriculum policies. We do not intend to change that, but where governors choose to make such statements parents should have access to them. Amendment No. 72, which has been fully accepted by the churches and other voluntary school interests, secures that.

The final Government amendment, which also affects aided and special agreement schools, has been welcomed in our recent consultations. It extends to the governors of such schools the obligation to have regard to representations about the curriculum from those connected with the community served by the school. It is clearly right that the community served by an aided school should have, and be seen to have, the same right to be heard as that served by any other type of school. The new subsection (2) to clause 19 achieves this.

The small drafting amendment No. 151 improves the presentation of clause 43 and contains no changes of substance.

Mr. Cash: I wish to speak to new clause 35 entitled "*Competitive Sports*". It is supported by the Central Council for Physical Recreation which represents about 250 bodies involved in sporting activities. I am told that about 40,000 amateur football clubs, 1,500 rugby union clubs, as many as 3 million squash players and countless cricketers and others will be deeply interested in the new clause.

There is a thin red line—or perhaps a thin blue line—which one must tread in such matters. I notice that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State nods his head. I seek to be constructive. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister of State on her new appointment and I look for an assurance from her that what I have to say on the subject will be well received by the Government.

My argument is about competition in schools and that part of the curriculum which covers sporting activitities. It is directly related to the Government's philosophy and policy.

I can do no better than to repeat what the Secretary of State said shortly before 9 July, when he commented:

"Equality of opportunity means the achievers must be allowed to achieve. If you don't believe that, then everything will sink into a grey mass of mediocrity."

The Secretary of State added:

"The world is a highly competitive place and nations which cannot compete go under."

That was said not in the context of competition alone, but specifically about the absurd attempts by the Labour-controlled Inner London education authority to abolish competitive sports in schools to save the losers from humiliation. The reality is well documented in a report which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* on 9 July.

Hon. Members may laugh, but I refer them to an article in *The Guardian*, three days later, which stated:

"Are Britain's teachers really as dotty as they sometimes seem? . . .Inner London Schools are trying to stamp out the First XI mentality by stopping inter-school football matches. Cricket is seemingly all but extinct within the state system. Rugby cannot be mentioned within politically correct society . . . The effects of all this are obvious. International sports success will soon be beyond the British."

The leader writer in *The Guardian* continues:

"the anti-sports policy isn't carefully thought out at all . . . Let's leave aside the fact that the anti-team sports, anti-competitive polices are actually rather racist because they prevent activities which a lot of black children are especially keen on."

He concludes:

"That is a truly pernicious approach and no education authority worth its salt ought to pander to the stupid teachers who support it."

—[Interruption.]

Before Opposition Members protest too much, I urge the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) to take up the matter by replying with a letter to *The Guardian*.

There are a number of problems connected with the provision of suitable facilities for the coaching and playing of sport in schools.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Is not one of the worst problems of our schools the circular issued by the previous Conservative Government advising local authorities to review the number of school playing fields that they use and to sell them? Have not a substantial number of school

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

playing fields been sold for housing, with the result that some schools no longer have the space for a cricket square and facilities for winter sports?

Mr. Cash: Naturally, I deplore the unnecessary disposal of playing fields.

Local authorities do not have a duty to provide adequate coaching and playing space for school sports. That is what my new clause is about. Their power is merely permissive, so they can choose whether to provide sporting facilities in schools. On many occasions they choose the easy way. That is why the new clause imposes a duty. A slippery slope is formed because no duty exists.

I believe that competitive sport is part of the curriculum, and I hope that we will legislate along the lines that I suggest.

I refer the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) to circular 16/78 from the Department of Education and Science, the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office, entitled,

"The Development of Sporting Talent in Children of School Age"

which was issued by the then Labour Government. I regret that the circular has not been followed as it should have been and is regarded as unsatisfactory. Today's debate allows us to discuss competitive sports in schools and to come up with something meaningful. A duty rather than a mere power should be imposed.

6.30 pm

The CCPR represents about 250 bodies, including the Welsh Rugby Union, the Rugby Football Union, the National Cricket Association and the Amateur Athletic Association. Indeed, scarcely any body concerned with sport is not a member of the council. Bearing in mind the millions of people who take part in competitive sport, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to take the new clause seriously, because it is consistent with the philosophy of both the Government and the Bill.

The new clause proposes consultation with governing bodies. Subject to an overall cost limitation, parents would have the legal right to tell governing bodies and head teachers of schools where competitive sports were not provided that they are required to provide them.

I believe that the new clause deserves the Government's support. If it were suggested that there should be greater business involvement in the provision of sport, I would agree; but if it were suggested that we should rely on voluntary sports clubs, I could not agree. Indeed, it may come as a shock to my hon. Friend the Minister, or to anyone who might put forward that suggestion as the panacea, to learn—as was confirmed on the radio this morning — that the increase in rates in Scotland has made it increasingly difficult for local authorities to maintain a position which enables schools to afford the provision of the required playing fields.

It is said that similar provisions will come into effect in the remainder of the country in 1990. Last weekend *The Sunday Times* estimated that the rates at Lords could increase from £27,000 to £500,000 in 1990. If that happened throughout the country, it would cause serious difficulties for voluntary sports organisations.

Mr. Neil Macfarlane (Sutton and Cheam): My hon. Friend is advancing a most important argument. I support him wholeheartedly on the importance of the curriculum content within schools and the importance of the link that he has established. Certainly no one should overlook such an august body as the CCPR.

My hon. Friend the Minister has had a foot in both camps—in Marsham street and now south of the river—and I congratulate her on her transfer. She has a special understanding both at local authority and departmental levels. To be realistic, we shall not progress much further with the proposal tonight. However, given the degree of concern about this matter, perhaps the most important action would be to undertake a detailed survey. I suggest that from my experience in office of the confused nature of some of the statistics and the availability of facts and information I think that local education authorities, the Sports Council and the CCPR should undertake a 12-month investigation and detailed analysis.

Mr. Cash: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention. When my new clause was selected for debate this afternoon, a letter from the Minister with responsibility for sport was sent to me by hand marked, "Immediate — most urgent". My hon. Friend the Minister quite rightly drew attention to the fact that he is holding a seminar in November when such matters can be investigated. I congratulate him on that initiative. However, neither I nor the CCPR—for which I hope I speak — believe that it is adequate to deal with the matter through a seminar when legislation is clearly needed.

I could produce at least an inch of evidence from schools throughout the country to support my case about head teachers who have been creating difficulties for children. The new clause is not just about getting children on to playing fields; it is about team co-operation, health, education, competition and national standards for sport. I hope that the Government will positively welcome my suggestions.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) will forgive me if I do not take up his remarks. Although I agree with everything that he said, I wish to deal especially with Opposition amendment No. 148 and my amendment No. 223, both of which relate to political indoctrination in schools.

Two years ago 180 of my colleagues either joined me in the Lobby to support my ten-minute Bill or signed an early-day motion. I admit that for two years nothing happened in the Department. I understand that a senior mandarin is quoted as saying:

"Since the concept of indoctrination is antithetical to that of education the current Education Act, by virtue of being an Education Act, implicitly disallows biased political teaching."

That may be an appropriate gesture by one of our senior civil servants, but it has not prevented political indoctrination in our schools. I was delighted when the Government acceded to an amendment tabled by my noble Friend Baroness Cox in another place, and it is to that that clause 42 relates.

Traditionally our education has been based on consensus, but that is now breaking down. The consensus is simply that children are placed in schools in loco parentis and that teachers do not have a right to inculcate their political viewpoints into their education. When most of us were at school, current affairs classes were usually confined to a Friday afternoon. I do not think that any of

us knew the political viewpoint of our teachers — *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may laugh, but I did not know whether my teachers voted Conservative, Labour or Liberal—and that was quite right.

Although the vast majority of teachers comply with traditional forms of teaching, a small militant minority have indulged in a form of teaching that can be described only as brutal, intellectual sermonising. They have not sought to encourage children to develop their own thinking on political matters but instead have tried to instil in them their own political views. That was shown most clearly in an address by Mr. Chris Searle, who was sometime acting head of humanities in a London school. He said:

"When we deal with El Salvador we are dealing firstly and fundamentally with violence and armed struggle and we have to come to terms with the fact that there are two forms of violence."

Mr. Searle was trying to inculcate his views in his pupils' education.

He continued:

"There's the bestial, inhuman violence which buttresses a tyrannical and proxy regime and another form of violence —a righteous violence—a revolutionary violence—a just violence in which, for example, the fighters for justice and freedom in El Salvador or Namibia are engaged."

He was telling his pupils that some forms of violence are to be applauded when they are in pursuit of political objectives with which he agrees. That is worrying, and that is why clause 42 is so desperately needed. I am surprised that the Labour party is seeking in its amendment to make it meaningless.

The examples of Mr. Searle and others are perhaps extreme, but in one London school question paper the following question was set:

"The money required to provide adequate food, water, education, health and housing for everyone in the world is estimated at $17,000 million (£11,500 million) a year. How many weeks of NATO and Warsaw Pact military spending would be enough to pay for this? (Show all your working)."

It is clear that the question is biased. It is an attempt to channel children's minds into a certain political viewpoint. Instead of encouraging children to think for themselves, they are having a political viewpoint rammed down their throats, which cannot be right.

Amendment No. 223 deals with one small aspect of the problem and clause 42 should go a long way towards banning political indoctrination, but it relates to

"the pursuit of partisan political activities by any of those registered pupils at the school. . . and . . . the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school."

I am worried because that will not prevent teachers from placing posters on walls, such as CND posters. As long as they do not teach the subject, they will get away with it. It is important that at this late stage we should tighten up the Bill if we can.

I was told that in Lincoln a poster of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was placed on a school notice board and someone wrote upon it that she should have a bullet put through her head. That might be said to be laughable, but what is that sort of poster doing on school walls? When I visited a school in my constituency of Horncastle, I saw a CND poster on a wall. The place for CND posters is not in our schools, and nor is there a place for Conservative party posters in our schools. The same goes for Labour party posters. We do not want any party political posters in our schools, but they have been finding their way into them and that is why clause 42 is so necessary.

The most noticeable form of political indoctrination in the past two or three years has been so-called peace studies. Invariably they deal not with one aspect of peace but peddle a unilateralist line. That is bad enough, but they seek to inculcate a particular form of thinking. For example, the following question was placed in a Bournemouth question paper for schools:

"Do you realise that the mobility of cruise missiles on trucks makes the south of England one big target area?"

Why should children be posed that sort of question? Why should they be required to think in those terms? When I introduced a ten-minute Bill, I produced evidence, including the ILEA dove pack, which contained no fewer than 60 items peddling the unilateralist line. Only two items gave any help to teachers who were to teach so-called peace studies by dealing with the multilateralist line. As we well know, many peace studies do not deal with peace in its entirety. Instead, they try to peddle one line.

Another difficult area on which I want briefly to touch is anti-racial studies. All of us in the House abhor racism and we hope that our education system will inculcate in our young people a hatred of anything that can possibly be termed racist. The traditional and Christian concepts of education inculcated that kind of belief by seeking to instil in pupils compassion, care for others and a belief that all people are born with at least equality of opportunity. The anti-racism studies that we have seen develop in some of our schools, especially in London, are very different from that. In one ILEA teaching pack, for example, the tactics of the police in the miners' strike were equated with Auschwitz. That is an outrageous comparison and is an example of partisan political teaching in our schools. There is a danger that that will lead children to trivialise the horrors of Auschwitz. That kind of teaching has no place in our schools.

6.45 pm

I have a copy of a letter of 30 May that was sent from the South Tyneside borough council to all schools in the local authority area. It calls on the schools to co-ordinate 10 days of action from 16 to 26 June in campaigning on South Africa. Most of us on these Benches abhor apartheid and we would like to feel that our children will have inculcated in them a belief that apartheid is wrong, but should we be campaigning against apartheid in our schools? Of course not. That is not the way to deal with the problem, but that has been going on in our schools. That is why we need clause 42.

Education in a free society should enshrine the principle of freedom to pursue truth in all its different guises. The only truth is that there is no truth save the necessity of seeking it at all times. It is not the purpose of education to inculcate in immature minds half-baked political theories from the Right or the Left. That is why clause 42 is so important. I commend it to the House.

Sir Hector Monro (Dunfries): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who has tabled new clause 35. It is designed to ensure that children will have sufficient sport and recreation at school. This is a matter of attitudes and priorities and not of money and I think that we can show to Ministers the importance that we attach to this subject.

[Sir Hector Monro]

I shall not be diverted to the issue of rates, which we debated when dealing with Scottish legislation as long ago as 1984. I think that the rates issue will be resolved in good time and we should not become too anxious about it at this stage of the Session.

A great improvement in sport and recreation at schools can be obtained without additional expenditure. We want enthusiasm from staff and parents, much better organisation of available time, better coaching and a much better use of facilities, many of which are of exceptional quality.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I think that my hon. Friend should stress that there is a real danger to sport in schools because of the positive antagonism to it in many schools, especially those in the ILEA area. Sadly, this antagonism is spreading throughout the country. The problem is not confined to lack of enthusiasm.

Sir Hector Monro: I am sure that the House will take note of my hon. Friend's serious warning. He speaks with first-hand knowledge of the south-east of England.

Sporting and recreational facilities are extremely good in many instances and it is most unfortunate that they are shut and not available for use for part of the time. For years, those interested in sport and recreation as well as education have talked about the dual use of facilities so that children can use them during the day and the evening while parents can use them at night. Time and again we have been told that this is impossible, and all sorts of attitudes have been advanced. There should be more enthusiasm within the Department of Education and Science to resolve this basic problem.

I accept that we have to face the difficulties of providing caretakers and access to the public, for example, but when facilities are so under-used we must find answers to the problems. It is frustrating that this issue has been with us for many years. During my humble period as the Minister with responsibilities for sport, I spoke to Ministers of the Department of Education and Science—this was in 1980 and 1981—and urged them to try with me to make progress. Progress in this area has been singularly slow under both Labour and Conservative Governments.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend give consideration to using the community programme to provide maintenance for some of our sporting fields? That is something which would fit in well with the problems that stem from a great deal of unemployment.

Sir Hector Monro: That is another constructive idea to throw into the debate. Given the pressure that has been placed on the Department over many years to take dual use seriously, I hope that it will show resolve to overcome the difficulties that seem to present an impossible problem to those interested in obtaining the use of gymnasiums, squash courts and swimming pools, all of which lie idle in the evenings.

Why is sport and recreation so important in education? I believe that sport and recreation and the part that games play in education are all part of the quality of education and we see the development of character and leadership through team games and individual pursuits such as hill walking, ski-ing, and so on. Any form of adventure training must be encouraged in our schools. We must encourage our children to reach achievements that they felt were beyond their capabilities. They must be pushed, but not too far. We must have a careful balance between what is a foolhardy activity and an acceptable risk. We must set out with such goals in mind—not the rather flaccid "do nothing, lie down and go to to sleep" attitude of many educationists.

Team spirit may be a throwaway line, but it is vital at school and in many aspects of life. It develops loyalty in every respect. It enables the building of morale and the acceptance of discipline. Professional sportsmen should see children playing football, rugby and cricket and accepting the decision of the referee or umpire without question. To achieve that, there is much to be done on the field in terms of discipline. That starts at school.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the decline in team sports, which has been illustrated on the national field in games such as football, cricket and rugby, with the honourable exception of hockey, is perhaps due to the reason that he has just mentioned—that in some cases teachers have tried to get away from the competitive element and have encouraged individual sports? Should we not encourage team sports so that Britain can once again be great?

Sir Hector Monro: Yes, indeed. Much of the purpose of my hon. Friend's new clause is to develop team sports. In view of the great world hockey championships which took place over the past fortnight, one can see what can be done if the spirit and enthusiasm are present. I give all credit to England for its remarkable achievement in hockey and the tremendous spirit in which the tournament was played. That tournament showed that, to have high quality games, one must have high quality facilities. The all-weather pitch on which the hockey was played enabled the games to be of a high standard. One could not have seen such a standard on the average grass field that is provided at many schools, when it is a hit or miss operation. Hockey played under such conditions can be a miserable form of sport. We must bear in mind that it does rain in this country. We have far too many football and rugby pitches at schools that become mud heaps by about February or March. The facilities need to be better for the wet weather.

The point on which we are all agreed is that, if a school is at the top educationally, it is absolutely certain that it is also at the top through team games——

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hector Monro: I ask the hon. Gentleman to let me finish my sentence. The excellence of education academically and through games is complementary. Schools that have a high morale academically and in games are usually extremely good schools.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman never says a word about money. The cuts in education have meant that schools are grumpy and books are missing. The hon. Gentleman advocates doing things in sport when his Government is cutting money on a grand scale. We cannot possibly do what he suggests.

Sir Hector Monro: It is high time that the hon. Gentleman listened to other Member's speeches. I made it clear at the beginning of my speech that enthusiasm for sport in schools need not cost a penny more than it does

at present. It is a question of using time, teachers and facilities adequately. There is no need to spend more money. It is a question of changing attitudes. The hon. Member's attitude is completely wrong. I repeat that good schools in education and good schools in sport are outstandingly good schools for our children. That is what we want to achieve. Children who come from a good school will walk tall. Their morale will be high through both their academic and sporting achievements. Nothing that I have suggested during my speech would cost a penny. It requires a change of attitude by those in authority and encouragement by Ministers and the Department of Education and Science. We have physical education teachers of high quality. They can be excellent coaches. So where are we going wrong? Indoor facilities are good, but perhaps they are insufficient.

I have spoken about this country's climate and the quality of outdoor pitches. Time is not on our side. The world judges a country by its performance at sport. At the top of the pyramid we are very good. We have exceptionally gifted performers and world champions; I pay all credit to them. However, at the base, I am afraid that our performance is average. Indeed, we could say that it is mediocre. We want to see more centres of excellence based in our schools so that governing bodies, which are led so well by the Central Council of Physical Recreation, encourage children, when they reach 16 and 17 years, to join sports clubs and enjoy sports and recreation after they have left school.

Mr. Freud: Cannot the hon. Gentleman, as a Scottish Member of Parliament and an ex-Minister, do something about the Scottish rating authorities killing off Scottish athletic clubs?

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman has not listened either. I started my speech by saying that I did not want to go into the details of rating. The rating issue is one of the sports clubs and not of schools. The rating issue was debated in great detail by the Scottish Standing Committee in 1984. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has read all the proceedings. He knows that the English and Scottish sports clubs are valued on a different proposition. That must be faced in future. It is not an issue at the moment. It is certainly not an issue in the new clause regarding schools.

I encourage my hon. Friends to lead education authorities towards greater prominence for sport and recreation in our schools. That would be an advantage to schools both academically and physically through the morale, leadership and sportsmanship that team games bring to schools. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford has given the House a great opportunity to set the flag waving for sport and recreation. I hope that Ministers will respond with similar enthusiasm.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) in this most important new clause. Bearing in mind hon. Members' enthusiasm for the game of hockey and their delight at the England team's success, I hope that we shall have success in recruiting more colleagues into the Lords and Commons hockey XI. I invite them to come along.

The new clause is a sad but necessary one. I think of the sporting situation when I first became involved in London schools a long time ago. In 1957 I was elected as General Secretary of the Westminster Schools Athletics Association. Every primary and secondary school in Westminster belonged to that association. We made it our business to see that there were competitive games for every child in every school—boy and girl, in whatever his or her chosen game might be. There was a considerable shortage of facilities in that area. Children had to travel across to Battersea and beyond to get the facilities they needed for sport. Today, in many schools there are no team games, even though there are pitches on the school campus and outside the school's front door. They lie unused for weeks on end, despised by local authorities and some school governors. That just will not do. It is unfair to children. There is a traditional and substantial motto in education—mens sano in corporo sano—which means "a healthy body produces a healthy mind". I think that this has been accepted—*[Interruption]*—not by all, not by one or two fat men——

7 pm

Mr. Cash: Is my hon. Friend aware that a study in the midlands, which is cited in *The Observer* of 16 March 1986, has shown that 83 per cent. of children engaged in less than five minutes' vigorous activity a day? That is appalling. As the article says:

"If typical, this statistic must cause grave anxieties to those interested in the future wellbeing of the nation."

Mr. Greenway: That is an important point. Further, 85 per cent. of all children do not take part in any sport beyond the age of 15. That statistic has been established for a number of years. The percentage is increasing, which is very sad.

Because of the lack of sport and competitive team games our schools are losing a crucial and helpful ingredient in the education of our young. If children can take part in games, particularly competitive team games, under the direction of a referee or an umpire, they can press one another to the limit, under proper rules. Children will press one another to the limit at other times if they are not allowed team games. I know from long experience that that is one reason for the type of aggression that is appearing in some schools. Children must be allowed an outlet for their physical and mental energies and their determination to compete. If that is not allowed in sport, there will be aggravation of a type we do not want.

Sadly, we are losing as a nation because of the weakness of sport in schools. Mike Gatting, the England cricket captain, who made a fine innings this week, probably would not play cricket if he were in a London school today. *[Interruption.]* It is no good saying that I should get on, this is an important matter. Labour Members may not care about children and facilities for them but Conservative Members do.

I am president of two school sports associations which attempt to do a great deal for children in our schools, but that is becoming increasingly difficult. Schools are the only place in which we can cope with large numbers of children involved in sport and team games. Clubs cannot do so. In any case, the children who join clubs to learn sport have to buy or be given equipment. Many will not have a chance. That is wrong. The schools should provide opportunities to play sport, and the necessary equipment, so that every child, whoever he or she is, can play sport.

Playing individual games or competing against an environment or one's own performance during childhood has led many people to a job in adulthood as a professional

[Mr. Greenway]

cricket player, soccer player, and so on. Unless we do something about sport, we shall deny children a valuable avenue to enjoy work in their adult lives. I commend the new clause to the House.

Mrs. Rumbold: I turn first to the important points on competitive sports raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Stafford (Mr. Cash), for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). I appreciate the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford about the importance of competitive sport in schools. As he has acknowledged, there is to be a seminar involving my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), to discuss sport in schools. I hope that we shall take cognisance of the important points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Macfarlane) who asked us to consider a national survey of what is happening in the sporting world.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford spoke at length about the CCPR. That will be one of the bodies which will take part in the seminar on school sport which, with the agreement of Ministers, the Department of Education and Science and the Department of the Environment will hold in November. That seminar will be attended by a wide range of representatives of the national sports associations and the education partners—teachers and advisers. We want to support strongly the views of all my hon. Friends.

Mr. Cash: I am sure that my hon. Friend will acknowledge that one problem is that the Minister with responsibility for sport is from the Department of the Environment. The sports issue arises in the context of the curriculum in schools, which falls within the responsibility of my hon. Friend's Department. I hope that she will address the need for legislation in the context of political purposes as they affect local authorities just as she did before being elevated to her present position.

Mrs. Rumbold: If my hon. Friend will bear with me for a moment, I shall come to his points about the possibility of legislation. It is important in the context of the Bill to consider how sport is placed on the curriculum. Important discussions are taking place between the partners, which are the governing bodies and the sporting interests. I fully understand the emphasis that my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries has placed on sport in schools and his philosophy. The competitive spirit is an essential part of that. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North emphasised the point that sport plays an important part in the curriculum and in the school structure in developing a school spirit.

The Government firmly believe that the organisation and delivery of a schools curriculum are properly matters for local determination. Clauses 17 to 19 clearly define the roles of the local education authority, the governing body and the head teacher in that process—roles that are not entirely compatible with the absolute duty in respect of sport which my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford would place on local education authorities. I ask him to accept that it would be difficult in the context of the Bill to have competitive sport specifically protected by statute and afforded, alone among all the curriculum subjects, the same status as religious education.

Mr. Cash: I ask my hon. Friend to accept the point that my new clause proposes no more than that there should be consultation between local education authorities and schools and between the Secretary of State, local education authorities and schools, which, effectively, would give parents a right which they do not have at the moment to insist upon something that is in the interests of their children.

Mrs. Rumbold: I think that my hon. Friend will admit that we have discussed at considerable length the methods by which we had hoped to encourage consultation between the Secretary of State, the governors and the schools about the order of the curriculum. The Bill's general thrust is to include parents on governing bodies to enable them to consider how to organise the curriculum in the way they think most suitable. I emphasise that, by increasing parental influence on governing bodies, we are seeking the very provisions in schools which my hon. Friend hopes to achieve. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford also proposes that the new duty would be modified to the extent by which it would be unlawful for authorities to spend more in this area than the sum determined by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. That, as hon. Gentlemen will recognise, represents a radical departure from the way in which the level of funding for provision in schools is otherwise decided. I could not see a justification, as I am sure that my hon. Friend will accept, for the funding of provision for competitive sport in schools to be afforded any treatment under the law different from that provided for other subjects.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) raised the matter of the importance of clause 42. I am grateful to those in the other place who put this clause within the Bill. We sincerely agree with all that my hon. Friend said. He has associated himself with amendments Nos. 148 and 149, which argue that we should delete the requirement to forbid the pursuit of partisan political activities. That would leave a significant gap in clause 42 because paragraph (1)(b) deals only with the promotion of partisan political views during the teaching of any subject in schools and does not include the many activities which teachers may arrange outside the normal teaching programme.

Mr. Leigh: I hope that there has not been a misunderstanding. I was opposing the Labour party's amendment.

Mrs. Rumbold: I accept that. However, my hon. Friend moved amendment No. 223. Unfortunately, that would impart a much wider understanding than we intend. Taken together, clauses 42 and 43 provide a comprehensive set of provisions against political indoctrination.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle made an important point about posters. We both recognise that in former incarnations within the House we have raised this matter with the Department of the Environment. Posters which would bring political issues to the attention of pupils will be covered by clause 43. That will require that where such issues are brought to the attention of pupils they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views. I cannot see how a poster on its own which presents a particular political view, for example, by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, could meet that requirement. On the other hand, if there

were to be a mock election in a school, posters of all different political parties would be reasonable and acceptable.

I hope that my hon. Friend will realise that it is not possible for me to accept amendment No. 223, not only because it would widen the extent of clause 42 beyond necessity but because seeking to influence pupils is unspecified and therefore the paragraph is ungrammatical.

7.15 pm

Mr. Radice: In this group of amendments and new clauses we have been debating a considerable number of subjects. I want to put on record the fact that we are sympathetic to the idea behind new clause 35. We are strongly in favour of sport in schools, both team and individual sports. In fact, the Inner London education authority would be in favour of a duty to provide competitive sports. My local authority, Durham, which is Labour-controlled and has been for many years, is strongly in favour of sport, and is in the forefront of providing it in schools. Clearly, we have to look at new ways, new policies and new money for providing sport in schools.

Our new clause deals with the setting up of an education council. I was glad that the Minister had my Fabian pamphlet. At least, I am glad that her civil servants have read it, even if she has not. I urge the hon. Lady to read it. The Minister accused me of ignoring the role of Parliament. In fact, we are strong believers in the Select Committee system. I hope that the next Labour Government will treat that system with more respect than this Government have done, especially the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts. I will not take any lectures from the Minister about that.

I am glad to hear that the hon. Lady does not want to run the system from Whitehall and that she supports dialogue. That is good news. Certainly, the hon. Lady is well placed to argue that case with her experience in local government. However, she did not face the argument about the education council. She is complacent about the state of the educational partnership and the Government's relationship with local authorities and teachers, which is in a bad state. In fact, there is a major breakdown of consensus in our education system. That is one reason why we have argued for an education council with representatives of the major interests on it. It would agree on and debate the major educational issues.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 162, Noes 301.

Division No. 282] **[7.15 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter

Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 7

REVIEW OF THE PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

'It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to review the progress made by local education authorities in implementing those sections of the 1981 Education Act which are concerned with the provision of special education'.—*[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

7.30 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take the following: New clause 8—*Further education for young people with special educational needs*—

'In subsection (1) of section 20 of the Education Act 1981 the words "and is registered as a pupil at a school" shall be omitted.'.

New clause 9 — *Appeals procedure for parents of children with special educational needs*—

'For subsections (4) to (7) of section 8 of the Education Act 1981 there shall be substituted the following subsections—

"(4) The decision of an appeal committee shall be binding on the local education authority by or on whose behalf the statement under appeal was made.

(5) In any case where an appeal committee confirm the decision of a local education authority as to the special educational provision to be made for the child the appellant may appeal in writing to the Secretary of State.

(6) On an appeal under subsection (5) above the Secretary of State may, after consulting the local education authority concerned—

(a) confirm the special educational provision specified in the statement;

(b) amend the statement so far as it specifies the special educational provision and make such other consequential amendments to the statement as he considers appropriate; or

(c) direct the local education authority to cease to maintain the statement".'.

Mr. Bennett: I shall try to be brief as we have a great deal to cover in the Bill.

New clause 7 deals with the provision of special education and asks the Government to undertake a review of the workings of the Education Act 1981. No doubt the Minister will counter by stating that the Government always have the legislation under review. However, I believe that there is a strong argument in favour of a specific review of the workings of the 1981 Act. If the Minister cannot accept the amendment, I hope that he will spend a little time explaining how he believes that the legislation is working. There is much evidence that the predictions of the Opposition when the 1981 Act was passed—that the legislation would not work unless the Government came up with extra resources to make it work—have been proved accurate for many local authorities.

It is amazing that the Government can dream up substantial extra sums of money for the new city technology colleges, yet they cannot find any extra money to make the Education Act 1981 work. That is a sign of the Government's priorities. The Government have opted for that gimmick rather than making sure that those youngsters who are born handicapped or who acquire handicaps have extra funding to ensure that they can be integrated into and obtain the full benefit from main stream schools.

I would be especially interested to hear the Government's statistics on the way in which the statements are made in local authorities. My impression is that the statements are made in a very haphazard way. A few local authorities have a good record in ensuring that statements are made on all the children who need statements, that the statements are made as early as possible and that the statements are of a high standard. However, I am aware that some local authorities seem to be making no statements or are making statements when children have reached the ages of seven, eight, or nine, when the problems of handicap have been obvious for many years. These children should have been receiving special assistance at an earlier stage.

I also have some evidence that one or two local authorities are making statements not in relation to the needs of the youngster but in relation to the resources that they have to implement those statements. If a local authority has a shortage of a specific form of special education, it delays making statements for the children who might need that form of special education to avoid drawing attention to the fact that it lacks provision. That is outrageous. We should have a clear undertaking from the Government that they expect local authorities to make statements on all children, when appropriate, that they expect statements to be made promptly, and that, where there is clear evidence from the statements that a special form of education is needed—in a special school or in a mainstream school with special back-up—the resources are provided so that the statement can be fulfilled. I hope that the Government can provide information on that matter. I believe that statements are not being made in the best possible way in many authorities.

I also hope that the Government will take the opportunity to tell us whether they feel that there are sufficient educational psychologists in training or within the service who can contribute to the statements. There is evidence of a shortage of the professionals needed to make statements, and that is one reason why there is such an uneven provision.

Will the Minister give us a clear statement about the education of the deaf and the training of teachers? I know that the Minister has been strongly lobbied on that issue, but there is still confusion about the Government's intentions. When the Minister replies, I hope that he will give us more information about that.

I am sure that the Minister will remember, from the proceedings on the Education Act 1980, that I have a specific interest in the problems of dyslexia. I am pleased that the British Dyslexia Association has received a great deal of publicity during this month. However, there is still insufficient knowledge about the problems of dyslexia, and in many local authorities there is an unwillingness to provide resources to ensure that youngsters with reading difficulties and, in some instances, acute spelling difficulties, receive the assistance necessary to take full advantage of mainstream education.

I would like the Minister to comment on many other aspects of special education. It is sad that we have to look for a device such as this Bill to provide a brief debate on special education in schools and that we cannot have more parliamentary time to discuss these matters.

We must, however, consider the issue of post-16 provision. I support the Liberal party's new clause on this subject. It is important that we make proper provision for post-16 education for children with special handicaps. I have visited many colleges of further education and witnessed some very imaginative schemes offering further education for these children. The schemes look impressive. However, for all those impressive further education schemes there are youngsters who are denied access to a college or to courses in their localities. Provision for 16 to 19-year-olds should be universally available to handicapped youngsters. I hope that the Minister will give us a clear statement about provision in that area.

New clause 9 relates to the appeals procedure. We argued about such a provision at great length in the proceedings on the Education Act 1981. We said that parents who were dissatisfied with the school recommended by a local authority for a child upon whom a statement

[Mr. Bennett]

had been made should have the same rights of appeal as the parents of a child who had not had a statement made upon him. We failed to persuade the Government then. I hope that they will give this point further thought now.

The appeals procedure on the choice of schools has worked reasonably well. It is totally illogical—if the Government want children with special needs to be integrated into mainstream education—that parents of handicapped children should be denied an appeals procedure. I hope that the Government will consider that point sympathetically and say that there is no reason why the parents of a child for whom a statement as been made should not have the same rights to exercise an appeal as the parents of a child who has not received a statement.

If the appeals panels have sufficient skill and judgment to decide whether a school is full, they have sufficient judgment to decide whether the local authority's proposal for a child is valid or whether the parents' proposal about the school is valid. It is an insult to the parents, to the handicapped child and to the appeals panels for the Government to insist that an appeal cannot be made.

I hope that the Minister will give us a clear account of the way in which the Government see the Education Act 1981 developing. I hope that he will tell us what the Government are doing to find resources and then tell us that the Government will insist that there is universal provision for 16 to 19-year-old children with special needs and accede to the request for an appeals procedure.

Mr. Freud: I support the new clause moved by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). New clauses 8 and 9 repeat the principles of the Handicapped Young Persons Bill which I moved in May last year in an attempt to improve the law in relation to young people with special educational needs.

New clauses 8 and 9 represent two changes to the last great Education Act—that of 1981—which is likely to be the only important Education Act of this decade. The first change concerns young people aged 16 to 19 in the special needs category, who currently receive the roughest deal, although Warnock indentified this group as a priority area and stated that provision for these young people was "in general manifestly inadequate" and that if nothing was done all earlier efforts "may come to nothing".

The problem is that the provisions of the 1981 Act, specifically those concerning the central protection offered to the child by the statement, apply only so long as the child or young person is receiving education at school. Young people in further education thus lack a vital protection. Even though Ministers have said that the 1944 Act imposes a legal duty on local education authorities in respect of these young people, the loophole remains. Recent examples of the problems concern young people who have faced charges for courses at institutions of further education. Integration should give all in this age group the same legal status, but at the moment it is certainly not clear that that is so.

The problem is not merely theoretical. The National Bureau for Handicapped Students informs me that there are cases outstanding in which the statement process has gone awry for the young people concerned, usually but not solely where out-county placements, and therefore financial judgments, are involved. For example, two young people in Bedfordshire who are deaf are currently at an out-county residential institution without knowing the results of their statements and thus without knowing whether finance will be provided by the local education authority.

The second change concerns an aspect to which the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish referred—the appeals procedure for parents who are dissatisfied with the statement that they receive from the local education authority about their child. Under the 1981 Act, parents can appeal to an appeals tribunal. The tribunal can listen, cluck with sympathy and agree with the parents, but it cannot take any action. It can merely confirm the statement or send it back, but if the tribunal refuses to uphold the statement the local education authority does not have to change it. Although the parents can now go to the Secretary of State, the Minister will know that very few do so and it is my contention that they face what amounts to legal discrimination, especially as we all know how long the Department takes to reach a decision and how hard it is to persuade it to overrule a local education authority especially when financial considerations are involved.

New clause 9 would give parents in this situation the same rights as are provided by the 1980 Act for parents dissatisfied about the choice of school. I hope that the Minister will answer this question. What is the sense in the tribunal sending back the statement and the education authority merely repeating something that the parents do not want to hear and which makes them manifestly unhappy? What is the sense in employing the expertise of a tribunal if it can make no positive or constructive contribution to the proceedings? What is the point of the whole exercise? Why will not the Minister accept these new clauses which seek to end discrimination against children with special needs?

During the passage of the 1981 legislation the Government's stock answer was that there would be financial implications, but that has never seemed an adequate reason for denying equal treatment before the law or for weighting things so much against those with special needs. Lady Warnock has said that integration without finance is inoperable and all members of the Committee in 1981 were saddened by the Government's refusal to fund the 1981 Act. The Government must think again and I hope that they will do so sympathetically in relation to these new clauses.

Mr. Dunn: I am delighted to respond to this short debate initiated by the hon. Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud). Before making my general comments, I should remind the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East that Lady Warnock and the report which bears her name made the point that it would take time to implement some of the findings.

7.45 pm

The background to this aspect of the Bill is as follows. The Government have funded three major research projects relating to aspects of progress made by local education authorities in implementing the 1981 Act. Like both hon. Members who have spoken, I served on the Committee dealing with that legislation so perhaps, like Siamese triplets, we are doomed to spend our time together. As the House knows, all three projects were to last three years, after which a report would be prepared

and presented to a major seminar at London university later this year to publicise the findings. The Government intend to review both the guidance to local education authorities and the legislation itself in the light of those findings to see whether amendments are necessary. Such a review is clearly a major undertaking and is bound to take a little time, but in view of the work in hand I hope that hon. Members will agree that there is no need to lay upon the Secretary of State a statutory duty to carry out a review that is already well advanced.

I appreciate the aim of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East in new clause 8 to widen the scope of the 1981 Act to cover not only children under the age of 19 who are registered pupils in schools but also those with special educational needs who, at the age of 16, transfer to courses at colleges of further education. I remind the Opposition, however, that the provisions of the 1981 Act are framed in terms of schools, so to achieve the hon. Gentleman's objective would require far more amendments to that Act than are proposed in the new clause. For example, the definition of special educational needs in section 1 would have to be amended, the duties placed on local education authorities and school governors in section 2 would have to be widened and consequential amendments would be required to sections 3 and 4 as well as to the special education need regulations of 1983.

Mr. Freud *rose*——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Dunn: I am overwhelmed by the interest shown. I give way to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East.

Mr. Freud: Has the Minister tried putting that argument to a handicapped child with special educational needs?

Mr. Dunn: I acknowledge receipt of that message and give way to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: If the only problem is the drafting, there is a simple solution. The Minister can simply accept the new clause and put the wording right when it goes back to the House of Lords. As he has had the entire recess to consider the new clauses, he had only to ask his own draftsmen to put it right and to draft the necessary consequential amendments. It is a bit thick to suggest at this stage that the only reason for refusing the new clauses is that the wording is not right. The Minister knows that if the Government want to do something they can perfectly well do it, so come on now.

Mr. Dunn: I am invited to "come on", an invitation which I note with some interest, but I remind the House that an hour or so ago the Government were admonished for introducing a new clause on which there had not been time to consult. It is not fair for the Opposition now to invite us to take their new clauses at face value. There must be some consistency. The argument should not alter just because we have moved to another group of amendments.

I acknowledge the genuine and personal concern that both hon. Members have shown in the needs of those with learning difficulties or handicaps of one kind or another and I undertake to examine and review what has been said. In particular, I shall write to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish about the problems of the deaf and the training of their teachers. I do not believe, however, that this Bill is the appropriate vehicle to achieve the objectives listed by the Opposition, although I appreciate their right to list them even though we have cantered around this course several times before. I undertake to examine the points made and to write, but I cannot give any undertaking that will lead to any further changes in the Bill.

The hon. Members for Cambridgeshire, North-East and for Denton and Reddish referred to the role of the local appeal committee and asked why there were differences of emphasis as well as technical differences. In some respects, while the role of the local appeal committee in relation to admission to mainstream schools and to the provision necessary for children with special educational needs may seem similar, in practice they may be very different. When hearing appeals under the 1980 Act, the committee will normally be faced with the relatively straightforward matter of the choice of school and related issues. The assumption is that unless a selective system is in operation, ordinary schools are suitable for all children in the appropriate age group.

That is not the case in a dispute over special educational provisions. Decisions on location will be influenced not only by the availability of suitable staff and equipment but by the availability of special services which are not purely educational, in other words medical, nursing and social services, any of which may be determining factors in deciding the appropriate placement. It is therefore likely that disputes between local education authorities and parents may involve the appeal committee examining a wide range of specialist advice, particularly in drawn-out and complex cases. I believe that we have reached the right balance but I do understand, and up to a point, sympathise with, the concerns expressed by other hon. Members.

I have referred to the review of the provisions of the Education Act 1981. The Government are committed to the provisions of the 1981 Act although we are aware of some issues which need to be considered. I hope that Opposition Members will be prepared to agree that it would be helpful at this stage not to prejudge the outcome of our considerations. I can readily assure the House that a review of the provisions of that Act is already planned and, in the light of my assurance, perhaps the Opposition will withdraw their new clause and await my reply to the points they have raised.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: The Minister's reply is a little disappointing. I appreciate his idea of writing to individual hon. Members about the points that they have raised. I hope that he will add to his list my question about the number of educational psychologists. Is their number sufficient, and are there sufficient in training so that statements can be made promptly?

One reason for debating this issue in the House is to make information available to a much wider public than would have access to the correspondence. The Government should look carefully at their review. I welcome the fact that the Government have funded research into three local authorities——

Mr. Dunn: Five authorities.

Mr. Bennett: Even if it is five authorities, the fact that research is being done into local authorities immediately distorts the situation within those local authorities. The fact that someone outside is taking an interest in a particular problem encourages those in the local authority.

[Mr. Bennett]

I had hoped that the Government could have backed up their in-depth review of those five authorities with a general survey of how well statements are prepared in the country as a whole. I had hoped also that the Minister would illustrate some of the problems which are becoming evident so that there might be a wider debate within the country.

I am disappointed with the Minister's response to new clauses 8 and 9. He does not seem to appreciate that substantial problems face people aged over 16. It was a lame excuse to say that he had not had the time, or that we had not tabled the amendments in the correct form. These amendments were tabled before the summer recess in the names of Members of the Liberal party which would have given the Minister ample time to discuss the matter with us had he been seriously concerned about the issue. The Government seem happy to discuss various measures in the Bill with their hon. Friends. It would have been a great service to those of us involved with special education if the Government had spent a little time discussing post-16 provision.

Mr. Dunn: Believing as I do in the access of all Members of the House to Ministers, perhaps the hon. Gentleman would confirm that at no time did he make a request to see me on this point. If he did so, I have no recollection of it.

Mr. Bennett: I certainly did not ask to see the Minister. The amendment was tabled not in my name but in the names of Members of the Liberal party. It was, however, a matter on which in Committee we pressed the Government to make concessions. At that stage, we received no sympathy from the Government. We tried to persuade them to accept one or two minor things to assist the speed at which this legislation could pass through the House. The Minister could therefore have met us on this issue if he had been sympathetic.

The same applies to appeals. It is unsatisfactory for parents to feel that, even if they win an appeal, they still may not have a guarantee that their child will go to the right school. Instead, there may be a long bureacractic process involving the Secretary of State with the possibility that the child will be awarded a place at a particular school when it is no longer appropriate. Children with special educational needs need that special provision at the appropriate moment. If assistance is given when it is most needed, integration into mainstream schools may well be speeded up.

The Government's answers have been most unsatisfactory. Since the 1981 Act was passed, we have had no sign that the Government will provide the resources to turn the recommendations of the Warnock report into a reality. We shall therefore divide the House on the clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 175, Noes 296.

Division No. 283] **[8.00pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:

Mr Ron Davies, and
Mr. Allen McKay

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen &
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 10

PROCEDURE ON CLOSURES

'The Secretary of State shall, in considering proposals required to be submitted for his approval under sections 12 to 15 of the Education Act 1980—

(a) give full reasons in writing for his decision, subject to meeting the requirement of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and the necessary confidentiality between officials and ministers;

(b) announce his decision within six months of the date of such submission of proposals to him or, in exceptional circumstances where that time limit cannot be met, make a statement within six months as to the reasons for the delay giving a date at which the decision will be made.'.—*[Mr. Freud.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Freud: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: New clause 15—*School closures and reorganisations*—

'It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State or any local education authority making a proposal which falls to him for decision under sections 12 to 15 of the Education Act 1980 to make available to any statutory objector:—

(a) the response of the local education authority to the written objections of the statutory objector.

(b) all documents and minutes presented by the local education authority to the Secretary of State in support of the proposal.

(c) copies of any questions asked by the Secretary of State relevant to his consideration of the proposal and the reply of the local education authority.'.

New clause 22—*Procedure on closures (No. 3)*—

'When the Secretary of State, in considering proposals required to be submitted for his approval under sections 12 to 15 of the Education Act 1980, overturns a recommendation of a local education authority, that local education authority shall have the right to appeal against his decision, provided that notice of such an appeal is given in writing within 28 days.'.

New clause 34—*Procedures on closures*—

'When the Secretary of State, in considering proposals required to be submitted for his approval under section 12 to 15 of the Education Act 1980, overturns a recommendation of a local education authority, the Secretary of State's decision shall stand for a period of at least five years.'.

Mr. Freud: The new clause is the latest in a long series of attempts during the passage of the Bill to clarify and improve the procedure of school reorganisation. I was fortunate in having the new clause selected by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I would be foolish if I did not press it to a vote.

Although we recognise that there is an attempt at a new regime in Elizabeth house following the exposure of the 14 months' average delay in decisions, two main problems remain and the new clause attempts to meet both of them. The first problem is that of further information, both on the local education authority's case for reorganisation and on the Secretary of State's reasons for it. That must be fair to objectors and local communities. Applying the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 is the moderate and sensible way to achieve this openness. We discussed this issue at considerable length in Committee, but the new clause also preserves confidentiality between Ministers and officials, so that that can no longer be an excuse.

The new clause places a time limit of six months on the Secretary of State's decisions or, where that would be difficult, an obligation to state what is going on and why there is a delay. Again, we have discussed that matter at length. It is extraordinarily unhelpful to the well-being of a school to have educational decisions hanging over it. It is our ambition to speed up the process and to make it clear to all those who are involved.

In the context of the pressure to remove surplus places and the intense local feelings aroused by reorganisation proposals, decisions made in good time and in the open will, almost inevitably, be better decisions than those which are covered up and which spend a long time in the melting pot.

I know that the Minister will be pleased to hear that, in the next few months I shall visit him with two groups of constituents whose schools are being reorganised. I maintain that openness in one case will help in all cases. When criteria become known and procedures are better understood, it will be helpful generally to education. Decisions made under these new arrangements will also even up the legal status of objectors and proposers by giving the parents the right to know on what basis the decision has been made. At present, the Secretary of State need give no account of his activities while having the power drastically to affect the life of local communities. We need to reassess the balance betweeen efficiency in reorganisation and the rights of the individual. This new modest clause will improve both those matters.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I join the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) in supporting the new clause. The Opposition have also tabled other new clauses. When one is faced with the question whether a school should close or not, considerable passions are usually aroused. The Secretary of State has a duty to reach a decision quickly, to do it fairly, and to be seen to do it fairly.

The problem now is that no one knows whether the Secretary of State has reached a decision fairly or whether someone had a quiet word with him and he took rather more notice of a little bit of political nobbling than of the case presented by the local education authority. It does not matter how much the Minister protests, or how much hon. Members protest on his behalf that he would not be subject to any political lobbying behind the scenes and that he would make a fair decision. Unless all the information relating to the decision is made public, he will never convince those who are dissatisfied with the final decision. It will often be difficult to please such people, but it is important that we make it clear to them that justice is done. The only way to do that is for all the information that the Minister used to make his decision to be made public and for the decision and the reasons for it to be conveyed by the Minister.

As the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East suggested, once the information is made public, it will help case law to be developed and people will know the criteria that the Minister is taking into account, those that weigh with him and those that do not. On the whole, it will discourage people from putting forward arguments which are unlikely to carry weight. Therefore, it should reduce the burden of papers that the Minister must consider. It will also help local authorities when drawing up plans to understand what is in the Minister's mind when reaching decisions. They will take that into account and tend not

to put forward proposals which would be unacceptable to the Minister. This sensible group of amendments will ensure that justice is seen to be done.

They will, on the whole, speed up the process. It is unfortunate that the Government have seen fit to reject them so far. However, I hope that, even at this late stage, the Minister may have second thoughts.

8.15 pm

Mr. Cyril Smith (Rochdale): My support for the new clause is based on recent constituency experience.

I was delighted to hear the speech made by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), who spoke for the official Opposition, because it would appear that this new clause is to be considered on its merits rather than on the source from which it emanates. Therefore, we may on this occasion persuade the official Opposition to vote for an alliance amendment. That would be historic. The fact is that often the Opposition speak in support of our amendments but do not bother to troop into the Lobbies.

In my constituency, two types of reorganisation are pending. One is the reorganisation of Roman Catholic education, about which I brought a deputation of parents to meet the Minister and he kindly received us. That was many months ago, but we have still had no decision or news. I am not complaining about that, because I suspect that in this case no news is good news. None the less the parents of Catholic children in Rochdale would like to know whether the Government mean what they say. The Government have said constantly, and again at the recent Conservative party conference, that parental rights are what matter and that they want to take into account the wishes and views of parents.

In the case of the Catholic reorganisation in Rochdale, 97 per cent. of the parents have signed petitions which I and the parents delivered to the Minister. Those petitions opposed the Catholic diocesan proposals for the reorganisation of Catholic education in Rochdale. It is extremely interesting, because the Bishop of Salford, to his utter disgrace, refuses to tell the parents of the children in his Catholic schools what his proposals are and what his reaction is to their objections.

The Minister kindly arranged for the parents to see the local authority's objections, and we are grateful to him for that, but the parents of Catholic children in Rochdale have no idea what the bishop's reaction to their views has been. The bishop constantly refuses to disclose that. It is an absolute scandal, and the bishop should be ashamed of himself. I hope that Catholics will remember that I voted for the ten-minute Bill earlier today, but that is beside the point. The behaviour of the Bishop of Salford on the reorganisation of Catholic education in Rochdale has been an absolute and utter disgrace.

I hope that if this new clause is accepted, it will result in the Minister disclosing not only his reasons for arriving at a decision, but the advice and information given to him by bodies which are directly responsible — such as diocesan education authorities through the bishops — and why, in this case, I hope, he has rejected their advice and decided to support 97 per cent. of the parents.

Mr. Freud: Does my hon. Friend agree that delaying a decision has a very damaging effect on a school? Faced with uncertainty, many parents would rather send their children to another school or to a private sector school. The longer the delay, the more damage that is done to a school. Ultimately, the reorganisation is carried out despite the merits of the argument.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is correct.

Perhaps I can say with some modesty that I have been a member of the Rochdale education committee for 23 years, and its chairman for eight years. Indeed, I piloted the last reorganisation scheme through Rochdale town council. I know how important it is for parents to be kept posted of what is happening. Constant delays affect not only parents, but staff morale. People are not sure what is going to happen, when it is going to happen, or whether their jobs are safe, and so on. Such delays are detrimental to the education of children.

My local authority is about to submit its proposals to the Minister. The Labour local authority in Rochdale ganged up with the Tories, forming an unholy coalition on education. The proposals put forward are scandalous and a disgrace. During the weekend I saw copies of a private document that was circulated to Labour councillors by chief officers. The document is marked "Private and confidential", but it says that if reorganisation goes ahead the education service in Rochdale will be harmed. Today, I took great pleasure in sending the Minister a copy of the private advice given to the Labour group by the professional staff in Rochdale.

Rochdale local authority intends to spend between £50,000 and £100,000 on trying to persuade parents to accept their proposals to carve up the education system. It has appointed public relations consultants to spend public money on selling the scheme to the public and parents of Rochdale. But no professional advice is available to the scheme's opponents other than that given voluntarily. They have no opportunity to state their case, and so on. Consequently, there will be a long, drawn-out battle. The Minister is bound to reject the scheme. Apart from anything else, it provides 1,800 places more than is required by the number of children in Rochdale. The scheme openly says that.

The Minister cannot accept the scheme, yet £100,000 of ratepayers' money will be spent on selling it. Moreover, the chairman of the education committee in Rochdale has been given two days' paid leave a week by Rossendale education authority in order to carry out his duties. That is happening although we are always being told that there is not enough money for education or for children's books. Apparently, however, teachers can be given two days' paid leave a week to sit in an office making sure that a chief education officer, who earns nearly £30,000 a year, is doing his job. I do not know where the devil we are going.

The Government should seriously consider the new clause. It gives parents and the public an opportunity to know the reasons for a Minister's decision. That will at least help another authority to have some idea of what is acceptable to him. Exceptionally, the Minister will not be able to make a decision in six months. But he can at least give reasons for the delay. I strongly support the new clause.

Mr. Holt: Few hon. Members can have been unaware, in the past 48 hours, of a little baby in the north-east of England called Nicola Bell. She was born very prematurely, but not as prematurely as another baby who is still alive in the north-east.

I have begun on that rather off-beat note because, when the law on social service benefits was framed, it was not

[Mr. Holt]

thought possible for such a premature baby to live. In the 1950s, the medical and legal professions were wrong, and as a result that mother is now deprived of benefits. Laws last for a long time, but things do change. Consequently, we must be careful when framing our education law.

I tabled an amendment, because only three years ago a school in my constituency was submited for closure to the then Secretary of State. The law is not restrictive, so a vindictive local authority can resubmit its application for closure every year. That has a detrimental effect on the school and the area.

Huntcliff school in Saltburn was earmarked for closure in 1982 by the local education authority. In 1983, the Secretary of State said that the school did not meet the criteria for closure, because it was a school of excellence providing everything for the youth of that town. But less than three years later that school had been resubmitted for closure although there has been no variation in the ground rules. I have every confidence that the new Secretary of State will reject the local education authority's proposals because there is no justification for them. But unless the Government table an amendment similar to mine, that local education authority can submit that school for closure year after year until the parents and those fighting to keep the school open capitulate.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: If the Minister had had to give his reasons in full in the first place, that local authority might not have been tempted to resubmit. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join us in the Lobby to ensure that people have the necessary information.

Mr. Holt: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not listen. I said that, as the school met the criteria of excellence, and as nothing has changed, I have every confidence that it will stay open. The former Secretary of State made that clear when the proposals were rejected. But for how long will my constituents have to be subjected to this form of Chinese water torture, that goes drip, drip, drip, year after year? My amendment would at least mean that there would be a five-year period when parents need not worry about closure.

I do not think that five years is an unreasonable period and once a determination has been given it should be valid for that period. I recognise that when one specifies a period one can always argue the case for a shorter or longer period. My argument for five years is based on the fact that it is approximately the length of time that children would stay in that school. Once parents have decided on a school for their children they should be free of the worry that the school will be closed half way through their children's academic career.

8.30 pm

If a school is closed and the children are dispersed to other schools, those other schools are also unsure what will happen. There is a need for the Minister to make a decision and to make it stick for at least five years. Unless that is done we are subjected, year after year, as in Saltburn, to an education authority which can, justifiably, put the same school forward for closure year after year. By doing so the authority avoids any argument about closing other schools—perhaps those which ought to be closed or put under review. If the Minister accepts my amendment, attention would be focused on the other schools which, at the moment, are not under the microscope because the LEA, in its wisdom, decides not to put them there.

The north-east of England is already ravaged. Parents are worried enough as to what employment their children will have at the end of their academic careers. To subject them and their children to the worry of school closure is wrong. I am confident that the 1983 decision on Huntcliff school will be reaffirmed when the case comes to the Secretary of State this year. But thereafter, I would like the Minister to state that legislation will be introduced so that a five-year moratorium will elapse before schools are subject to further consideration.

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): When there is a proposal to close a school, whatever educational advantages may accrue—we all recognise that there may be great educational advantages—a high proportion of such proposals tend to be unpopular with parents.

Other reasons may prompt the closure of a school—accessibility to homes in rural areas, the decay of villages and so on — but parents feel strongly about these matters. If the Bill is not amended in some way, will the Minister explain to what extent the need to satisfy and explain the decisions to parents and thus lessen their apprehensions and anxieties will be adequately covered?

Mr. Dunn: The debate tonight is an echo of the debate that we had in Standing Committee and I do not object to that. I note the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) and I shall return to that shortly.

I must point out to Members on both sides that I spend a great deal of time receiving Members who bring deputations to me about certain proposals affecting schools in their constituencies. In common with the officials at the Department of Education and Science, I am conscious of the time that some proposals take to be concluded, as measured from the date of their publication to the time of the decision. In many local authorities the debate has gone on longer than that because all local authorities, if not most — one or two perhaps are different — are facing falling rolls in their schools. We must be concerned with the range of curriculum on offer, the staffing of schools and the cost of maintaining schools which are a third or half empty.

No one likes to close a school and parents do not like it if their school is closed. However, the local authority has a duty, both in terms of the expenditure that it is responsible for and its commitment to fulfil its own policies and the policies of the Government. The procedures that were adopted in the Education Act 1980 were a substantial improvement on the ap al procedures which obtained before. I cannot comment on those previous procedures because I was not party to the enactment of earlier legislation or to any of the practices which existed prior to 1980.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) made a passionate speech but, as he knows, I cannot comment in public about any proposals which are before the Secretary of State. To do so would be injudicious, as Gilbert and Sullivan would be wont to say. I am sure that the points the hon. Gentleman raised are not just for my hearing. I dare say his comments will receive a wide readership in south-east Lancashire—or the area formerly known as south-east Lancashire before local government reorganisation.

Parents have a chance to state their objections to the proposals clearly and categorically both in writing and verbally. The deputations which I meet state their objections to certain proposals affecting a school or range of schools which are represented by hon. Members. Deputations take advantage of the time with me to make clear their concern about the provision of education in their community. These deputations are aware of the criteria which are worked to and the policy statements of the Secretary of State for Education and Science. This information is obtained from the guidelines which are issued by the Department, the interchange of views and advice given by officials to local education authorities and the guidance, advice and criteria which are published in a variety of circulars based upon our views. Such information is complemented by Ministers' speeches.

The position is not satisfactory and Members of Parliament have a role to play. On a number of occasions when a decision is apparently uncontroversial—I am not speaking about any particular decision—a Member of Parliament may be persuaded of the need for a deputation to go to Elizabeth house. Consequently, the decision on the proposal may well be delayed for three months if the points raised by the deputation are clearly at odds with the information that we have to hand.

I am under advice from the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud)—I will not say Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym): he is quite a different fish. One may telescope the time scale and provide a let-out by explaining why we were delaying over a decision. There are occasions when deputations make valid points which need to be checked with the diocesan authority or the local education authority.

If we were provided with a let-out route and could state that we had taken our time because of compelling reasons —information that we did not have before had to be checked or information received was inaccurate—what would be the mechanism by which our statements were proved? Would I be required to appear at the Bar of the House and to give reasons why I am late or the Secretary of State is late? Would I be required to turn up from time to time to apologise to Members of Parliament and say, "I am so sorry, Mr. Speaker, that we were delayed".

I hope the House will accept from me, because I am one of the nicest people I know, that we do spend as much time as we could to bring decisions to an early conclusion. From time to time, compelling reasons — sometimes, perhaps, a late intervention by hon. Members—cause a decision to be somewhat delayed. In case he feels guilty, I am not saying that the hon. Member for Rochdale did so. He was, in fact, a model Member, leading a model deputation—which is not to comment on the merits or demerits of the case.

Before the summer recess, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that a scrutiny of the procedures followed by the Department would be undertaken by Mr. Mitchell, whose report is expected shortly. Changes in procedures may well be adopted in the light of that report.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister intend the report to be published?

Mr. Dunn: I will take that up with the Secretary of State. Junior Ministers have limited powers of action, but I shall ensure that the hon. Member's intervention is drawn to my right hon. Friend's attention. I am sure that the hon. Member will table a question fairly soon to ensure that I provide an answer.

The Government have some sympathy with the motives of those who have spoken, but I cannot accede to their requests now. We are awaiting a report from an eminent and respected public figure and will take account of his recommendations.

I understand the motive to which my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) referred. It would be injudicious for local authorities to keep making the same proposals. I cannot comment further on that. I cannot, however, accept that it would be wise to fetter local authorities' freedom to present proposals. Proposals under sections 12 to 15 may fail to gain approval for a wide variety of reasons, ranging from the educational to the purely procedural. The problem which prompts the original proposal, which is usually a decline in pupil numbers, will remain in many cases. It would damage the efficiency of the education service and be contrary to the Government's policy of removing surplus places to prevent authorities which consider it necessary from presenting alternative proposals. Political control of an authority might change. That happens from time to time. It is regrettable when my party loses control. Proposals made by an outgoing administration might be withdrawn by the incoming one. That may cause delay, confusion and a strain for parents.

Sir Raymond Gower: Does my hon. Friend anticipate anything in Mr. Mitchell's report requiring legislation to be implemented?

Mr. Dunn: That depends on what Mr. Mitchell has to say. No avenue can be ruled out, but I do not want to pursue that, enticing as it may be.

I attach a great deal of importance to parental involvement. That is why we take special account of the process of consultation. There must be an opportunity for the views of individuals, institutions, political parties, elected members of authorities and those of neighbouring authorities to have sight of proposals which affect a school.

Most of the deputations that I see are composed of parents, parent governors, governors and councillors, who may themselves have children at a school. It will be difficult to streamline the procedure by which views are made known by having mass interventions by various organisations at any stage. We rely heavily on the co-operation of hon. Members when they bring deputations to see Ministers.

Mr. Holt: Is my hon. Friend saying that the Government's case for not acceding to my proposal is that there is likely to be a change of political control? That is the only reason that he has put forward so far. An incoming administration could withdraw proposals, so the Government have not answered my case.

Mr. Dunn: With respect to my hon. Friend, I gave one or two other reasons why proposals might fail. One is that they are procedurally wrong. Law and regulation lay down what must happen when proposals for reorganisation are made known. An authority might make a mistake in its interpretation of those regulations. A proposal might be technically unsound. There might be problems about consultation. Information might be incorrect. There is a

[Mr. Dunn]

variety of reasons why proposals might be rejected. The rejection letter from the Department states quite clearly why proposals are unsound.

8.45 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): Political control of government may change. A future Labour Government may have a very different approach to the same problem.

Mr. Dunn: I dare say that the hon. Member is right. There are great differences between the parties in terms of attitudes towards schools, sixth forms and tertiary colleges.

I cannot accept the new clause and hope that it will not be pressed to a Division.

Mr. Freud: In the time-honoured words of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), I am very disappointed by the Minister's reply.

New Clause 10 is modest. We ask the Minister for no more than that he should give in writing reasons for his decision. As the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) argued in Committee, secrecy leads to rumour, and rumour leads to the break up of the well being of community. All that we want to know when there is a school closure or reorganisation is whether the reasons are financial, educational, political, to do with disenchantment of the teaching force or due to lack of safety of the building. The Minister must know that if such information is not given, the matter is talked about, the rumours stick and the people concerned are damaged. I cannot understand why the Minister is denying such an opportunity.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. Does he agree that the main casualty are the Government whose decisions, being shrouded in secrecy, are open to the worst possible interpretation although they might be on sound educational ground?

Mr. Freud: I entirely agree. The new clause merely asks the Government to get a move on. They have agreed that 14 months, which was the norm for a decision, is too long.

Mr. Dunn: I think that the hon. Member will find that the average is six months. The norm is not 14 months.

Mr. Freud: I listened to the Minister. It was published that the Government were dissatisfied with the previous length of time and were trying to reduce it to six months. We were simply trying to enshrine six months in legislation. We were making available to the Minister the perfectly valid course of announcing after six months why a decision has not come to light. The community would be content to be told after six months that investigations were taking place, but would take another two or three months. However, just as people want to know the reasons for a closure, they will want to know when the reasons will be published.

I have no hesitation in pressing the new clause to a Division. I hope that Conservative Members who have listened to the debate will vote for our sensible and modest proposal.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 168, Noes 291.

Division No. 284] **[8.50 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*

Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Cyril Smith and
Mrs. Elizabeth Shields.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 13

PARENTAL PREFERENCES

'( ) The duty imposed on the governing body under subsection (2) of section 6 of the Education Act 1980 shall apply notwithstanding sub-paragraph (*a*) of subsection (3) of that section if in the opinion of the governing body compliance with the preference would not prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources at its school.'.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This is a technical clause of a micro-incremental nature compared with the more ambitious new clause 27. It is important for thousands of parents throughout the country when they apply for their children to attend particular schools. It is important because the spirit of the Bill as I understand it, is to strengthen the position of parents in the education system.

The most important right of all for parents is the right to choose, and yet every year thousands of parents fail to get their children into the school of their choice. There is growing frustration in every constituency. The Minister will know the problems in my area. We have discussed the problems of Abbey school in the west of my constituency and of Whinfield school in the east. Schools are over-subscribed and parents cannot send their children to the schools of their choice. In desperation parents go to their Members of Parliament for advice.

Why does this happen? It is not because of the education system, but because of our 1980 Act which provides, not choice pure and simple, but heavily qualified preference. It allows a parent's preference to be overridden if the local education authority believes that compliance with the preference would prejudice the provision of a sufficient education or the efficient use of resources within an education authority area as a whole.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that, contrary to what he said a few moments ago, the problem does not stem from the fact that a school is over-subscribed — because the headmaster and governors might be keen to taken on an additional two or three pupils—but because the local authority overrides the wishes of both school and parents?

Mr. Fallon: My hon. Friend, as always, puts the case slightly better than me, and has rightly identified the source of the problem. It is the extent to which the local wishes of schools and parents can be overridden.

Some six years on from the 1980 Act, it is obvious that the less popular schools have attracted fewer applications as more and more parents apply for the more popular schools. However, children are directed to the less popular schools where, every year, more and more places are unfilled because the local education authority feels that the resources are not being efficiently used.

The proof that the system is not working lies in the number of appeals. My hon. Friend the Minister told me in answer to questions that there are some 10,000 appeals every year. Many more parents may not wish to put their children through the distress and agony of appeal. Even if the appeal is successful—and only half of them are—distress is still caused by the uncertainty. If the appeal is unsuccessful, there is distress among children who are separated from their friends who have been successful. Indeed, brothers and sisters are separated as education authority after education authority declares as a matter of policy that the kinship connection will no longer apply, and that that in itself is a reason for overriding parental choice.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not simply a question of the distress caused or the popularity of a school, but one of educational standards? I know of children in my constituency who have a particular aptitude, and there may be a school that is strong in that area, but because the child is unable to attend that school the standard of education that he achieves in music, mathematics or whatever is not as high as it could otherwise have been. Therefore, in addition to the distress caused to children, educational standards are suffering.

Mr. Fallon: My hon. Friend's remarks strengthen my case. They also strengthen my view that, if the 1980 Act is left unchanged, educational standards will not be maintained, the distress suffered will increase and the frustration of parents will multiply. If we do nothing to amend the Act, we shall do nothing to improve the attractiveness of the less popular schools, which will become even less popular and will receive fewer and fewer applications.

The purpose of my amendment is simple. I prepared it in consultation with the Advisory Committee on Education—ACE—which has done a great deal of work on school appeals and parental preference. The amendment would confine the operation of the veto to governors of a school and allow them to decide whether the addition of a few more pupils each term would prejudice the efficient use of resources, not within the entire county area, but at the school itself.

Mr. Norris: Does my hon. Friend agree that one problem is that the defence of prejudice to efficient use of resources is trotted out by education committees as a standard defence, generally supporting a particular planned admission limit at a set level? The appeal is based on the idea that some additional proportion of children may be allowed without prejudice. Does my hon. Friend agree that there would be value in trying to define those limits of prejudice? I understand that many authorities consider that one extra pupil per form of entry is almost recognised as not constituting prejudice and that more than that would do so. Is there any value in going down that road to try to reduce much of the uncertainty and unsatisfactoriness of the present appeal system?

Mr. Fallon: Yes, I think that there would be considerable value in trying to devise limits to the exercise of that prejudice, but the framers of the 1980 legislation — I have read through the *Hansard* reports of the Committee proceedings of that measure—had it in mind that each case should be considered on its merits irrespective of the limit that had previously been devised.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Does my hon. Friend agree that governing bodies of schools in his constituency, as in mine, are often most anxious to allow the extra one or two pupils that would be permitted but are overridden by the presiding authority?

Mr. Fallon: That is exactly the position. I think that my argument is becoming stronger as I continue to give way to my hon. Friends' interventions. I do not want to take too much of the time of the House, however, because there are many more debates to follow this one.

The purpose of the new clause is clear, and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has had a great deal of time over the summer to think about it. I have had a great deal of time, too, to think of what arguments he can possibly devise to resist the clause. It cannot be said that the problem is minimal. There are 10,000 appeals every year, and I believe that that is 10,000 too many. Only half of the appeals are successful, and I cannot accept that that is satisfactory. All of them should be successful if we are interested in genuine parental choice.

Secondly, it cannot be said that the new clause destroys the arrangements for admission limits generally. That could be said, too, of the appeal procedure that is in the 1980 legislation. If an appeal is considered on its merits by the tribunal, as it should be, the school may then have to take an additional pupil over its limit. The 1980 Act preaches the admission limits arrangement. Thirdly, it cannot be said that the clause would harm the more popular schools. The governors themselves would have the power to refuse the upper second limit. That in their view would be unreasonable, would strain their resources and would prejudice the efficient use of resources at their school.

Finally, it cannot be said that the clause would interfere with the general county-wide assessment. The general effect on the wider system would be a matter for the local education authority to consider when it decided its original admissions policy. This is a simple and practical amendment that stands at the margin of choice, and if it is carried several thousand parents every year will benefit.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): It has long been a principle that pupils should be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents. Those are the words of the White Paper "Better Schools" and not mine. The White Paper was a useful reaffirmation of a principle that has been honoured too much in the breach. The Government's 1980 legislation valuably strengthened the application of that principle but, unfortunately, it did not go far enough. Section 6(3)*(a)* of the 1980 Act contains a form of words that has allowed, once again, the officials to know best.

The exercise of choice by parents is a right that they value, and the more that they have of this right the more they value it. Where they do not have it, it does not mean that they do not want it. On the contrary, they do. The exercise of the right of choice must also have a beneficial effect on schools. Where the right operates effectively, it requires teachers to make their schools attractive to parents and children.

The right of choice is not always so popular with the producers of education. Life becomes a little untidy and unpredictable for administrators in areas where there is parental choice. From the point of view of some teachers, they ae exposed to an external evaluation that can make itself felt effectively, and that, too, can be somewhat uncomfortable. The right of parents to choose is bound to be tenuous enough in practice. In reality, in many places there is, only one school to which it is practical for parents to send their children. It is worth stressing in that context that school closures reduce choice. Each time a school closes, the element of effective choice is further narrowed. That is just one reason why we should be sceptical about a policy of encouraging school closures.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My hon. Friend referred to the practical choice, the logistics, where there is perhaps, only one school to which a parent can send his child. Is my hon. Friend aware that the problem to which my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) referred often occurs when someone new moves into the area? Obviously, that person wants to send his kid to the local school. In the interests of the kid, the headmaster and the Government are quite likely to say that that is a good idea, but the local authority steps in, ignores the declaration o human rights which says that parents have prior right to the choice of their children's education, and says, "No."

9.15 pm

Mr. Howarth: I think that my hon. Friend is right. Too often, parental choice does not seem to be highly regarded by local education authoriies. In the same way, I think that, too often, the schools that are chosen for closure are the popular schools. I think that my hon. Friend suggested in his earlier intervention in the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) that local education authorities are somewhat apt to alter planned admission levels to prop up the unpopular schools. We hear too many instances of that reported by the Inner London education authority, and recently I have heard it reported in Wiltshire. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minster will accept that the new clause will prevent that kind of practice and that it puts the onus on the schools to use their resources well and to give wider opportunity. I hope that he shall be able to look favourably on the new clause.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I do not wish to delay the House for long, because I think that we have two treats ahead of us—first, the forthcoming debate on the next batch of amendments and, secondly, the Minister's reply to his hon. Friends on this issue. Some hon. Members have a sneaking suspicion that the Minister may not be completely unsympathetic to some of the broader ideological and philosophical arguments that underpinned the speeches made by Government Members. I look forward, with more than usual enjoyment, to the way in which the Minister reads the brief on this occasion and the sense of commitment that comes out in that reading.

I shall put on record one or two comments about the Labour party's views on new clause 13. Basically, the clause attempts to rehearse and repeat many of the arguments that we have heard on previous occasions about education vouchers. The Right wing of the Tory party is bringing the free market philosophy to education. It has tried this argument on a number of occasions. On other occasions it probably had the intellectual and philosophical sympathy of the previous Secretary of State, but thankfully it did not have his practical support. On this occasion, as the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) said — I wonder a little about the almost Keynesian language used — this is a micro-incrementalist amendment to the Education Act 1980. I very much like and appreciate such language. It may be a part of the dampening process that is going on within sections of the Conservative party.

The hon. Gentleman is wrong, for a number of reasons, to push the new clause. We believe that he is wrong

[Mr. Derek Fatchett]

fundamentally because it is part of that overall philosophy. It is part of what I would see as the portakabin approach to education, whereby one builds up a series of popular schools, which become well-resourced as against other schools, and parents make a fairly obvious choice towards those schools. It has no planning and no ability to consider the allocation of resources between schools in a particular local education authority, nor does it have the ability to consider the allocation of resources between education authorities. We welcome the comments by the hon. Gentleman, who said that he opposed school closures and was worried about the policy of closing schools. If he thought through the basis of his own free market arguments, he would see that that would probably lead to more school closures and a greater emphasis on what I have called the portakabin approach.

The hon. Member for Darlington said that the new clause shifts the basis of appeal and power from the local education authority to the Government. That is clearly its purpose. He said that there are 10,000 appeals against school allocation but he did not—I listened carefully—say how many were rejected by local education authorities. His argument would have been stronger if he had cited those figures. It would have been stronger still if he had taken the opportunity to make it clear that his new clause would not provide parents with an absolute choice. There is a danger in the hon. Gentleman's rhetoric in that it gives parents the impression that new clause 13 would provide an absolute choice. It would do nothing of the sort. New clause 13 provides that the governors can opt out of parental choice by showing that that the decision they take is in line with efficient education and use of resources. That clause is badly drafted. It will help the legal profession and lead to a great deal of argument. It does not provide parents with an absolute choice in the way the hon. Member for Darlington suggested.

We would oppose the new clause if it were pushed to the vote but I suspect that the Under-Secretary of State, with the skill and arguments that he will use on this occasion, will be able to persuade his hon. Friends to see the correctness of his position and we will not have a vote. We oppose the measure for reasons which we have already stated—because we feel that it is not workable and does not make good education sense.

Mr. Dunn: I welcome the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) to his new post as Opposition spokesman on education. I congratulate him on the courtesy and moderation with which he always delivers his speeches. He could almost be one of us.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): That will not go down well in his reselection process.

Mr. Dunn: In that case, I shall withdraw that remark if it would lead to the hon. Gentleman being deselected, because he is quite a nice man really.

We have heard from the hon. Member for Leeds, Central and from my hon. Friends the Members for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) and for Darlington (Mr. Fallon). I should like to take us back to the Education Act 1980. It was a major, pioneering Education Act, as my hon. Friends the Members for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), who served with me as Back Benchers on the Standing Committee, would confirm. That legislation did a great many things in the context of parental rights and appeal. It gave some protection to planned admission limits in a way that had never existed before. It must be right for Conservative Members to pay tribute to the framers of that legislation for what it did.

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington rightly pointed out that there were about 12,000 appeals a year of which more than a third were successful. It is not generally appreciated that, if a parent's appeal is upheld and the school of the parents' choice is agreed by the independent appeals committee, the school is obliged to take the child. If one, two, five or seven appeals are upheld, the school is obliged to take all those children. That did not obtain before the passage of the 1980 legislation. Under section 15, if a local education authority wishes to reduce the planned admission limit of a school, 20 per cent. or more of the previous admission level, it is required to publish notices and to bring the matter to the attention of the Secretary of State who adjudicates upon that wish.

There is debate, rightly, within our party and in the House about whether a figure of 20 per cent. is sufficient. I am not prepared to go down that route tonight except to point out to my hon. Friends that the protection of 20 per cent. under section 15 did not exist before. Consequently, there is no turning back, in any sense, or turning away from the reforms that we have initiated in the Education Act 1980 and those we are implementing in the passage of this Education Bill.

I can help my hon. Friends by referring to a significant provision already in the Bill. Clause 31 contains new provisions requiring the local education authority to consult the governing body before determining each year's admission arrangements. These will include the proposed intake target. The governing body will thus, for the first time, have a new opportunity to make its views known on these matters and the LEA will be required to give these views serious attention. As a function of the governing body, this matter will fall to be mentioned in the annual report to parents under clause 28 and, if parents wish, can be the subject of a resolution at the annual meeting under clause 29 which, again, the LEA would have to address seriously. More generally, of course, the whole thrust of the Bill is to increase the influence parents have over the way in which their children's schools develop as part of local provision. I would regard this as a powerful extension of parental choice.

I understand the thrust of the points made by my hon. Friends, including the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones). However, I ask them not to press this new clause to a Division because I think that we have made significant gains in the Education Act 1980 and in the Bill which will shortly be enacted.

Mr. Fallon: I am grateful for the support I have had from Conservative Benches for the new clause. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) said three things. I understood that the number of successful appeals was about 40 per cent. My hon. Friend the Minister said it was about one third. I understand that it has varied slightly over the years. However, that still leaves far too many unsuccessful appeals. Both sides of the House, and those who framed the 1980 Act, should be interested in reducing the number of unsuccessful appeals. The hon. Gentleman also said that my amendment does not provide absolute choice. We cannot provide that. That is why I

want the governing body of the school to decide ultimately. Finally, the hon. Member for Leeds, Central quibbled with the wording. He suggested that it might be a lawyers' paradise. It is exactly the same as in the 1980 Act; it simply transfers the responsibility.

My hon. Friend the Minister told us earlier tonight, with his usual modesty, that he was the nicest person he knew. It is only because he is so nice that I am now going to say that I did not think much of his reply. I hope that the points that have been made and the support that my case has attracted will not be lost. I hope that he will reconsider his argument. It is because the rest of the Bill improves school management and gives parents greater involvement in schools that the frustrations built into the 1980 Act — because it is preference not choice — will increase. The more popular schools will become even more popular as a result of this Bill and more parents will apply to them.

I hope that the Minister will reconsider the operation of the 1980 Act. It has now been running for six years. At the very least he should offer to review the workings of the appeals procedure. Perhaps when Mr. Mitchell has finished reviewing the closure procedures he could be prevailed upon to review the appeals procedures. If he does that, my new clause will not have been moved in vain.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 27

Direct funding by Secretary of State

'(1) On an application duly made to him by the Governing body of any school, the Secretary of State may by order direct that as from the date specified in the order the school shall be funded directly by him.

(2) The basis of such funding shall be a grant for every pupil enrolled of the amount being spent for the time being on average for children in that age range in the maintained sector of education in England and Wales.

(3) Such per capita funding paid directly to the school by the Secretary of State shall be deducted from the expenditure permited to be incurred by the Local Education Authority.

(4) The Secretary of State shall have power to direct the Local Education Authority to lease the premises of the school in question to the Governing body on terms which he believes to be fair and reasonable.

(5) The Governing body shall have power to determine the educational policy of the school, to manage its finances and administration, and to point and dismiss (subject to current employment protection legislation) the Head Teacher and other staff of the school.

(6) The Secretary of State shall not make an order under this section unless he is satisfied that the Governing body is both willing and competent to exercise the responsibility of managing the school.

(7) Where the Governing body of a school propose to apply for an order under this section they shall, after consulting the Local Education Authority—

(a) publish their proposals in such manner as may be required by regulations made by the Secretary of State;

(b) submit a copy of the published proposals to him;

(c) provide him with such information as he may reasonably require in order to enable him to give proper consideration to their proposals.

(8) The published proposals shall specify the date on which the proposals are intended to be implemented.

(9) Before the end of a period of two months beginning with the day on which the proposals are first published, any of the following may submit objections to the proposals to the Secretary of State:

(a) any ten or more local government electors for the area;

(b) the Local Education Authority concerned.

(10) The Secretary of State shall have power to require modifications to the proposals put forward to him in an application under this section.'.

Brought up, and read the First time.

9.30 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I beg to move, That the clause be now read a Second time.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on his initiative over the summer in launching the idea of city technology colleges. The principles behind the scheme, which are clearly set out in the excellent booklet speedily produced by his Department, are broadly in line with those encompassed in the new clause. The new CTCs are to be funded directly from his Department, on a per capita basis. They are to be independently run, with the head teachers having powers within those colleges to determine conditions, including pay and qualifications of staff. In short, they differ from the proposals in the new clause only in so far as there is a specific requirement that the curriculum should be oriented towards technology.

The Government have done a great deal to extend parental choice in education. Conservative Members have perhaps been too preoccupied with ideas such as educational vouchers, and not seen the possibilities that the type of change in funding that is envisaged with the CTCs could bring about within the state sector, within which is the greatest problem and need. I am unhappy with the situation that exists not only in our inner cities but in other parts of the country, where the only people who can exercise real choice in schooling are those who are wealthy enough to pay twice — once in taxation and once by opting into the private sector. Those who can opt for the private sector can look after themselves, but the most important group of parents consists of those who cannot afford anything other than the state sector, and we must concentrate on making the state sector responsive to their choices, and bringing choice within that sector. We must allow the state sector to blossom and grow to provide the real benefits and talents that it is capable of providing.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should take courage and go further than the CTCs. He should recognise that every state school could be given the right, should the board of governors so decide, to opt for funding centrally, and that every state school could be given the responsibility for hiring its head teacher, and in his turn, the head teacher given the responsibility for the curriculum and the hiring and firing of staff. That would not only bring tremendous support and morale among the teaching profession but would do something far more important.

Mr. Fatchett: Nonsense.

Mr. Forsyth: That is not nonsense. I have yet to meet a head teacher who would not welcome the opportunity to have some say in the running of his school. At the moment, head teachers are limited to discretion on the spending of a few thousand pounds, and, as we have seen, where the Socialists have control of education authorities, head teachers are hounded and subjected to unacceptable political pressure about the staff that they hire and what they teach in the classrooms.

Not only would central funding be welcomed by the teaching profession — or at least by the best in the teaching profession—as it would enable them to give of

[Mr. Forsyth]

their best, but more importantly, as our schools have for far too long been captured by, and operated in the interests of, educationists, schools would start to respond to the needs and preferences of parents.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: If a parent decides to choose school A rather than school B, at present it makes no difference to the school or to the education authority. If there were per capita funding which my right hon. Friend has proposed in the CTCs, school A, in gaining a child, would gain extra resources. That school would be able to do more for its staff and provide more equipment and resources within the school. School B, in losing the opportunity of having that child, would have to consider where changes should be made. School B would have to consider the reasons why parents were not sending children there. A consideration of waiting lists and demands would provide an automatic incentive for schools to respond to parental preferences, and to be innovative and experimental and so bring a freshness to the system.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Can the hon. Gentleman explain whether in his system of per capita funding he would expect his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to fund schools on the basis of the best provision by local authorities at present — many of which are Labour-controlled — on the worst provision or on average provision, which is to be found in Conservative-controlled authorities?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman has made the classic mistake which has dogged education for a generation. He has confused the output of schools and their success in producing pupils of a given standard and quality with the resources that are put into the schools. If the hon. Gentleman does not understand that, he should consider the progress of the Inner London education authority. The authority has received far more resources than other authorities but it has achieved only half the national average of passes at A-level and it has twice the national average of pupils who leave without any passes or qualifications.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish has missed the point. I am not talking about directing resources, although I am sure that resources directed on a per capita basis will be spent at the chalk face and not in the top-heavy tiers of administration in education authorities. My point is far more fundamental. The dispersal of resources should be made within the schools and schools should be directly accountable to parents, in the sense that if they do not perform they should receive fewer resources.

The argument would not, as the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish would like, be about the Government making enough money available. Instead, it would be about which schools use their resources most wisely and meet the needs and aspirations of parents.

My right hon. Friend has set in motion a radical experiment which should be welcomed by parents throughout the country. Although he may not be able to accept the new clause tonight, I hope that he will take courage from the fact that many people, not only in the Conservative party, believe that that could be the key to achieving the kind of change which we have looked and longed for in education. That change could help us achieve the standards and performance achieved by other countries, by providing a choice for parents.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: I am grateful for the opportunity to speak briefly in support of new clause 27, so ably proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). I welcome the clause for three reasons. First, it provides the opportunity for schools to break free, if they so wish, from the inhibiting embrace of the local education authority. I welcome it because we have all seen the excesses perpetrated by certain Labour-controlled authorities and also because of the bureaucratic procedures which are strangling education in other parts of the country.

There is a specific dispute in my constituency which involves wrangling about the redistribution of hours given to ancillary staff. It will please you, Mr. Speaker, to hear that I do not propose to go into that today, but all the political in-fighting now going on in Norwich is due to the bureaucratic process which inevitably results from local authority control.

Secondly, I welcome the capitation principle. Thirdly, I welcome the fact that decision making would devolve to governors and head teachers under the new clause. Many of us have welcomed the experiment in Cambridgeshire in which financial control has been pushed down to head teachers. I gather that the experiment has been a success. If so, it further strengthens the argument that we have made today.

Finally, I join my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling in his support for the city colleges of technology on exactly the principle proposed in new clause 27. The new colleges must be welcomed because they will attract more talent into engineering and more resources into education as all Members of the House wish. In addition, as my hon. Friend said, a welcome opportunity is provided for schools if they so wish to distance themselves from the local politics and bureaucracy which I believe are harming our education system.

I am pleased to support new clause 27.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This clause would build on the welcome elements in the Bill which strengthen the presence of parents on governing bodies and enhance the power of governing bodies. The new clause would allow schools to be selfgoverning and accountable to parents.

As we all know, there is acute anxiety about the condition of the education service in this country. That anxiety pre-dates the teachers' pay dispute but has been much intensified by it—and the prospect of a further, deeply regrettable flare-up in its dispute must further increase that anxiety. The anger of parents about disruption and their anxiety about the relative inadequacy of standards in this country has been increasingly endorsed by academic findings. I shall not rehearse the now familiar comparisons of average academic attainment in this country and in Germany or Japan, but the figures show a serious discrepancy and relative failure on the part of this country. The undercurrent of anxiety is now becoming a tide. Parents, employers and many teachers are deeply concerned.

In his excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) pinpointed what has gone wrong, and the new clause would strike at the root of the problem. Education has been in the hands of educationalists who

have not been under enough pressure through the system to be sensitive and responsive to the wishes of parents. It is a curious fact, for instance, that in the past 10 to 15 years when technical education should have been growing increasingly important in the range of provision available to children the technical schools were almost entirely destroyed in the name of the social theory of comprehensivisation. I welcome the emphasis given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of to a revival of technical education in this country and especially the city technology college initiative.

The temporary collapse of technical education was one aspect that was unsatisfactory to parents. Another has been the creeping politicisation—indeed, it is more than creeping, it is very much on the march—in a number of local education authorities. It must be of concern to us all that the effect of these failures, relative inadequacies and abuses, has been to alienate many parents from the education system. It is significant that in a survey in 1963 only 27 per cent. of those surveyed supported the right of parents to opt out of the state provision of education. By 1979 that figure was 60 per cent.

If we are concerned, as we must be, for the cohesion of our society and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling emphasised, for the educational prospects of the 93 per cent. of the nation's schoolchildren who are in the maintained sector, we must take that trend seriously.

9.45 pm

If implemented, the new clause would enable schools where it was their wish and that of the local community to become responsive to parents in a new way. The new clause does not suggest that any system should be imposed. Where developments are to take place, they would be on the basis of what schools and local people desire. It would be a worthwhile complementary development to the CTC initiative of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

It is a good thing that the pattern of funding and accountability of our schools is now being searchingly questioned. The teachers' unions and the local education authority employers are, understandably, asking for massive additional sums of taxpayers' money to be provided for the education service. Most of us would undoubtedly be happy to see significant extra sums being made available not only for teachers' salaries but for the classroom and going through to education itself. However, it is less sure that the taxpayer needs to be asked for large additional sums. It is, after all, a strange state of affairs and something of a puzzle that while the education budget nationally provides for a record amount of money to be spent per pupil, everywhere one comes across oversize classes, shortages of books and equipment, schools being closed, teachers who feel miserable because they are underpaid and a recruitment crisis in teachers of mathematics, science and craft, design and technology.

I suspect that the most important explanation to that conundrum lies in a written answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) when he was Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) in which he gave figures which showed that in the maintained sector of education there are 525,000 teachers and lecturers and 362,000 other full-time staff. For every five teachers and lecturers there are roughly three other people employed full time. Enormous amounts of money are running into the bureaucratic sand.

The local government Audit Commission was looking in the wrong direction when it recommended recently that more schools must be closed in the interests of economy. It might be more appropriate for the local government Audit Commission to look a good deal more sceptically and searchingly at what local education authorities are doing.

The new clause would release schools, as they wish to be so released, from some of the toils of officialdom. It is a strange principle, upon which we have traditionally proceeded for many years in Britain, that politicians and officials know better than parents and teachers how education should be organised and what is the right kind of provision for children. We live in an age in which people are becoming increasingly conscious of their rights as citizens and consumers and I do not think they will be willing to tolerate this kind of bureaucratic thraldom for much longer.

Let me cite two instances of particular schools which show how popular this new clause would be if it were to be made law.

My hon. Friend may well be familiar with the John Loughborough school in Tottenham. There, West Indian parents became so intensely dissatisfied with the Inner London education authority's provision for them and their children that people who could ill afford to do so decided to set up their own school. Those parents are paying about £600 in fees. That is very hard for them to do but they care so much about the education of their children that they are willing to do so. They receive no support at all from the state as it is, but under the scheme put forward by my hon. Friend they would at least be entitled to the amount of money which the taxpayer and ratepayer reckon to spend on their behalf and that would surely be only right.

The second instance I would like to put to my hon. Friend the Minister comes from a different part of the country, from rural south Warwickshire in my constituency. Warwickshire county council proposed that the village school in Whichford should be closed. It gave no good reasons for the closure, and there are no good reasons on academic grounds for closing good village schools. Clare Burstall of the National Foundation for Educational Research has said that such hard evidence as there is on the relative academic performance and prospects of children in small schools suggests that they have an advantage. Certainly the people of Whichford were very clear that it would be a devastating blow to their local community to lose their school. They felt, and I heartily agree with them, that it is for them as local parents to make the judgment between the merits in terms of local community of keeping their school and the alleged educational advantages of having the children bussed some distance away to a larger school. They were quite clear that all the worthwhile arguments lay on the side of keeping their own school. So we asked Warwickshire county council whether it would allow those parents the money that Warwickshire would be spending on their children to set up a trust in the village and keep their school. Warwickshire county council said no. So we asked my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph), when he was Secretary of State, whether he would be willing to intervene and consider whether

[Mr. Alan Howarth]

some such solution could be found. He gave us some encouragement but he said that he would need to be satisfied that they really had the commitment and the administrative capacity to see the scheme through. So we did some more research.

When we surveyed the households in the village, 104 supported the scheme and only three were opposed. We did some more research to discover what voluntary help could be found. Thirty volunteers put their names forward to help on such matters as school transport, playground supervision, sport, natural and environmental studies, music, dance, craft, cooking classes and computer classes as well as secretarial and maintenance help for the school. It became clear that with the willingness that there was in the local community to raise the extra money needed they could have kept the school open.

Under the system that we now have and under the law as it now stands they were not allowed to do so. That expression of opinion in Whichford was representative and I do not believe that my hon. Friends wish to ignore such an emphatic expression of opinion, which speaks for very many people in many different sorts of community in Britain.

Public opinion is bestirring itself on a very important issue. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recognised that. I welcome the initiative he has announced on city technology colleges, and I hope that he will use something like the model of this clause to take the process further.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): I should like briefly to give a warm welcome to the principles of the clause moved so ably by my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). There are many good schools in Britain which are hampered and handicapped by local education authorities. It brings to my mind that television advertisement for one of the banks which poses the question, "Does your bank hold your business back or does it back your business?" There are many local education authorities that hold back our best schools rather than giving them the backing that they deserve.

If schools had the opportunity of breaking free from the shackles of educational bureaucracy, they could perform much better to the benefit of the children and in accordance with the desires of parents. My hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) referred to a school in his constituency. I can also think of a school in my constituency where that solution might well be welcome. I refer to Langley grammar school. It has long been the desire of the education bureaucracy in Berkshire to put an end to grammar schools in Slough. Slough is one of the educational oases where grammar schools exist. In that dark period dating from 1981, when Berkshire county council was controlled by an alliance of the Labour party with the Liberals—a hung council or balanced, as those on the now empty alliance Benches would like to describe it—there were many attempts to destroy the grammar school system and to replace it with comprehensive schools. Fortunately, those attempts were resisted, and with the return of Conservative control in Berkshire they were buried.

That was not the end of the story. The education bureaucracy then sought to hamper the school by imposing a catchment area that would restrict its intake and reduce the number of staff, thus causing a decline in the standard of education provided. That occurred even though the school is persistently oversubscribed because it performs in accordance with the parents' wishes. Although its future as a grammar school is still secure, the uncertainty that has hung over it for years means that it has been starved of the necessary physical resources. It has too much temporary accommodation and too few purpose-built structures for music, science and so on.

I have not been able to discuss the matter with the governors, but if they had the opportunity provided by the clause to go independent with a direct grant, they would do so. I am sure that the school would flourish and would continue to serve my constituents in Langley and the surrounding area, just as it has done so excellently for many years. Consequently, I warmly welcome at least the principles behind this measure.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I wish to raise two points briefly. The case for the self-management of finances by schools is almost self-evident. As a chairman of the governors of a comprehensive school for four years I know that nothing is more frustrating than having to go cap in hand to county hall to get a broken window or leaking tap fixed in the knowledge that the same service could have been purchased locally more quickly and cheaply. There are also different priorities. The school might think that one thing is top of the list while the divisional education office or county council education office might think another should be top. In those circumstances, it must be right for the school to decide.

Of course, Cambridgeshire has pointed the way. But there it is only 2 per cent. of the money. In my constituency a school with a budget of £450,000 might well see the governors having discretion over only £3,000. That is absurd. The important thing is to sensitise the system. We all know about the problem of falling school rolls. In an ideal world there would be a broad balance between the capacity of schools and the number of pupils, and all schools would be equally attractive. But in practice that is not so. In Hertfordshire there are 25 per cent. more places than pupils. But the spread is not even: some schools are full, while others are half full.

Eventually, the bureaucrats and politicians in county hall decide which schools should close. A different conclusion might be reached if there was parent power, because parents could choose the school that they wanted. Schools will only have an incentive to perform well, to use resources efficiently and to meet the demands of parents if their finances are in accordance with the number of pupils registered there.

Mr. Dunn *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Fatchett first.

Mr. Fatchett: I shall avoid the error of running into the Minister's pleasant comments, and will try to have them removed from *Hansard* when my reselection comes up. I was most concerned when he said that I could even be one of them. I think that that has a peculiar meaning in the Conservative party.

But the debate has been interesting. It has shown that a substantial section of the Conservative party is anti-local government and local democracy despite its attempts to conceal that fact. Those hon. Members want to centralise

education more and more. The debate has also shown that many Conservative Members are anti-teacher and against what they call educationists. In the past two years they have tried time and again to run down how teachers perform and have failed to give them credit for maintaining a high standard of education despite the Government's policies, which have deprived education of many resources.

I would like to comment briefly——

Mr. Michael Forsyth *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: No, I will not give way. I would like to comment on the theoretical arguments raised by the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). It seems to me that the Right of the Conservative party has got itself into a state of some confusion and contradiction. It is not my task to try to sort out the intellectual thinking of the Conservative party but, from time to time, it may be appropriate to offer some guidance in the spirit of comradeship which has been pervasive in this debate.

In the previous debate, we heard that hon. Members wanted to decentralise, and basically that was their argument——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That at this day's sitting the Education Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Fatchett: Time and again in the previous debate reference was made to freedom of choice, parental choice and the notion of decentralisation. In this debate, exactly the opposite has been proposed. The hon. Member for Stirling wished to take the responsibility for managing and funding schools away from the local authorities and ultimately away from parents. He wishes to vest that power in the Department of Education and Science.

Mr. Forsyth *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: I will explain why, and the hon. Gentleman may reply to that in his wind-up speech, when he may sort out his contradictions and confusions.

The hon. Member for Stirling wishes to vest that power in the Department because he wants to allow that Department to set the level of resources for each school. He does not wish to vest the power with the local authorities or with parents.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) asked about the level of funding, the hon. Gentleman ran away from that point and dismissed it as irrelevant. Those who have been involved with the education system will know that the level of funding is not irrelevant. The hon. Member for Stirling dismissed it as such because he realised that, if he put a figure on the level of funding, that would underpin my contention that he is a centraliser rather than a decentraliser.

We have had much talk about parental choice. This new clause shows that the previous discussion was a lot of hypocrisy. If the schools, as promulgated in the new clause, are established, the reality will be that the parents and those who run the school — the governors — will invoke a process of selection to keep out children from the local catchment areas. These will be selection schools; they will not be parental choice schools.

Several Hon. Members *indicated assent.*

Mr. Fatchett: Hon. Members may nod, but they should think it through. In reality, parents in a particular school will define their selection boundaries. They will be based not on the geographical catchment area but on other criteria—the criteria of selection. The hon. Member for Stirling, by his argument, has proved that he is a centraliser and that he has little regard for parental choice. He wishes to bring back selection to education and he wants to strengthen what is, in some respects, an already too elitist system. That is why we shall oppose the new clause.

Mr. Dunn: May I correct one thing? Earlier, I said to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) that he was almost like one of them. I did not say that he was like one of us. If he is, that is his business.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) on his excellent speech. It is clear from the debate — mainly from contributions by hon. Friends — that we have a radical and major contribution to make to the future of education in Britain. It is significant that the ideas come from the Conservative Benches. In the seven years that I have been a Member of the House, not one idea, improvement, benefit or dynamism has come from the Opposition.

I must point out to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling that the Government will have to think long and hard before they accept a scheme which has been outlined in the new clause. The issues are significant, far-reaching and undoubtedly controversial — that was probably the intention of my hon. Friend. Some of the ideas in the clause are fascinating and interesting. In my view, they are not the kind of changes which can be simply enacted by an amendment at this stage. With as much conviction as I can muster in a brief response, I invite my hon. Friend not to press his proposal.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I shall not spend much time on what the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) said. It is interesting that it should be central as his party is the party of centralists. I thought it significant that the hon. Gentleman spent the whole of his speech labelling me with concepts which are nothing to do with the spirit of the new clause rather than stating why he opposes the principle behind it.

The hon. Member's principal argument, in so far as it related to new clause 27, was about the method of funding. That shows that the extent of his research and consideration had not gone beyond the first line as he will find that subsection (2) of the new clause sets out the basis of funding.

I had not expected my hon. Friend the Minister to accept the new clause tonight. I am encouraged by what he said. He said that he needs to think long and hard about this matter and that there are many aspects of it which he finds attrative. I invite him to think long and hard. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 32

DUTY OF LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY TO DISCLOSE DEBT CHARGES

'It shall be the duty of every local education authority to publish annually a statement of all outstanding debt charges applicable to each school in their area.'.—*[Mr. Madel.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 119, in clause 27, page 30, line 26, leave out from second 'the' to 'a' in line 31 and insert

'governing body to prepare and publicise once in every year'.

No. 120, in page 30, line 38, at end insert

'and

(iii) comparable figures for all other schools for which the local education authority are responsible.'.

No. 227, in page 30, line 38, at end insert

'and

(iii) debt charges relating to the school for which the authority is responsible.'.

No. 121, in page 30, line 42, leave out from 'discretion' to end of line 2 on page 31 and insert

'such sum to any amount up to the total running cost of the school in the previous year adjusted by the percentage change in the average allocation of resources to schools of that class within the local education authority for the budgeted year, the proportion of such sum to be allocated to be at the sole discretion of the governing body'.

No. 122, in page 31, line 3, leave out paragraph *(c)*.

No. 123, in page 31, line 14, leave out subsection (2).

No. 125, in page 31, line 16, after 'authorities', insert 'and teachers' associations'.

Mr. Madel: I was grateful when, on Second Reading, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that clause 27 virtually incorporated my Education (School Budgets) Bill, which I presented in the 1984-85 session.

New clause 32 and amendment No. 227 would ensure that the hidden large costs of running a school—debt charges — are published annually so that it is made crystal clear to parents and ratepayers what the costs are. Clause 27(1)*(a)*(i) provides:

"expenditure incurred or proposed to be incurred by the authority in meeting the day to day cost of running the school (itemised as the authority think appropriate)".

I happen to think it very appropriate that we write into the clause what I have proposed in new clause 32 and amendment No. 227.

The Government are anxious about the growing cost of surplus school places. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) has referred to Hertfordshire's difficulty. Like many other shire counties, Bedfordshire has the same problems. It should not be forgotten that surplus places alone are not causing increased spending—we must include debt charges that fluctuate in size with interest rates.

It might appear that some local authorities are spending a great deal on education, but they inherited recently completed or partly completed school building programmes in the mid-1970s after reorganisation, which carried big debt charges. When the Conservative Government reformed local government in 1974 a number of local authorities were in the middle of huge and expensive comprehensive reorganisations which carried with them the debt charges to which I have referred.

Nothing causes greater uproar in some areas than proposals to close schools, either because they have become too small or because there has to be a reorganisation. Parents and ratepayers have the right to know the full costs involved in running a school—that is provided for in clause 27 — and the current debt charges. A number of county councils and their education committees are hung; the alliance often, alas, holds the balance of power. In those circumstances parents and ratepayers, have the right to know the different costs of shutting school A rather than school B. They have to weigh up what they think is best and information on debt charges would be helpful and enlightening for them.

There is an annual problem with the rate support grant. The Government are in the thick of deciding what should be done for 1987-88, but I believe that in the current RSG insufficient attention was paid to the debt charges that some authorities, including Bedfordshire county council, have to carry. Debt charges for a school are unavoidable as long as it is used by a local authority.

New clause 32 and amendment No. 227 would be helpful to the Government, local authorities and, above all, to parents and ratepayers. The object of my Bill, which is virtually incorporated in clause 27, was to give parents and ratepayers an unfettered right to information about what it costs to run a school. We often hear talk about teachers' salaries swallowing the lion's share of expenditure and about schools that have not had enough spent on books or repairs. When clause 27 is the law of the land we shall all know what has been spent, what is being spent and what it is proposed to spend. My new clause and amendment No. 227 will ensure that maximum information is provided to parents and ratepayers about the cost of running a school.

Mr. Dunn: I acknowledge the influential contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) to our thinking on financial information for and about schools. Much of the spirit of his private Member's Bill is reflected in clause 27 and the House owes him a vote of thanks.

It is central to clause 27 that as much information as possible on the day-to-day running costs of schools should be made available to governing bodies, without unnecessarily overburdening the LEAs. That is why required information is restricted to current expenditure and there is a discretion to include capital expenditure. My hon. Friend seeks to extend prescription to information on debt charges and he wrote to the Department earlier this year to express his great interest in such an extension.

Debt charges are an important element of an authority's central continuing costs, but the Government believe that such central costs, seldom attributed to a particular school, would not furnish governing bodies with information that was pertinent to their making sound decisions on the best use of the resources allocated to them. However, if an LEA believes otherwise it will be free to include such information on a school-by-school basis. In the light of that, I ask my hon. Friend to accept that the problem is better treated with discretion than with prescription and I hope that he will seek to withdraw the motion.

10.15 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have no desire to detain the House, but I wish to mention amendment No. 120, the

purpose of which is obvious. It is to ensure that if schools are to be provided with financial information they should also be provided with comparative information from which they can assess the implications. I hope that my hon. Friend can accept that principle because it will be difficult for schools to interpret information if they have nothing with which to compare it.

Mr. Norris: I endorse the remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) about amendment No. 120. Clause 27 is to be a great advance, in that it provides school governors with information with which to manage their finances. The Bill's aim is to improve accountability and to make it more real than apparent. It is a matter of management practice that in requiring a local education authority to provide details of expenditure incurred or proposed and details of capital expenditure, schools should be provided with comparable information with which to evaluate the performance of their school. I invite the Minister to consider that in any industrial complex in which performance indicators are employed the key is comparison. I commend amendment No. 120.

Mr. Dunn: I appreciate that my hon. Friends seek to extend the minimum list of items for which some spending responsibility is to be devolved and the information about that. However, there are real and practical reasons against what they seek to do. For example, in many authorities minimum charges will not be allocated to schools but will relate to blocks of capital grant for primary school or general modernisation programmes. Some may be long-standing and relate to up to 60 years of programming for land, and to not much less time for buildings. There are particular problems in relating them to one school. The different methods of financing capital programmes make debt charge information variable and an imperfect measure of exactly what a local authority is spending on a school.

If a local authority wants to provide information on capital cost it will be free to provide it, bearing in mind that such a commitment might involve that authority in a great deal of work. We are talking about a discretion. We are not forbidding the provision of information. It is up to the local authority to provide the information that it cares to provide about capital cost and works on schools. I hope that the amendment will not be pressed.

Mr. Madel: My hon. Friend the Minister invited local authorities, if pushed, to respond positively and to supply information about debt charges. I accept that it will take some time before they get into their stride and provide that information under clause 27. It will take time for that to become law without hiccups. I hope that local authorities will read our debate and respond constructively to what the Minister said about the need to supply financial information, if required. I believe that that information will be required by ratepayers.

In view of the spirit in which my hon. Friend responded to the new clause, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 5

APPOINTMENT OF PARENT GOVERNORS BY LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Amendments made: No. 33, in page 6, line 34, leave out 'may be appointed by the authority'
and insert
'shall be appointed by the other members of the governing body.'.

No. 34, in page 6, line 39, leave out 'local education authority' and insert
'other members of the governing body'.

No. 35, in page 7, line 7, leave out 'authority' and insert 'other members of the governing body'.

No. 36, in page 7, line 10, leave out 'the local education authority' and insert 'governors'.

No. 37, in page 7, line 22, after 'the', insert 'local education'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Clause 6

CONNECTION WITH LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Amendment made: No. 229, in page 7, line 41, leave out paragraph *(b)* and insert—

'*(b)* where it appears to them that no governor of the school is a member of the local business community, or that it is desirable to increase the number of governors who are, to co-opt a person who appears to give them to be a member of that community;'.
—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Clause 7

APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNORS IN PLACE OF CO-OPTED GOVERNORS

Amendments made: No. 46, in page 8, line 9, after 'shall', insert:
', if the school has less than 100 registered pupils,'.

No. 47, in page 8, line 10, after 'for', insert 'at least'.

No. 49, in page 8, line 17, at end insert:
'; and shall, if it has more than 99 registered pupils, provide for two governors to be so appointed.

(3A) Where, by virtue of subsection (3) above, an instrument of government is required to provide for the appointment of two governors, it may make different provision in relation to the appointment of one governor to that made in relation to the appointment of the other.'.

No. 50, in page 8, line 24, leave out 'a' and insert 'any'.

No. 51, in page 8, line 33, after 'one', insert:
'or (as the case may be) two'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Clause 8

GOVERNORS' PROCEEDINGS AND TENURE OF OFFICE

Amendments made: No. 54, in page 9, line 12, leave out paragraph *(b)* and insert—

'(4A) Any foundation governor of a voluntary school, or governor of a county, voluntary or maintained special school appointed otherwise than by being co-opted, may be removed from office by the person or persons who appointed him.

For the purposes of this subsection, a governor appointed in accordance with any provision made by virtue of section 5 of this Act shall be treated as having been co-opted.'.

No. 55, in page 9, line 34, leave out from beginning to 'and' in line 36.

No. 56, in page 9, line 37, after 'required', insert
'for the purposes of making appointments in accordance with any provision made by virtue of section 5 of this Act or'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Clause 10

REQUIREMENTS AS TO CONSENT TO GROUPING

Amendment made: No. 230, in page 12, line 42, leave out '5 and '.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Clause 15

MISCELLANEOUS

Amendment made: No. 231, in page 19, line 17, after 'provision', insert:

'(otherwise than by virtue of section 6 of this Act)'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Clause 17

DUTY OF LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY TO STATE POLICY

Amendments made: No. 62, in page 20, line 24, leave out second 'and'.

No. 63, in page 20, line 25, leave out 'publish' and insert 'make'.

No. 64, in page 20, line 26, at end insert '; and

(c) to furnish the governing body and head teacher of every such school with a copy of the statement and publish it in such other manner as the authority consider appropriate.'.

No. 65, in page 20, line 34, at end insert—

'(4) Every head teacher to whom any copy of a statement is furnished under this section shall make it available, at all reasonable times, to persons wishing to inspect it.'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Clause 18

COUNTY, CONTROLLED AND MAINTAINED SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Mrs. Rumbold: I beg to move amendment No. 232, in page 21, line 6, after 'policy', insert
'with regard to matters other than sex education'.

Mr. Speaker: With this we shall discuss the following: Government amendments Nos. 233 to 240.

Amendment No. 114, in page 30, line 16, leave out clause 26.

No. 226, in clause 26, page 30, line 18, after 'shall', insert
'in consultation with parents of registered pupils at the school'.

No. 221, in clause 26, page 30, line 18, leave out 'are reasonably practicable'.

No. 228, in clause 26, page 30, line 22, after 'considerations', insert
'in particular the value of fidelity within marriage and chastity before it'.

No. 115, in clause 26, page 30, line 22, leave out 'and'.

No. 222, in clause 26, page 30, line 22, after 'of', insert 'stable'.

No. 116, in clause 26, page 30, line 22, at end insert
'the promotion of happy and stable relationships between partners, the pattern of family structures in the area of the authority, the likely impact of such education on children in non-traditional family structures or in care, the values of ethnic and religious minorities in the area, the availability and proper use of contraception, and the availability of, and legal provisions relating to, abortion'.

No. 118, in clause 26, page 30, line 22, at end insert—
'(2) It shall be the right of any parent to withdraw his child from any sex education to which that parent objects.'.

No. 242, in clause 26, page 30, line 22, at end insert—
'(2) The Secretary of State may by order direct any Local Education Authority to remove any books on sex education which in his opinion are unsuitable or morally corrupting.

(3) A local educational authority which has received such a direction shall require all governing bodies of schools within that Authority's area to comply with the direction.

(4) Any teacher who uses such books on sex education contrary to an order by the Secretary of State shall be liable to instant dismissal.

(5) Any parent whose children can be shown to have suffered by the use of books on sex education, which have been subject to an order of the Secretary of State, may bring an action for damages against the Local Education Authority concerned.'.

No. 244, in clause 57, page 61, line 2, at end insert '26'.

Mr. Secretary Baker's motion, That Clause 26 be transferred to end of line 19 on page 47.

Mrs. Rumbold: I wish briefly to take the time of the House to set out the Government's position.

The issues associated with sex education in schools have been the subject of much debate and discussion in this House, in another place, and in the country generally. Strong feelings have been expressed—understandably so—as this is a uniquely sensitive aspect of schools' work, which bears directly on the physical, emotional and moral wellbeing of pupils.

The Government remain firmly committed to sex education as an essential component part of preparing pupils for the realities and responsibilities of adult life. For that area of a school's curriculum, it is important that the provision offered should be appropriate and should reflect the best of existing practice. That is the intention of clause 26.

The clause could be, and indeed has been described as "a statement of the obvious". Perhaps that is so, but in this area the obvious is worth stating and establishing. I am sure that all in this House would agree that such a difficult and sensitive area of the curriculum cannot be dealt with adequately, other than within a moral context. Similarly, it must be right and proper for schools to encourage youngsters to look at questions of personal relationships and sexuality in a positive manner, which recognises the realities and responsibilities of sexual maturity, marriage and parenthood—in other words, we are talking of the value of family life. The vast majority of schools and teachers for the past 15 years or more have been approaching sex education in an appropriate and responsible manner, and for them clause 26 can be seen simply as giving statutory endorsement and underpinning to their work. Regrettably, however, not all local education authorities and schools live up to this ideal, and there has been increasing concern about instances of the use of educationally unsound teaching materials and methods and the propagation of extreme and unrepresentative views of sexual ethics and quite bizarre behaviour by certain authorities and teachers. I do not propose to detail these instances here and now, but I believe that all hon. Members will be familiar with the kind of abuses which I have in mind.

Understandably, parents throughout the country and from every walk of life have been disturbed by the reports of such undesirable so-called sex education and are anxious to see their children protected from such influences. The provisions of clause 26 will go much of the way towards ensuring that irresponsible and inappropriate teaching does not find its way into the classroom. There has, however, been pressure for this provision to be reinforced, by giving parents a statutory right to withdraw their child from any sex education provision to which they object, and we have two amendments before us, Nos. 117 and 118, which would have this effect.

Attractive as such a course may seem at first sight, it is not the answer. A statutory right of withdrawal from sex education would be wrong in principle, unworkable in practice and, above all, would evade rather than tackle the problem of unsuitable teaching being imposed on pupils against their parents' wishes.

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend says that the right of withdrawal would be impracticable, but this is happening throughout the country already. Parents are withdrawing their children from sex education. It is done usually in consultation with the school and no prosecution follows. Is my hon. Friend saying that the Government's position is that if in future parents seek to withdraw their children from sex education that will amount to a failure to attend school regularly under section 36 of the Education Act 1944? If that is the guidance that is to be given by the Government to local education authorities, it is going a great deal further than anything that we have seen to date.

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend may be aware that under present regulations within schools if a parent approaches a head teacher and, with the agreement of the head teacher, there is an arrangement whereby the child may not attend certain classes, that is the situation that

[Mrs. Rumbold]

obtains. The situation that will obtain in future is one that I shall explain as I proceed with my argument, which I think will cover more than adequately the issue that has been raised by my hon. Friend.

The Government and Parliament have a responsibility to take effective steps to ensure that the provision offered in this important area of education is educationally and morally sound and acceptable to parents. We cannot simply encourage parents who may have concerns about what is on offer to opt out.

Parents have no right elsewhere in the secular curriculum to select from what schools have on offer. The provisions for withdrawal from religious education do not offer a precedent here. The 1944 settlement made a clear distinction between religious education and the secular curriculum, as a reflection of the particular place of the religious interests in the dual system. Religious freedom is a fundamental right in this country, hard won over many generations and rightly cherished. I cannot accept that any aspect of the secular curriculum, no matter how sensitive, can be viewed in the same light.

On the question of practicability, we live in a world where issues of personal relationships and sexuality are not conveniently compartmentalised. We cannot prevent children from picking up information about sexual matters from television or the newspapers or from day-to-day conversations with their friends. As a result, inside the school, there are many situations in which questions concerning sexual matters may arise, either spontaneously or as part of a planned programme, for example in discussion of literature, or in lessons in biology or home economics. Sex education itself is often not a separately timetabled subject, but encompasses a variety of different parts of the curriculum. Pupils' education would be seriously harmed if parents had an absolute right to require that their child should be withdrawn on each and every occasion on which sexual matters might be mentioned.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West) *rose*——

10.30 pm

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall continue my argument for a while, because it is important to maintain the flow. From my experience of teenage children, it is unlikely that they themselves would welcome such a measure.

Mr. McLoughlin: I acknowledge the point that my hon. Friend has just made. There is much concern among parents following an advertisement placed by Derbyshire county council in the *Derby Evening Telegraph* at this time of cutbacks in education, about which we regularly hear, regarding the creation of 285 new teaching posts. I ask whether my hon. Friend accepts that part of the parents' concern would be the bottom paragraph in the advertisement, which states:

"The council's policy is that all people receive equal treatment regardless of their sex, marital status or sexual orientation."

The fact that county education authorities are advertising teaching posts in that vein is causing great concern among parents.

Mrs. Rumbold: I consider that the local education authority is using its hard-earned and hard-fought for financial resources in an extremely reprehensible way. It is not something that I would welcome. I do not think that many hon. Members would welcome the use of education money for such a purpose. I hope to go on to explain how the Government's amendment will assist in trying to refute such a use of education funds.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhonda): Do the Minister and the Government propose that such circumscriptions be introduced into the public school sector also? I am sure that the Government have at heart the vast number of pupils who go to public schools about which people can exercise a choice. Indeed, they advertise various aspects of their curriculum and the way in which they educate children. Does the Minister agree that the criteria should apply to public schools, or does she believe that public school pupils are not required to have any sex education at all?

Mrs. Rumbold: If the hon. Member understood what were the responsibilities of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, he would know that he does not have responsibility for public schools. It may be something that he knows about rather than me. I am not aware that we are talking about that. We are talking about the maintained sector.

The amendments which we propose to clause 18 will, I believe, strike effectively at the root of public concern about sex education — the possibility of inappropriate methods and materials finding their way into the classroom, and the newspapers, against parents' wishes. Under the proposed new arrangements, control over sex education in county, controlled and maintained special schools would be removed from teachers and local education authorities, and placed in the hands of the new-style governing bodies provided for under the Bill, with their increased parental representation, and answerable to an annual meeting of the full parent body. The governing body would be responsible for deciding, and stating publicly, whether a school is to offer sex education and, if so, what its contents should be and how it should be organised. This is broadly the position already in voluntary aided schools. In doing so, the governors will be required to have regard to the local education authority's policy and to consult the head teacher, but not specifically to consult the LEA.

Under the proposed new arrangements, the governors would have the power to decide that a particular textbook or teaching aid should not be used in the classroom, and to determine the way in which particularly controversial issues, such as homosexuality, should be approached by teachers, if at all. They would also have the discretion—presently exercised by the head—to decide whether, in certain particular circumstances, where there are irreconcilable differences between the views of an individual parent and the school's approach to sex education, a particular pupil might be withdrawn from certain lessons. I hope that that answers the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls).

Although the governors would, in principle, be able to decide that sex education is not to be provided at all in a particular school, I expect that, in practice, they would be guided by the Government's firm belief that sex education is an essential curricular element and that to deprive pupils of any teaching in this field—where not all parents are able or, indeed, willing to offer the necessary information

and guidance themselves — would be to leave those pupils prey to misinformation, misunderstanding and playground gossip and ill-prepared for the responsibilities of adult life. The position of examination courses which require the study of reproduction and sexual behaviour, notably biology, is specifically safeguarded in the amendments.

The Government's proposals are a recognition of the unique sensitivities surrounding sex education and the extent of public and parental concern. We have no intention of introducing similar arrangements for the handling of other contentious aspects of schools' work. Those schools and teachers who are providing appropriate and responsible sex education should welcome their work being endorsed by the governing body. Only those who are pursuing ill-thought-out or inappropriate policies should find their work questioned, and rightly so. I have already mentioned that the governors will be required to consult the head teacher in determining their policy, and I sincerely hope that they will, in the main, be guided by his or her professional expertise and advice. Teacher representatives on the governing body will also be able to influence and inform the policy-making process.

I stress that, under the proposed new arrangements, all the parties concerned will continue to be bound by clause 26, which requires that any sex education provided is set within a clear moral framework and is supportive of family life.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): What exactly does my hon. Friend mean by a "moral framework"? As there is no absolute morality, is she talking about Christian morality?

Mrs. Rumbold: The only description of the moral framework which one can talk about is the well-understood view of family life — a loving and sharing relationship within the confines of family life. *[Interruption.]* I did not say that. It is right and essential for the Government and the House to offer the education service a clear statement of the broad principles which should inform "good" sex education. I need hardly say that I am concerned that the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) and his colleagues propose that clause 26 should be deleted from the Bill. The most recent question underlines that concern. It would not, however, be appropriate for such a statement to move beyond the general and to seek to prescribe, in primary legislation, the detailed content of sex education lessons. To do so, would be to set an undesirable precedent and would unreasonably constrain the power which we are now seeking to give to governors to decide on the content and organisation of sex education in their own schools.

We have a number of amendments before us which seek, in various ways, to alter or expand the wording of clause 26. I must admit to rather more sympathy with the intentions of those tabled by Conservative Members than the proposals of the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) and his colleagues, who appear to have a view of the priorities for sex education provision which I imagine would be of concern not only to many parents but to many teenagers.

However, I am firmly of the view that clause 26, unamended, sets out in unequivocal terms what I might term the "tone and tenor" of appropriate sex education, and serves clear notice on all concerned of the standard which the House expects all schools to reach. The Government will be offering further guidance on how these broad principles should inform detailed practice in sex education when we issue a final version of our circular on sex education at school, a draft of which was issued for comment earlier in the summer. Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools will also be issuing substantive professional guidance on the teaching of sex education, following references in its recently published discussion document on "Health Education from 5 to 16 Years". These are the appropriate vehicles for the discussion of the detailed content of sex education provision — not primary legislation.

On a motion to move clause 26 to a different place in the Bill, I should explain that, as we come to consider the final shape of this legislation, it seems to us that clause 26, on sex education, would be better placed in part IV with other similar provisions.

I believe that the new arrangements we have proposed for the control of sex education, set within the broad framework established by clause 26, offer the most effective way of achieving the aim, which I would hope all in this House share, of ensuring that all schools offer appropriate and responsible sex education in which all parents can have full confidence and which offers all pupils the best possible preparation for facing the challenges, choices and responsibilities which sexual maturity and adult life bring.

Mr. Radice: It is widely recognised that sex education is an important part of the curriculum and it is common ground on both sides of the House that it is essential that children are made aware not only of the physical facts but of the wider social and moral issues. Such knowledge is an aid to development and a protection for young people as they grow up in a world in which social and moral attitudes are changing and in which there are varying patterns of relationships and behaviour.

The importance of sex education is acknowledged in the HMI document "Health Education from 5 to 16 years" in the recently published Department of Education and Science circular to local education authorities and governors — a good circular — and in the Government White Paper "Better Schools".

We know that the majority of pupils are strongly in favour of sex education. We know that there is also considerable evidence of strong parental backing for sex education. The Policy Studies Institute's survey of 200 families with teenage children found that 96 per cent. of parents thought that schools should provide sex education. Another study of 16,000 parents carried out by the health unit of Exeter university found that three quarters of those questioned wanted their children taught about human reproduction, conception, pregnancy and birth and 27 per cent. even went so far as to say that they preferred the school to take responsibility for all aspects of sex education and personal relationships. Therefore, it is clear that there is strong support by parents for sex education in schools. According to the PSI survey, most parents stressed the need for a partnership between school and home. Where there were criticisms, parents tended to concentrate on the inadequacy of the coverage of sex education rather than on any over-provision.

Another significant finding of the survey was that sex education is not confined to a special subject. It is taught in a number of subjects including personal and social

[Mr. Radice]

education, health education, religious education, biology and English, as well as arising more informally in personal counselling or following the pupils' questions.

I am sure that the HMI is right when it says that sex education ought to deal with such issues as contraception, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases and homosexuality. They are part of today's world and our children have to be made aware of them. However, because those issues in particular, and sex education in general, are sensitive and potentially controversial they have to be handled in a careful, balanced and responsible way, as they are in the majority of cases. If sex education is to be effective particular care has to be taken to retain the support and confidence of parents both for what is taught and for the material used in schools. I welcome the stress which a recent ILEA document, "The Teaching of Controversial Issues in Schools" gives to the need to consult parents.

The promotion of materials or teaching methods which do not have the support of parents is certain to be counter-productive and is likely to undermine attempts to produce balanced attitudes towards sex and sexual relationships. A backlash could endanger sex education.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

10.45 pm

Mr. Radice: Yes, but only once, as many hon. Members want to speak on this subject.

Mr. Hickmet: Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that much of the concern that has given rise to the amendment relates to the manner in which the ILEA has promoted sex education in inner London schools and the manner in which sex education has been promoted in places such as Brent and Haringey? Does he believe that the book recently put out by the ILEA is a desirable publication? Does he consider that the proceedings last night in Haringey, and recently in Brent, were desirable? If not, what should be done about such matters?

Mr. Radice: That question should really be addressed to the Government. The hon. Gentleman questions me about material that he says has been put out by the ILEA. I think he is referring to a certain book. That was not put out by the ILEA to schools, and it is to be used only with the support of parents. Personally, I do not believe that that book should be for general use, and nor does the ILEA.

Now the question of legislation. On Second Reading and in Committee I said clearly that I thought it important that any local authority should retain the confidence and support of parents. I repeat that now. At those stages of the Bill my hon. Friends and I took the view that it was wrong for sex education to be in the Bill. I note that when the measure began its life in the other place, it did not include the clause on sex education. In other words, the Government then agreed with us. Their conversion was imposed on them in the other place. Let us be honest about that.

Lady Hooper, speaking in the other place on behalf of the Government, was absolutely right when she said:

"We must look to individual teachers to exercise good judgment in planning their teaching and selecting appropriate teaching materials. We should not take away that admittedly heavy responsibility from teachers. Only they can properly exercise it, subject to the regulations and to the pressure parents can exert at their annual meetings, or other meetings". —[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 15 April 1986; Vol. 473, c. 650.]

Our position remains that we do not believe sex education should be in the Bill and that it is best left, as Lady Hooper said, to a partnership involving teachers, parents, governing bodies and local education authorities.

I come to the parental opt-out alternative which has been suggested by the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), if he is allowed to pursue it, having arrived here late. On Report we tabled an amendment along similar lines. However, unlike the hon. Gentleman, we consulted teachers' organisations, LEAs and other bodies, parents and governors. We became convinced that it would be undesirable and impractical to opt out. We found particularly persuasive the letter of 7 August which the present Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction sent to hon. Members.

The letter from the Minister was very persuasive. It stated:

"Any such right would be wholly innappropriate in the secular curriculum and would open the door to the fragmentation of school education. Nor could it be worked in practice. Sex education is often given, not as a separate time-tabled subject, but as an element of several different parts of the curriculum . . . Pupils' education would be seriously disrupted, and the schools' task made unmanageable, if pupils had to be withdrawn every time sexual matters were discussed."

The Minister was correct, and we should heed his advice.

I would now like to consider the Government's new amendment, which the Secretary of State produced at his party conference as a compromise solution. I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman and the new Minister have not stuck to the position for which the Minister argued so persuasively in his letter in August. I cannot help suspecting that it was the need to produce a bone for the Conservative party delegates and for the Secretary of State's Back Benchers rather than the facts that swayed the Secretary of State and the Minister to their present course. Be that as it may, the solution which the Minister has put forward this evening is highly unsatisfactory. First, contrary to the wise words of Baroness Hooper, and indeed to what the Secretary of State had to say at the Conservative party conference about the importance of building up the role of head teachers, the amendment will remove all responsibility from teachers. It will also remove responsibility from the local education authorities——

Mr. Pawsey *rose*——

Mr. Radice: Yet the governing body already has adequate powers over the curriculum by the articles of government. As the Minister stated in his letter in August, it will have additional powers over the curriculum when the Bill is passed. It appears as if the amendment is simply window dressing. There is no real argument for giving the governing body total control over sex education.

There is an even greater problem. The Government have said that they are in favour of sex education, yet under the amendment it will be possible, as we have heard from the Minister, for a governing body to decide that there should be no sex education in a school. That is completely illogical. The Government have said that they believe in sex education and that it is an essential part of the curriculum yet they are allowing governing bodies to decide that schools should not have sex education. The amendment goes way beyond the opt-out amendment

tabled by the hon. Member for Leicester, East. It is against the best interests of pupils and parents and against the Government's policy.

However, there may be a cop-out as the head is required by the amendment to consider the governors' statement, and he has then to ensure that the curriculum is compatible with it except — and hon. Members should note this point — where it conflicts with any part of an examination course in the curriculum. On the face of the amendment, the head is not required to change the content of examination subjects, for example, biology, home economics or sociology, which may include sex education issues. If that is the correct interpretation, many schools could simply re-organise the curriculum to include sex education under other subjects. Is that what the Government intend should happen? I hope that the Minister will answer that point.

The Minister's letter to hon. Members states that the governors would also have the discretion to allow pupils to be withdrawn from sex education lessons at parental request. It is difficult to discover from the wording of the amendment if that is really the case. That is difficult to understand. I do not see how this follows from the wording of the amendment. I have taken legal advice on the amendment, and the Government have clearly used their legal advisers, but it will be a matter for the courts to decide. That is not a sensible way to legislate. Will the Minister explain to the House how the amendment gives governing bodies the right to allow pupils to opt out? The Government amendment is ill-conceived, badly drafted and probably unworkable, and we shall vote against it.

In conclusion, I agree that sex education is a very important subject, but I must say that in recent weeks I have found distasteful the obsessive interest that a few Conservative Members have displayed in the issue. I wish that they were as interested in the inadequate supply of books and equipment, the bad state of repair of too many schools, the shortages of teachers and all the other problems in education. I look forward to welcoming the hon. Member for Leicester, East and others to future debates on education.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you allow a separate vote on amendment No. 118? Now that we have heard the speeches of the two Front-Bench spokesmen, is it not desirable that, if requested, there should be a separate Division on amendment No. 118?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes. Amendment No. 118 has been selected for a separate Division, and when we reach that point I shall ask an hon. Member to move it formally. Perhaps I could also inform the House that there has been a request for a separate Division on amendment No. 114. That has also been granted, and again I shall ask an hon. Member to move the amendment formally when we reach it. I call Mr. Peter Bruinvels.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Bruinvels.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems to me that, in recent years, standards in the House have slipped occasionally. Will you confirm that it is grossly discourteous to the House for a Member to come into the Chamber eight minutes after a debate has started and then expect to be called to speak in that debate, not having heard eight minutes of the Minister's opening remarks?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have called Mr. Bruinvels.

Mr. Bruinvels: May I make the point clearly that I was 30 seconds late, for which I apologise. I was certainly no later than that.

I begin by thanking my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the concessions that they have made in response to our calls for children to have the right to opt out of sex education if their parents are especially concerned about sex education in schools. As I speak to amendment No. 118, in my name and in the names of almost 60 of my colleagues, and to amendment No. 242, I shall seek to put across the point that although we are grateful and pleased that the concession has been made, we do not believe that it has gone far enough to allow us completely to accept my hon. Friend's statement.

To me, sex education is fast becoming a mass of conflicting ideas and ideologies. If we knew what sex education was about, we could understand its meanings and perhaps matters would not be as worrying as they are, be it in Haringey or in Brent. Gone are the days of plain biology when uncompromising lessons on human reproduction were acceptable. Instead, some teachers—I stress the word "some" — promote their sexual preferences, prejudices and proclivities and give talks on their own sexual morality in such a way as to encourage very young children to accept as abnormal what we think is normal and vice versa. Certainly the controversial side issues, such as homosexuality, the books available, such as "Jenny lives with Eric and Martin", the promotion of sexual promiscuity and other deviant sex relationships have caused great concern to many parents and, indeed, to teachers. Irresponsible and unpoliced sex education lessons which occur at present have possibly encouraged children to experiment and put this new knowledge into practice. That will certainly corrupt them.

Sex education must always be balanced, responsible and given in such a way as to encourage all children—they are, after all, very impressionable—to want to live decent, happy and normal family lives and not to be corrupted by some of the books that the Opposition seem not to condemn. I believe that it is for parents to decide if, when and by whom sex education should be given. After all, it is a private matter. The wrong books and the wrong teachers will corrupt and deprave.

11 pm

We must ask ourselves what is the purpose of sex education in schools. I do not totally oppose it, but who should give that form of education? Are the teachers qualified? Are they specialists? Does sex education come within the overall syllabus of any particular department? Should it not be included purely and exclusively in biology? What is the content of sex education? Should it not be all-inclusive, with moral teaching, a social setting, biological facts and medical information? At what age should pupils come forward to be taught?

Should visual and audio aids be used? Some of the books and videos used in this country can corrupt children at a very early age. Are the titles helpful? Do they tell the whole story? Should not my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State publish a list of the books that he and

[Mr. Bruinvels]

his officials have approved as being helpful? The governing bodies will now have the ultimate say as to whether sex education is given, but they will certainly need help and advice and no one is better able to give it than my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, not just because he is head of the Department of Education and Science but because he is a father and understands the need to protect children. It is not just a matter of the professional role of the teacher or the role of the parent. Young children are being born every day and they are easily corrupted if given the wrong kind of tuition.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State referred to notification for parents, the need for the annual meeting and the obvious opportunities for governing bodies to monitor sex education. The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) said that the Government amendment would give parents an even greater say than we are seeking because sex education could be taken out of the curriculum altogether. I believe that some sex education should be given, but in a responsible way promoting the family and securing what I regard as the mystery of marriage. Biological facts about the reproductive system and teaching about morality are OK, but bringing in sordid sexual experiences and discussing the ifs and buts of homosexuality and promiscuity is obviously dangerous. I should like teachers to be totally qualified in the sex education that they are giving, but many have no experience whatever and do not even wish to teach in the first place.

I should have thought that parents rather than teachers knew best their children's needs and requirements and the final say is certainly best left to individuals. Naturally they will need to find out about what is going on in their life and in their social life, but they must not be subjected to the risk of corruption. *[Interruption.]* Some hon. Members may find this amusing, but if one leads what is normally a decent life one can stand up and promote traditional family values with confidence and in the knowledge that some people's lives are better protected than others.

It is true that at some time a teenager needs to know the facts of life, but whether a child of five or six needs to be told about homosexuality, as in the book entitled "Jenny lives with Eric and Martin", is another matter. I fear that mentioning these subjects at such an early age will tempt a child to find out more and to put into practice at an early age what is best left to a much later age if one has to go down that devious path. That aspect of life can corrupt. As a well-known lady a few days ago said:

"The curriculum on sex education is appalling. Young children can be taught the joys of casual sex, every type of contraception, and to regard abortion as just another extension of contraception, with no mention of the fact that a human being is denied life. Even VD comes across as something that can be treated as simply as a case of measles."

That is a sad fact of life.

In a recent survey 80 per cent. of parents questioned said that they would like to have sex education in schools but 53 per cent. said that they wanted to be more involved in the curriculum and 76 per cent. urged that homosexuality should not be taught in the schools—an important point—and 75 per cent. wanted to withdraw their children if they felt the need.

Therefore, there is a genuine threat to our children. As the new pamphlet issued by the Department of Education and Science for 1986 said, parents should play a major formative role, not only in determining the content of sex education but in deciding whether it takes place at all. The heads, the staff, parents and governing parties decide and need to fully consult each other. The consultation process needs advice from the top as to the books that are acceptable and about protection for our young.

Last night, Haringey passed a motion to bring about a positive image policy for homosexuals. That worries me deeply. The parents there do not want it and are trying to stop it, but effectively it is there already. That is a disgrace and a waste of public funds and my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) will be developing that if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The most important thing is that a child must never be corrupted. Therefore, we must look at the advantages and disadvantages and dangers of sex education. We must accept that too much ignorance is bad; indeed, just as bad as too much knowledge. As sex education increases, it is clear that much of it is becoming objectionable as too many people have come forward to experiment, and that must be considered a great disadvantage.

Parents are angry. They feel concerned that a number of evil people have taken over the sex education industry. In particular, I name the Family Planning Association, which has done everything in its power to promote some books which have done a lot to corrupt our children. It is clear that such organisations have launched an evil war on marriage and the family and what I and many other hon. Members value deeply. We must never support publicly campaigns for lesbian pupils, as there have been, or action against heterosexism, which it is said is a sexually transmitted disease, or positive promotion of lesbianism. We must not destroy the faith of our young. *[Interruption.]* It is Labour councillors here in London who make such remarks, doing a lot to corrupt our children. That kind of sex education is unacceptable and is running rife. Parents must always have the opportunity to withdraw their children if they disagree with that kind of filth because they know it corrupts and they know that it is unacceptable to today's society.

Every hon. Member in the House who is a father will know well — *[Interruption.]* Every hon. Member, a father or a mother, will know well the privilege of having children, the joy of bringing them up and their hope that the children will be brought up in a decent family life where natural things are promoted. The moral is that clean living is the only safeguard for us.

It is essential that we support the family. It is essential that attitudes to sex are taught in a clearly moral framework. The militant voice of those who believe in homosexuality and other practices cannot be considered as normal and we must do everything in our power to stop that. Sex education is a mass of misinformation, misrepresentation and outright fraud and abuse. The term "sex education" conceals far more than it reveals. It conceals a specific social, educational and economic policy which is used to influence sex education and especially the moral values. There is not a shred of evidence that sex education reduces the number of unwanted pregnancies among teenagers. Many more teenagers are being tempted; the number of abortions has increased, as well as the spread of disease. All this has happened with sex education.

Although I want to see the control of sex education maintained, I am not confident that a governing body, with too many Left-wing officials on the newly constituted governing board, will have the opportunity to stop the wrong kind of books being used.

I welcome more parent participation in the governing bodies, but I am not certain that there are enough opportunities for them to override the wish of those bodies. If I went forward and said that I wished to withdraw my child from sex education, the risk is that it would take too long to do so. As yet, the sanctions and the right of appeal have not been clearly spelt out. Why should the onus be on myself, as a parent, to convince all the governing body that I need my child to be withdrawn? Why can I not have the ultimate right to decide when my child needs to be withdrawn? If I do not agree with the sex education in the school surely I should be allowed to withdraw my child.

Many of the provisions before us tonight will not come into practice until 1988—two years before a child can be withdrawn from the sex education lesson. I fear that, by the time one can overturn and replace some of the governors on the governing body—the Left-wing ones who do not believe in the normal way of life—it will be too late. For over a year those children will have been corrupted.

We need an immediate right of withdrawal. We need the right to have our children where they can be best taught—whether in the home or the school. Let us, as parents decide. Why should anyone else tell us what we can or cannot do? An important principle of the Conservative party is that we can opt out of things and we are not force-fed with things with which we do not agree. I appreciate that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has tabled an amendment which will ensure that there is an opportunity for a governing body to opt out. I do not want to be the exception and many more parents need the right to exercise their wish to withdraw their child from sex education lessons.

We must clarify the sanctions and appeals procedure to ensure that there is that absolute right, and that, failing that, the child can be withdrawn. Section 68 of the Education Act 1944 gave parents the right to remove a child from a school if they were unhappy about the teaching. That is an important and welcome right, but if sex education is taught at every other school in the area, where does one send the child? The child must come first. The values are implicit and school sex education must be taught better. The material must be listed and books must be banned. Video material must never be used and parents must have the ultimate veto. It is my intention to seek to divide the House on amendment 118 in the name of protecting our children and ensuring that parents have the ultimate say.

My amendment 242 concerns the books that I want to see banned. The amendment would empower the Secretary of State to ban certain books by order if he thinks that they are unsuitable or morally corrupting. In a recent interview, my right hon. Friend discussed a book called "Positive Books on Black People's History" and explained clearly that he has no such right now. I suggest that there are plenty of books that should be banned. They include "Sex Education, The Erroneous Zone", which suggests that girls should have the freedom to choose as many lovers as they wish, and of either sex. "Make it Happy" discusses oral and anal intercourse.

11.15 pm

I am grateful to the *Daily Mail* which, on Tuesday 23 September published a very useful list. "Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin", we know about. It involves a homosexual father, his boyfriend and a five-year-old girl. Is that good for our children? "Make it Happy" encourages masturbation, group sex and bestiality. The BMA's "Sex for Beginners" calls for experiments in bondage. Are these the type of books that should be in our schools? "The Rights of Children" is used in social awareness classes in London where they talk about rape and consent to sexual intercourse.

What about "The Playbook for Kids About Sex", a Sheba feminist publication which encourages tiny children aged five to draw pictures of their naked bodies? "Biology for Life" includes homosexuality as an alternative in its sex without pregnancy chapter. It is being used as a possible curriculum workbook for the general certificate of secondary education. "Growing Up: A Guide for Children and Parents" shows pictures of aborted embryos and sexual organs in close-up. "Talking Sex" is the type of book for which we should have no place in our society. "Talking about Youth Work", "Talking about Young Lesbians"—I am grateful to Rachel Tingle who has published a book called "Gay Lessons"—are the type of books that must be banned. They discuss experiences of being gay at school, encouraging gay as the norm. "One Teenager in Ten" boasts about coming out. "A Boy's Own Story" involves a threesome orgy. "The Milkman's On His Way", deals with the awakening homosexuality of a working-class boy. Are these the type of books that we want in our schools?

I urge right hon. and hon. Members to treat this matter with the seriousness that it deserves. Not one of these books should appear in any school. If my amendment were accepted, children who are forced to go through sex education would not be corrupted by the present devious and immoral stand. We must do our best to protect those children. The new governing bodies need all the help that we can give them. It is quite clear that amendment No. 232 will be accepted. I will support it as a step in the right direction, but I pray that my right hon. Friend will outlaw the books that I have mentioned to ensure that children are not corrupted, that there is normal family life and that sex is not made obscene or spoilt by disgraceful books that are being promoted in schools, especially in London. The House should stand up for children's rights, protect parents and help the young to ensure that there is a better future for them in schools.

Mr. Freud: I follow an hon. Member who clearly did not benefit from sexual education—if he received any. I shall be brief. I served on the Standing Committee that considered the Bill and we discussed sex education at length.

I welcome the Minister to her new post. I had great respect for her predecessor and I hope that she and I will work together as amicably. The Bill provides a balance of power between local education authorities and governing bodies and I can see no good reason why sex education should be made an exception. There is great worry among educationists that one subject of all the subjects taught in school should be the responsibility of governors, while the rest of the curriculum remains the responsibility of the LEAs.

[Mr. Freud]

The Secretary of State talks about the homogenous band of industrialists who will be brought on to school governing bodies. We welcome them, but if a local high-flying industrialist with management ability asks about the responsibility of a school governor and is told that his main responsibility is for sex education and not for the curriculum, that will be a disincentive to such an industrialist.

I am sorry that any hon. Member should argue against sex education for children, because I believe that a child's right to know should override a parent's right to obscure.

There is to be a Division on amendment No. 118. I have had letters from many fundamental Christians, from Plymouth Brethren, asking me to support the amendment. I have great sympathy for those people and I looked at the case carefully, but I believe that children who are withdrawn from sex education are at most risk, because they know little. Christianity is the teaching of love and trust, but, much as one appreciates love and trust, the child who believes in loving and trusting everyone and who has no sex education is greatly at risk from child molesters. I know that parents have a duty, but I also know that parents who do not want their children to be taught about sex are least likely to teach those children themselves.

I appreciate that if 60 hon. Members sign an amendment there is substantial support for it, but I ask hon. Members with open minds to think again. Allowing a parent to withdraw a child from sex education is doing a substantial disservice to the child, just as going too far in the other direction can be wrong.

There is a campaign in my constituency called "Danger Stranger" in which children are taught that people they do not know are dangerous. They draw pictures of strangers who are all 6 ft 9 in tall and have black beards and electric eyes. But the vast majority of sexual attacks on children are committed by people whom they know well, and it is a substantial mistake to say that we shall teach children nothing or teach them that all people are dangerous.

There is also to be a Division on amendment No. 114, which would remove the clause from the Bill. I do not think that we desperately need the Bill, but I know that we do not desperately need the clause. The Secretary of State needs the London boroughs of Brent and Haringey because if he and they did not have each other to complain about I do not know what they would do. There are problems with loony LEAs, but they cannot be tackled through legislation. We believe that passing the clause would bring Parliament into considerable disrepute. The clause is simplistic and fairly dangerous nonsense.

The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) reminded us in Committee that the HMI produced a sober and sane report. It runs to considerable length and. as if to obviate that report and to ignore the good sense behind it, we have a six and a half line clause which will do nothing for children but a lot for the legal profession.

I commend amendment No. 114 to the House. We have always believed that if we cannot come up with an acceptable alternative, it is as well to stick to what we have.

Mrs. Sally Oppenheim (Gloucester): I must start with an incontrovertible statement of fact. Every right hon. and hon. Member has a mother, but only one of them has me as a mother. I congratulate by hon. Friend on trying to meet the objections and anxieties of many parents. He wants to create a framework for sex education in schools which is appropriate, moral and kept within certain confines. In my view he has failed on one fundamental issue. He has failed to give parents a prescriptive right as individuals to opt out on behalf of their children. It is possible for them to opt out, but there is no certainty. That is a great flaw in the amendment.

In such a debate it is easy to over-generalise. It is very easy to say that all parents are better at teaching their children about sex, or that any teacher is better than any parent. Neither is true. Some parents will be better than teachers and some teachers will be better than parents. On balance, the parent is usually most aware of the sensitive nature of their children and at what age their child is ready for sex education.

The draft directive to LEAs about sex education accepts that there is a right age and that it is variable. How are teachers to know the right age for each child, and if they do know, how will they segregate the children if the right age is different for each child?

My granddaughter aged nine asked her mother—my daughter—after reading a newspaper story, what was a sexual attack. My daughter then knew that the time had come for her child to be told the basic facts. No teacher could be provided with that sensitive information. Teachers are not in such close contact as parents.

Teachers might make judgments which are irrelevant to a child's needs. Moreover it is the parents who are unsuitable to teach their own children about sex who are least likely to want to opt out of sex education at school. The responsible parent who is worried about the curriculum is more likely to want to opt out.

Far too much emphasis is placed on irrelevant and damaging information in too many schools. We all know about the lunacy of ILEA and I shall not list the books involved. But the attitude is widespread throughout the country. It varies between schools and governing bodies, but I believe that the Minister's guidelines are not restrictive enough.

The Minister could have set down in the Bill a set of simple and clear principles. There should be a fundamental facts of life, birds and bees—call it what we will—sex education programme for children at about the age of nine or 10, which would not need to extend beyond one class and one question and answer session. That should be followed with a further class at about the age of 12 or 13, which may refer to homosexuality, describing it as abnormal and undesirable, and which must refer to all the health hazards, especially those that arise out of promiscuity such as cervical cancer and AIDS, which have been medically proven beyond doubt. There is no necessity to go beyond that and talk about sexual problems or sexual politics. A short two-step course in school is highly necessary if a child is not receiving guidance at home, but more than that is not necessary.

11.30 pm

I fail to understand the passage in a letter from the previous Minister, which we all received in August, to the effect that it was impossible to give parents the option of withdrawing their children from sex education, because the subject permeated a wider curriculum and it would cause massive disruption if a child were withdrawn. Indeed, the letter suggested that a school would find the position unmanageable if that were to happen. How was that true in August, when in October the present Minister

said that parents would be given the option to withdraw their children? If it was impossible and unmanageable in August, why was it not so in October? The answer is that the previous Minister's civil servants told him that sex education permeated the whole curriculum. It does, but not at an age where it matters. By the time a child is likely to have a D. H. Lawrence book, in the school curriculum he is likely to have reached A-level standard and will have had his sex education considerably earlier. By the time a child reaches even O-level biology, he will have had his primary sex education lessons. By the time that a child reaches points in history that may be relevant or which give rise to sexual questions, he will have had his basic sex education. Therefore, it was ridiculous to say in the first place that it was impossible to withdraw a child because the curriculum is permeated. That happens at an advanced stage in the child's education. It was possible then and it is possible now. The step taken by the present Minister is progressive and what was said previously was regressive.

If any hon. Member thinks that that sort of permeation does not exist throughout the country, he is quite wrong. There was a disturbing case in my constituency where a girl aged 16½, who had already had her basic sex education, was singled out by an English teacher, as no part of her curriculum and her set books, and given a book called "Sexual Politics" about feminism, sexuality and such matters. I read the book, and thought it very silly. It was laced with unnecessary pornographic extracts from other books, and was most offensive. That girl had a nervous breakdown and was withdrawn from school. She later returned to school and was once again singled out by the same teacher who had given her that book.

I complained to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, to whom I pay tribute. He went to the trouble of reading the book—which I do not think many Ministers would have done. It was most diligent of him. He wrote to me saying that he would be disturbed to see the book set as reading material in schools and that he considered it quite unsuitable for use in schools. I communicated this to the chairman of the education committee, who did not even reply to my letter. I asked him to give an assurance to my constituent that the book would not be included in the curriculum of any schools in my constituency and his reply was "No comment". The man's name is not Bernie Grant. He is not on the Inner London education authority and he is not even a Labour chairman. He is a Liberal chairman. He is an inoffensive, avuncular, family sort of person. He is also ineffectual and——

Mr. Nicholls: —a bit of a drip.

Mrs. Oppenheim: That is as may be. He is just the sort of person who might be chosen as one of these new parent governors. I do not even know whether he is a parent, and that is the danger. I wonder what chance that girl's mother would have had against a governing body composed even in the new way that is proposed. How would such governing bodies react if at the time of their annual report a substantial minority of parents objected to the curriculum and the text of any particular book, parents whose feelings may be very strong as individuals and well founded? Would they effectively be disfranchised as parents?

I cannot accept the assurances of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. His amendment does not give parents a prescriptive right to use their own judgment about their own children, which I believe is a fundamental right, although I give him high marks for trying. Sensible, moderate and family-oriented sex education has never been more important than it is now because the dangers have never been greater, both in terms of political subversion and of deadly health risks. To deny parents the right of control in such an area can only undermine their crucial role as parents, their authority and what many of them consider to be their fundamental rights.

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): The right hon. Member for Gloucester (Mrs. Oppenheim) was right when she said that on balance it is better for sex education to be given by parents than by teachers. That is especially so when the relationship between the parent or parents who give it and the children is a close and intimate one, where those parents are able to respond to the questions that children ask at various stages in their development. The right hon. Lady knows, however, and we all know, alas, that there are many parents who do not give sex education, that there are many other parents who give it and do it badly, and that there are unfortunately families where the relationship between the parent and the children makes it impossible for that sort of sex education to be given.

We would all agree that ideally sex education should be given within the family, but that is not always possible. Therefore, it seems to me—and I agree with the right hon. Lady—that there is a strong case for sex education in schools. I want to go further than that, but it seems extraordinary that she and others who have spoken from the Government Benches should imply that the only source of information available to growing children about sex is either the parent or the teacher. That is not the position. We live in a society in which the popular press, the media, advertisements and even pornography is available to children. When I taught in a comprehensive school in London years ago, I found extraordinary bits of pornography in the possession of the children whom I was teaching.

For anyone to suggest that children who do not receive sex education from their parents or from teachers are not being influenced and are not learning about sex must surely be very far from the situation which exists in our schools. This is a development in our society that has taken place over the past few decades. I am sure that the average child at school now knows far more about sex, abortion and sexual deviation than most of us, if not all of us in the House, knew when we were at a similiar age.

It is inevitable that if children do not get sex education from parents or teachers, they are likely to be misled by misinformation and salacious material. That seems to me to make sex education in schools not merely desirable but essential. I was delighted to hear the Minister use the word "essential" in her speech. Indeed, she wrote to all hon. Members on 16 October and on that occasion used the word. She regarded it as "essential". Therefore, it was extraordinary to me, when I read the letter—I do not know whether other hon. Members had a similar experience—and saw that it was "essential" for children to have sex education, to read elsewhere in the letter:

> "The governors will be responsible for deciding . . . whether sex education should be given in a school . . . and would also have the discretion to allow individual pupils to be withdrawn from sex education lessons at parental request."

If the Minister really believes it to be essential for children to have sex education, I cannot understand the amendments, nor can I understand the contents of the

[Mr. Guy Barnett]

letter she wrote to all hon. Members. I am quite convinced that there is a need for sex education. Therefore, I strongly support it. However, that does not mean that I support the new clause. It seems extraordinary, as my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench, said, that it has been tacked on at this stage and that the Government did not think of it first. The Government have acted in response to pressure on them. I have received hardly any letters from my constituents on this subject. Quite frankly, I wonder whether a concerted attempt has been made by a number of hon. Members to put pressure on the Government, and the consequence is that kind of contradiction in Government statements, the Minister's speech and the letter she wrote to hon. Members. The Government do not know where they stand.

In this debate there has been a great emphasis, and the proposed new clause places great emphasis, on the importance of family life. The Department of Education and Science and Her Majesty's inspectorate have long recognised, quite properly, that there is a variety of patterns of family life in this country, and that to talk of the nuclear family with mum, dad and a couple of kids as though it were the pattern for everybody is not merely inaccurate in terms of society but is deeply offensive to certain children who come from homes not of that form. HMI's document entitled "Health Education from 5-16" recognises that teachers need to respect different patterns of family life and the variety of cultural influences brought to schools by pupils. The assumption that all pupils belong to nuclear families with two parents present can be wounding and insensitive to children who, for example, live in single parent families.

Anyone who represents constituencies in inner cities and in inner London will know of the high proportion of children who come from single parent families and that an overemphasis of the kind with which the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) presented us, of the nuclear family with father and mother, may be deeply wounding to children who do not come from such families. It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to shake his head, but I am quite convinced that that could be the case. It could also be the case where parents are divorced. There is no question in my mind that a great deal of sensitivity is required in sex education.

A worrying amount of information is coming out about the degree to which incest takes place. Children grow up in some families in very worrying circumstances. Some children grow up in families in which one parent is homosexual or has homosexual tendencies. For the House to dismiss all that and pretend that there is another kind of world — a world in which there is not a mass of salacious material produced in the media, in which the vast majority of families are nuclear families that clearly are considered in the legislation — seems to me to be quite wrong. It is mistaken and could be damaging. That is the main reason why I agree with the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) about the need to defeat this clause and throw it out.

11.45 pm

I thought that most Conservative Members were against declaratory legislation. Much of this clause is declaratory. If it is not, it is liable to lead to vexatious legislation. I am doubtful about placing the responsibility of providing sex education in the hands of governors. This point has already been well expressed. In the best schools, this responsibility has properly lain with the professionals — the teachers. In doing that job, teachers have co-operated closely with parents. It would be extraordinary if governors had to announce publicly whether their school provided sex education, giving dramatic importance to but one important part of the curriculum.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): This point is essential to the hon. Gentleman's argument on the role of teachers. Does he advocate that teachers should adopt the position of agnosticism when talking about such issues?

Mr. Barnett: Certainly not. I believe—and I am sure that the House agrees—that this is a difficult, sensitive subject on which it is impossible to legislate. Teachers need guidance from HMI, the Department of Education and Science, college courses, and so on about the problems of sex education. I regret the suggestion that the responsibility for sex education may properly be taken away from teachers and that teachers may be irresponsible in the way in which they do the job of sex education. The vast majority of teachers do that job responsibly. To quote a few isolated examples of abuse is no reason for legislation.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Is not the problem the fact that Conservative Members are trying to impose on teachers a moral framework which they cannot even adequately define?

Mr. Barnett: My hon. Friend has made an important point with which I agree. For the reasons which I have given, I should like the whole clause to be deleted.

Mr. Pawsey: My first inclination was to support the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr Bruinvels) who spoke to it with his customary mix of honesty and enthusiasm. *[Interruption.]* I mean that sincerely. But the debate has moved on and a new dimension has been added to the Bill. I believe that the solution offered by my hon. Friend the Minister of State is in the best interests of the pupil and the school.

I accept the need for sex education in schools and acknowledge that in many homes sex education is not a subject of discussion between parents and children. Clearly it is unwise for children to grow up in an atmosphere of ignorance and innuendo. Knowledge gained in such a way is not particularly helpful to a healthy understanding of sex. For that reason, I believe that it should be taught in schools, but taught in a caring, sensitive way, with proper regard to morals and ethics. If children are withdrawn from sex education classes, one of the problems will be their supervision. At a time when teachers are under pressure, the prospect of several children outside a class trying to study independently will undoubtedly cause problems in many schools.

The thought occurs to me, as I am sure it occurs to many other hon. Members, that those children who have been excluded from sex education lessons will undoubtedly talk to the other members of the class to find out what was going on. The information they receive will not necessarily reflect the material of those lessons. Those children will receive a garbled version. The pupils excluded from those lessons will probably receive the worst of all worlds, for

they will receive picturesque descriptions from their fellow pupils which need not bear any close relationship to what was taught in the classroom. Also, although sex education is principally taught in one specific lesson, it must impinge on others, for example, biology. If a parent has the right to withdraw a child from one lesson, is it not right and proper that the child be withdrawn from others? It would seem that a precedent may be established with consequences not readily foreseen at this time.

That having been said, I recognise the strong feelings that undoubtedly exist on this subject. I certainly understand the apprehension which many parents feel, especially in the light of some of the appalling literature we have heard described this evening. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East and others who have drawn the House's attention to some of the rubbish and pornographic material which is circulated in our schools. Indeed, some recent examples seem designed to titillate rather than to educate.

The Government amendment ensures that school governing bodies will have the right to approve the material being used. They will have the right to decide whether sex education is to be taught. Surely that is the essence. The new governing bodies will be strengthened and parents will have representation equal to that of the LEA so that they will have the right to express an opinion on the type of material being used. That is an important safeguard and it is for that reason that I believe that it will do much to reassure parents who are concerned about the moral welfare of their children.

I also believe that many parents, knowing this, will do their utmost to serve on those governing bodies, thus ensuring that the quality of governors is much better than perhaps it is at present. I have argued for a long time that parents know best what is right for their children, and I believe that they will have the right to express that within a school governing body. If that is not an adequate safeguard, bear in mind that there is now a public annual general meeting of each school. That means that the parents who are not on the governing body will have an opportunity to cross-examine in detail and in public the school governing body and the head teacher. If they are dissatisfied with the way in which sex education is being taught or the type of material being used, they will have the opportunity of bringing that out into the open and ensuring that the governors and the headmaster answer the searching questions that will undoubtedly be put to them. Nothing so concentrates the parental mind as the prospect of their child being adversely influenced by some of the material which we have heard mentioned in the debate. If governors and head teachers have to answer to those aggrieved parents in public, it will ensure that the teaching of sex education is undertaken in a responsible way.

I welcome the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Minister, and I genuinely believe that it will provide parents with the reassurance that they need. Its general drive and thrust are in keeping with the remainder of the Bill.

Mr. Flannery: I oppose amendment No. 118. When Viscount Buckmaster introduced his amendment in the other place, he put the Government on the horns of a dilemma. A welter of confusion has now been built up so that nobody knows where he is. The fundamentalists and bigots have pronounced on this subject, and we have heard some of them tonight. When the noble Viscount tried to befog the issue of what was happening to the schools due to a lack of money, he worded the amendment to stress

"regard to moral considerations and the value of family life."

The Government could not resist using such lovely words, having tried to persuade us over the years that they were the party of morality and family life, as though nobody else and no other party could be. *[Interruption.]* As I said, the bigots are speaking tonight, and they can be heard on the Government Benches.

It is clear that the Conservatives do not know where they are on this subject. Indeed, they sent hon. Members two letters expressing differing views. The first, dated 7 August, said that the Government could not possibly allow a provision to permit the withdrawal of children from sex education, claiming that

"any such right would be wholly inappropriate in the secular curriculum."

Having made that claim, the Government realised that they had blundered, and at the Tory party conference the Minister had to intervene. But he did not quite know what to do—whether to leave it with those wicked teachers who could not possibly tackle the subject properly, or do something else. In the event, he decided to take the sensitive question of sex education—a subject which is often not even discussed by parents with their children—away from the teachers and place it in other hands. Not knowing in which hands to place it, he finally decided to give it to the governors. Thus, having said that he would not permit children to be withdrawn from sex education, he contradicted himself by saying that school governors would have that right.

The Tories are in a dilemma on this issue because they have not properly studied it. The wickedness is not in the schools but outside. Considering the amount of pornography that is available to people, including children, any fair-minded person must accept that sex education is already taught in a reasonable, responsible and sensitive manner. Obviously, considering the large numbers, somebody somewhere will not tackle it properly or will publish a book with which we do not agree or which causes problems. Educating our children is difficult enough, especially in this sensitive area, and the vast majority of parents value the way in which teachers help to prepare our young people for adult life.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Flannery: I will not give way and I wish to be brief.

Teachers, Her Majesty's Inspectors and the members of locally elected authorities are trying all the time to improve their approach to the sensitive subject of sex education. It ill-becomes people who know little about it to hurl abuse at those who are grappling with this delicate subject and who are doing their best for our children.

The vast majority of parents want schools to continue with sex education because leading studies have shown that few girls and even fewer boys discuss the subject with their mothers, so delicate an issue is it. Because parents are so timid to discuss sex matters with their children, the schools have an important, though difficult, role to play. The reality is that few problems arise about sex education. Some hon. Members are trying to multiply the problems for some curious political gain. They are muddying already difficult waters.

We should beware of bigotry. We should beware of the kind of speech made by the hon. Member for Leicester,

[Mr. Flannery]

East (Mr. Bruinvels), which was a disgrace to the people and teachers of Leicester. If one board of governors is different from another and makes its own decisions, many different decisions will be taken about the education of our children in many areas. That is the dilemma which the Minister has imposed on the Conservative party and the rest of us at a time when sex education is becoming better and more sensitive than it has ever been in our lifetimes.

12 midnight

Mr. William Shelton (Streatham): Most of us would agree that of course sex education should be taught in schools. I believe that most of us would qualify that by saying that it should be well taught. My speech will be shorter than I had intended as I am following the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mrs. Oppenheim). I agree with almost everything that she said and I do not want to repeat her points.

To pick up on a point made earlier, when I refer to good sex education, I do not mean agnostic sex education. I mean sex education associated with moral values and rights and wrongs related to some of the penalties which might befall one if sex is misused.

It is no good the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) saying that the vast majority of teachers and governing bodies are responsible. Indeed they are. However, what about the youngsters who come up against the irresponsible ones? Irresponsible teachers and governors may be a minority, but to the child and the parents involved, that represents 100 per cent. of the control over what the child is taught.

I was leafing through the magazine called "ILEA Contact" produced by the Inner London education authority. For those hon. Members who are not privileged to be representatives of Inner London constituencies, "ILEA Contact" is a magazine edited by ILEA and sent out every two weeks. I leafed through the letters page of the issue produced on 17 October. Two of the four letters are in support of gays. One is from a gay teacher working in an ILEA school. It states:

> "It is time for the ILEA to state that to present positive images of lesbians and gays in schools is an integral part of its equal opportunities policies."

The other letter is signed by teachers in the Hurlingham and Chelsea School NUT group. That letter refers to the book "Jenny lives with Eric and Martin". In that letter the group states that they

> "feel that the book presents a loving, caring homosexual relationship in a very positive way and as such should be on the open shelves . . . classified with books on 'Families'."

They have every right to hold these opinions. However, most of us would agree that we would not wish those teachers to teach our children sex education. Opposition Members must at least have some small qualms about their children being taught by such teachers. If they have no such qualms, I am sure that their wives would have.

A minority of teachers may not be appropriate to teach sex education and a parent might face that minority. For that reason, I give a limited welcome to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's suggestion, and that of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, whom I congratulate upon her new appointment, that a parent may go to a board of governors and state that they wish to withdraw a child because they do not like the teacher. I cannot find that clearly stated in the amendment. I have the Minister of State's letter which states:

> "The governors would also have the discretion to allow individual pupils to be withdrawn from sex education lessons at parental request."

However, nowhere can I see that right stated in the amendment. I hope that my right hon. Friend has not made a horrible mistake and left that out of the amendment. Perhaps the Minister who replies to the debate will assure the House that that right will be made available and will point out exactly where it can be found in the amendments, because I cannot find it.

I say a "limited" welcome because a minority of boards of governors — my right hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester drew attention to one Liberal chairman of a board of governors — will cause some difficulties. Parents will go to those boards of governors, who will say, "No, we think that you are absolutely wrong. We think that your child should read 'Jenny lives with Eric and Martin'." What does a parent do in those circumstances? Some parents will have deep religious feelings about sex education, and their strongly held religious beliefs should allow them to withdraw their children from sex education. I believe that they should be permitted to do so. They may be wrong, but they should have that right if, on grounds of religious persuasion, they believe that their children should be withdrawn from sex education in school. Even if it is good and moral sex education, they should have that right.

Although my welcome for my right hon. Friend's suggestion is limited, I shall support it. I shall also support amendment No. 118, which I suspect will not carry the day, because that is probably the way in which the House should vote.

Mr. Rogers: I speak in this debate with a great deal of humility, in that, although I am the father of four children who are now adults — one is a doctor and another a teacher — I still have not found the right prescription that I could offer to the House for educating children in relationships. One sad thing about this debate is that "sex education" is used as such a bald term. I hope that we are talking about education in relationships between people and between adults and children. I do not have a prescription for this. When I talk to my daughter, who is a doctor in general practice, and who I hope will soon make me a grandfather, about these issues, I do not know what to advise her and she does not know what to advise me.

What really saddens me about the debate is that, although the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) said many good things in his speech, he overstated his argument strongly and politicised issues that do not belong to politics. This is one difficulty in approaching such a problem. I can say genuinely that I do not know how I will vote. I know what I will not vote for, but I am not sure what I will vote for. I do not wish to present myself as someone who does not understand the matter, because I understand the problems that parents face today in trying to bring their children into the adult world.

One thing that we do not want is for our children to be subject to pressures before their minds are capable of coping with the dilemmas that come from those pressures.

My aim as a parent was to try to protect my children until they were mature enough to make up their minds, not

just in sexual relationships but in all matters. If we could approach the debate in that light, we would be much further along the right road.

I do not wish to delay the House too much at this time of night, but I hope that hon. Members appreciate that no family is an island in this day and age. The hon. Member for Leicester, East should remember that. He cannot create a ghetto from his family. There are too many pressures upon children these days. When we say how bad children are today, we should remember that children are subject to pressures today to which we were never subjected as children. I feel sorry for children today. Through the media, literature and other available material, they are under enormous pressure. That is why it is important that the family—I do not know what a "nuclear" family means—whether it has one parent or two parents, should be able to impart this knowledge and to protect its children without these enormous pressures.

Kids today need protection. Amendment No. 116 is important because it sets out all that should be taught under the guise of sex relationship education or however one describes it. It refers to

"the promotion of happy and stable relationships between partners"

and who could argue with that as an educative principle? It goes on to refer to

"the pattern of family structures in the area of the authority,"

which may be single-parent or two-parent families, and

"the likely impact of such education on children in non-traditional family structures or in care"

because even today, unfortunately, many children are still in care and not living in what might be described as a normal family. It also refers to

"the values of ethnic and religious minorities"

which I can appreciate as I come from a country with a substantial minority element especially in terms of language. That problem has also been highlighted by the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) in his amendments Nos. 135 and 136.

Amendment No. 116 also includes the words:

"the availability and proper use of contraception".

What is wrong with that being included in the educative process? I might have reservations about

"the availability of, and legal provisions relating to, abortion".

because like many hon. Members I do not believe in abortion as a form of contraception, but that makes it all the more important that innocent young children should be given some kind of sex education so that they do not need to resort to abortion, particularly the back-street variety which unfortunately is still available.

I ask the supporters of amendment No. 118 why they would want to withdraw their children from the form of education that I have described. I make this point in conclusion as I do not wish to arouse the hostility of Members, perhaps on both sides, who may speak with a measure of hypocrisy on this, but my children have been educated in the state system and therefore subject to the legislation applying to that system. Perhaps Members who have opted out of that system should search their hearts before legislating for children in the state system when their own children are perhaps at public schools and not subject to it.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): I approach this issue very seriously, as I am sure do all hon. Members, because although it may not be the most important issue in the Bill it is one that has concerned a great many Members and therefore one on which we must be very careful in our deliberations.

Having started with the same interest as others, however, I am in some difficulty in relation to the various solutions so far proposed both by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) and by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I will explain briefly why. With regard to my hon. Friend's proposals, if sex education were confined to a lesson in school with the simple device of an opt-out clause for parents who did not wish what might in some cases be regarded as a dubious facility to be imposed on their children I suspect that there would be little dissent on either side of the House about the provision of such a facility, but sadly that is not the case.

12.15 am

Having been a member of the Committee which considered the Bill and therefore to an extent forewarned about the issues involved in this question, I took the trouble to ask upper schools in my city of Oxford about their policy on sex education. Indeed, they confirmed what my hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) said when he was Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, that none of them teach sex education per se on the syllabus. There is not a lesson to which a parent who wishes to withdraw his child from the system can be directed, saying that that is the lesson to which his child should not belong.

I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East has the very best intentions in moving his amendment and I commend him for the interest that he has shown, but none the less it is a delusion to imagine that by arming oneself with this so-called protection of the right to opt out we shall be giving parents anything at all. In practice, sex education will continue to be carried out in all those other subjects on the curriculum which will not be readily identifiable. Indeed, if one were to take the principle to its logical conclusion and withdraw the child from all the possible lessons on the curriculum in which the subject of sex might be taught, the child would be going to school for about 15 hours a week and no more. That is a well-intentioned amendment but it has that fundamental flaw and that is why I cannot support it.

However, sufficient attention has not been paid in the debate so far tonight to the wording of clause 26. As I argued in Committee, and beg the indulgence of the House to argue briefly again, to use words such as

"due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life"

may make a lot of sense to lawyers but will in practice only make a lot of money for lawyers.

In the early part of the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) asked my hon. Friend the Minister of State whether, when she was referring to the value of family life, she meant the Christian family life. Her reply on that occasion, possibly unwittingly, showed just what sort of difficulties we shall get ourselves into if we believe that that simple and rather neat form of words will present teachers with the guidance that they need in order to construct the form of their sex education lessons.

We have all heard, and Opposition Members have made this doubly clear tonight, of those who will argue that the nuclear family is now out-dated and that we

[Mr. Steve Norris]

should be prepared to consider that the value of family life might not simply be expressed in that conventional form which I suspect the overwhelming majority of people in Britain would understand, but that it can be equally expressed in slightly less, dare I say, normal forms of family life, a great many examples of which they would no doubt seek to enumerate. Therefore, we are looking at a lawyers' paradise if we look at the words in clause 26 for any comfort at all on this issue.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's suggestion is that we should give the responsibility to governors. That is an innocuous enough proposal and it saves me from the prospect of having to vote against it. It does not improve the situation but it does not make it any worse. But what my right hon. Friend is suggesting is the exact opposite of what, in what I thought was an extremely well-reasoned speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mrs. Oppenheim) pointed out was the case—that there will be just as many loony governing bodies quite prepared to put inappropriate material in the curriculum as there are loony members of ILEA teacher co-operatives prepared to write to "ILEA Contact" and say how important they think "Jenny lives with Eric and Martin" is for a balanced sex education curriculum. Passing the buck to school governors will not do any good at all in that small minority of cases where any reasonable parent would be reasonably entitled to be worried about the kind of education that his child was getting.

I draw the attention of the House to what I believe is the redemption of this problem. It is possibly the only practical solution that I have yet encountered. In a recent circular, the Department of Education and Science issued specific guidance to teachers on the subject of sex education.

Mr. Radice: Excellent.

Mr. Norris: This cannot be right, because the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) has just agreed with me, but I shall pursue it none the less. The circular said that one could not sum up a subject as complex as sex education in a couple of simple, however well-meaning trite phrases. It stated that one could not solve the problem by giving parents a single opt-out clause or by deciding that governing bodies rather than teachers, parents, head teachers or local education authorities should be responsible. The circular stated that teachers ought to teach children sensibly, responsibly, unhysterically and in a balanced way. The circular allowed for a detailed exposition of the arguments involved in each of the difficult areas and it therefore made coherent sense.

I have not heard any hon. Member object to its contents. The welcome which the hon. Member for Durham North gave it is shared throughout the professions and by politicians of all colours. It is a welcome guide on how sex education should be delivered in schools.

The only practical solution to the degree of parental and Parliamentary concern which has been expressed tonight and on other occasions is to consider that circular as the basis for a comprehensive code of practice. It should be the duty and obligation of local authorities to have regard to it. It specifies the variety of subjects to be involved and what responsible teachers should be teaching and the kind of material to be used. It considers how teachers should form young minds and at what stage those young minds should be formed.

I recommend hon. Members to reject the trite solutions which they may feel offer them an opportunity to express their revulsion at some of the extremely odd and thankfully unusual examples that we have heard tonight. I share their wish to express that revulsion but I counsel them to reject the simplistic solutions contained in amendment No. 118. With the greatest respect to my right hon. Friend, hon. Members should have grave reservations about the idea that the problem will be solved by giving the responsibility to the governors. We should press now and in the future for a comprehensive code of guidance to be available in all schools in all authorities.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): When I came to the Chamber today I did not know which way I would be voting, but as the debate has gone on I have made up my mind.

It seems to me that a lot of us here have forgotten our sex education, the way it was taught, how and why, when and where. We have also forgotten that people outside the House live in totally different ways from what we think. Unfortunately, in this debate one or two bad examples have been given and some hon. Members would take a broad brush across the entire education system and all the teachers because of the one or two bad eggs. That is the wrong way to go about it.

I am concerned that the Secretary of State has decided to give the governors the choice of whether to have sex education in schools. It seems to me that the Secretary of State did not want to make the decision and that the easiest thing was to put the responsibility on the shoulders of others who can make the decision for him. That is wrong. I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware that the governors of schools do not work with regard to such practicalities. In practice, governors only meet four times a year—that is, if they are lucky. They do not always turn up at all four meetings, so why put the responsibility on governors when we have an honourable teaching profession?

Another matter which worries me, and about which I have asked my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) for assurances, which he has given, which is why I shall be able to follow him through the Lobby, is that we already teach sex education in schools in my area. Parents are happy about that, because it is taught to them first. They are brought into schools and shown the books and aids that will be used, and told how the subject will be approached. They are also given the opportunity to withdraw their children, but none have done so. I would not like anything to harm that system, which is working.

We have made heavy weather of the debate and probably approached the subject in the wrong way. We have probably highlighted the subject more as a result of the debate and made problems for schools rather that than got rid of them. I now know which way I will vote. I once thought that it would be with the Secretary of State, but it will not. It will not be with the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), who had some good points but went over the top. I am sure that I will be able to vote for the Liberal amendment as well.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud)

rather glibly dismissed the parents of Haringey as not deserving any protection by statute. I happen to represent about half of those parents and I venture to proffer a different opinion. I therefore listened carefully to what my hon. Friend the Minister had to say about the effect of clause 26 and the Government's amendments to see whether protection exists. If there is no protection in statute for the parents of Haringey, they will not receive it from the local authority.

Virtually all hon. Members will have seen in their evening papers a report of the disgraceful and scandalous scenes which occurred in the council chamber of the London borough of Haringey last night, when a group of parents calling themselves the Parents Rights Group—they are of all political parties and of none—went to the council to ask whether they could be heard in regard to the education of their children. They were shouted down, spat upon and urinated upon. Every conceivable obscenity was hurled upon them, and threats of physical violence were made. One was reminded that she lives near Broadwater farm estate.

The group wished to present a petition which reads,

"We do not want lesbian or gay lessons in our schools from nursery schools upwards."

There are some 5,000 signatures. As the borough of Haringey is not prepared to treat this matter seriously, the only recourse that I have is to hand the petition to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State with another petition signed by 140 parents of the Bounds Green Infants school which says,

"We the undersigned object most strongly to the teaching of positive images of homosexuality to our children in Haringey schools."

I hand that one also to my right hon. Friend.

The House may wish to know the background to last night's incident. There is now in circulation in my constituency a document called the Labour party manifesto for the last May elections. It was not much in evidence before those elections or, I hazard a guess, the outcome would have been somewhat different.

I wonder whether the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who is smirking, has seen the document. It is written in the name of his party. I shall read the section headed:

"Lesbian and Gay Rights".

It says:

"The Labour Party declares its commitment to fighting heterosexism."

That is defined:

"Heterosexism is the belief and practice that heterosexuality is the only natural form of sexuality."

In other words, homosexuality and lesbianism are equally normal forms of sexuality. How does that affect education? The document says:

"The Labour Council will support the right of all teachers and other educational workers to be openly lesbian or gay at work . . . The Labour Council will also begin the process of ensuring that lesbianism and gayness are treated positively in the curriculum."

The document says that, in order to further those aims, the council will establish a fund for

"curriculum projects from nursery through to further education, which are specifically designed . . . to promote positive images of gay men and lesbians".

12.30 am

How will the Bill protect parents and children from that sort of education when there is a definite and aggressive proselytisation by gays and lesbians to bring as many people as they can into their camp? I know that the majority of parents in my constituency would not tolerate such an approach, but what can they do about it?

My hon. Friend the Minister of State, ably supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), suggested that the problem will be settled by the new powers to be given to school governors. The LEA will have little to say about these matters, which will be determined by the parent-governors. But how will those governors be appointed? They will be elected by parents who will hold meetings, perhaps in the same conditions that prevailed at last night's Haringey council meeting. how many parents will want to go through that sort of ordeal every month to try to put forward their point of view and protect their children from influences which those parents regard—rightly or wrongly—as evil? How will they be protected?

Hon. Members may say that I am exaggerating and that parents will come forward. However, is the House aware that there is one council employee for every seven ratepayers in Haringey? It does not require much culculation to see where the recruitment will come, especially as employees are reminded all the time that as they receive pay from the council they are expected to support council policy at all times.

Mr. Fisher: Come on.

Sir Hugh Rossi: The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) lives in a fantasy, middle-class world and does not appreciate the reality of what is happening in parts of our metropolis. Has he not heard of entryism in his party? That has resulted in the Haringey Labour party becoming what it is. It has happened to other local parties and I am telling the House about what is being done in the name of the Labour party. I am sure that Opposition Front Bench spokesmen would not add their names to the sort of manifesto that I have quoted, but local parties are fighting elections on such platforms and claim that they have a manifesto to carry out those policies.

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hugh Rossi: No. The hour is late. The hon. Gentleman made his speech, and I did not interrupt him.

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hugh Rossi: No.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. It is clear that the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) is not giving way.

Sir Hugh Rossi: The parents' group attempted to speak to the teachers in Haringey to see what their attitude would be if it became council policy to provide such education. The answer they received from the head-teachers was, "We are terribly sorry but we cannot discuss these matters with you. We are paid by the council. Please remember that."

That is the political climate in which people in Haringey are living. They look to this House, to the Government, to protect them from the kind of people who are now in control of their area. I am far from satisfied that the legislation goes far enough to give that protection. Unless parents have—with all its faults and difficulties—the

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

right to withdraw their children from classes in schools where that sort of thing is taught, we shall have a very unfortunate generation of children.

Mr. Norman Atkinson (Tottenham): The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) has said that certain things are being taught in Haringey. He must be fair to the House. He knows that it is not correct. Many of the statements he quoted from the manifesto were, rightly, published before the last election by the Labour party and have been circulated by the local education authority. There is a very big difference between the things published in the sheets from which he quoted and any circulars that have been given to teachers in Haringey. The hon. Gentleman should admit that these things are not yet being taught and that they have not yet been circulated by the local education authority.

Sir Hugh Rossi: These matters are not yet being taught, but presumably it is intended that they should be taught. Part of the manifesto has already been implemented to the extent of setting up a gay-lesbian unit within the local authority involving six or seven paid officers whose job it is to go right through the system to ensure that such ideas are promulgated through every department and eventually brought into the education system.

The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Atkinson) says that this is not a real policy or mandate. But I took up the matter recently with the prospective parliamentary Labour candidate for Hornsey and Wood Green. I asked specifically whether this was her policy. She said that the council was entitled to do this because it had the mandate —the mandate based upon that document.

If my right hon. and hon. Friends are not prepared to protect parents, God help them.

Mr. Cormack: The House has heard a most eloquent and powerful speech. Nobody who has the care of and concern for the nation's children at heart could listen to that speech without feeling deeply disturbed.

We heard another excellent speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris). The two speeches were close together in sentiment. Over a century ago the House decided that children were not the possessions of parents. It was decided that we should have compulsory education. So, we have to decide, in another age and in another time, what children should be taught.

I have changed my mind since I came into the Chamber. I speak, not just as a parent, but as a governor, as a former schoolmaster and as someone who believes in the Christian normality of family life. I believe that it is impractical, and probably wrong, to say that children either can or should be withdrawn from particular lessons. I reached that view as I listened to the debate. I think that the House of Commons is often at its best when hon. Members can debate and consider away from the constraints of the party doctrine, whatever it may be.

The overwhelming lesson for me from this debate was implicit in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East. The only way to deal with this matter properly and sensibly is for the Government not to abdicate their responsibilities but to grasp the opportunities and realise that, in effect, there must be an agreed syllabus. If there is any subject on the curriculum for which there should be an agreed syllabus, it is this. I quote, for once with approval, the words of Mr. Gradgrind—

"it is facts that must be taught."

The facts must be taught against the accepted background, and in this country the overwhelming majority of people believe that the normal family consistsof two parents, who are married, with children. That is the background against which the facts should be taught. If the parents believe otherwise, it is for them to teach what some of us might regard as dangerous deviations; it is not right to have those taught in schools. That point has not previously been made, but should be emphasised.

I hope that my right hon. Friend and the new Minister, whom we all welcome, grasp that. No one could for a moment doubt their commitment. I do not believe that the clause they have moved is especially damaging, but it does not grasp the central problem. We need an agreed syllabus; we need parents throughout the land to feel that their children can go to school and be taught the facts— many of them dangerous facts — without overtones, without insinuations, without moral or immoral indoctrination. If the parents then opt out of what the majority consider normality, it is for them to instruct at home. That is the way forward, and I hope that it is the way forward that the Government will take.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I wish to make one of my exceedingly brief speeches. The issue is simple. Conservative Members believe in the responsibility of parents. We believe that parents should have the right of choice. We believe that parents have a greater right to choose in issues that concern them personally, directly and more closely than any teacher, governor or local government authority.

How can we as Conservatives, believing in the supreme importance of parental responsibility, take away from parents the right to withdraw their children, if they so wish, from precisely the sort of teaching that is threatened in boroughs such as Haringey? Unless we support the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), this legislation will go on the statute book depriving parents of the right to make that choice. No Conservative should be a party to such legislation.

Sir Ian Percival (Southport): I have listened to almost every word of the debate and formed a view that I wish to express briefly. I ask my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister to consider that view before the reply to the debate.

I accept that in our schools a large number of teachers are doing a wonderful job in what is a most difficult and sensitive subject. Only this morning I heard two boys being interviewed on the "Today" programme, and I would like to know the names of their teachers because I would like to write to congratulate them on the wonderful job that they have done. That is my first point.

Secondly, I am glad that my right hon. and hon. Friends are advancing the proposals that they have put before us because I believe that they are a step in the right direction.

But at the end of this lengthy debate I am left with one overriding view. It seems clear that everyone agrees that in some of our classrooms there is being said and done in the name of sex education things that would horrify us if we were parents of the children who are being subjected to it. I have listened for a simple answer to the problem, but there is no perfect answer. If I were one of those parents, I would take my children from those classes

whether or not I had a right to do so. Amendment 118, giving such a right, may be an imperfect solution, but in my book it is the only one that comes anywhere near a practical solution, and I support it.

12.45 am

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) said that a great deal of research has shown that most parents are in favour of good sex education in schools. It is probably true to say that in the House there is probably a majority of parents who will feel relieved if good sex education has relieved them of the task of having to do in their own home what has not been properly explained at school.

When I listened to the way in which my hon. Friend the Minister of State outlined the way in which she saw the problem, I was left with the idea that in some way the principles set out in the Education Act 1944 had been lost completely. As I understand the Act, there was a primary responsibility on the parent to decide on the education of his own child. Under that Act, education in a state school or some form of school is not even compulsory, but if full-time and proper education is to be brought about, and if a parent decides to make his child a registered pupil at a state school, he must ensure that there is regular attendance of the child at that school. That is my understanding of the attendance requirement, and withdrawal from classes is precisely the point at issue.

When my hon. Friend the Minister of State was talking about the right to withdraw and it being wrong to do so, she made it sound as if something new was about to happen. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) spoke about the impracticality of separating sex education in schools, and I accept that that may be the position in Oxford, but by the same token I have had constituents attending my surgeries — fundamentalist Christians and members of the Plymouth Brethren — who tell me that for years they have been withdrawing their children from sex education in schools. They have been able to identify it and they have seen the headmasters of the schools to tell them that they do not believe that that is the right way for their children to be educated. As a Conservative, I believe that in the end it will be those parents who have to decide, rightly or wrongly, what they believe to be in their children's best interests.

We may think that such people are wrong, but I would not like to think, bearing in mind that I have a relatively liberal attitude on these matters, that a fundamentalist Christian has it right. I think that a more liberal approach is probably correct. But I cannot, even as a politician, even in a profession which is not over-endowed with humility and self doubt, assume the intellectual superiority to say to a member of the Plymouth Brethren, "On this issue I am right and you are wrong."

I should like to know—I put this to my hon. Friend in an intervention and perhaps I blinked or something of the sort when she replied — what is supposed to be changing. Are we really going to say that as a result of this measure parents will not be able to exercise their right to withdraw? I hope that I can see my hon. Friend nodding and saying, presumably, that parents will be able to withdraw their children. If that is the position, we have spent the past three hours debating something that did not need debating.

Mrs. Rumbold: There is not to be a statutory right, because there never has been the statutory right of withdrawal. There has always been the right of the parent to go to the head teacher — in future, this will be the governing body — and say, "Because of our beliefs, we think that it would be reasonable to aks whether our child could be withdrawn." The position will be exactly the same except that the governing body will be involved instead of the head teacher.

Mr. Nicholls: With great respect to my hon. Friend—I am grateful to her for that reply—I do not see how the position would be quite the same, because in one case a parent might say to a headmaster, "I am withdrawing my child because I do not think that that is right"; whereas, as I understand the role of the governing body — this accords with everything that I have heard my hon. Friend say — the governing body will have a discretion about whether a parent should be allowed to withdraw his child. It is asking too much to think that all those governing bodies will be the repositories of wisdom. Those governing bodies will be made up of parents, among others. Which parent could possibly say to another parent, "I happen to think that you should not have the right to exercise your judgment in this case"?

What happens if a governing body is taken over by people who believe that the most gross sexual perversion should be taught as another form of normality? Are we to accept the possibility of a parent saying, "I am sorry, I have not been able to convince the governing body, but what I am going to say is that the primary responsibility for educating my child is mine and I shall withdraw my child from that identifiable sex education lesson."? I find it absolutely inconceivable that in such a case there would be some form of prosecution against a parent for having withdrawn his child, as if that would amount to irregular attendance.

It seemed to me that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) put his finger on the issue. He said that if he found himself in that position he would not allow his child to attend. An Opposition Member, from a sedentary position, made the perhaps unwise comment, "So you would break the law, would you?". There is no law to be broken. It is simply a question of withdrawing one's child from one specified area of concern. That cannot amount to irregular attendance. In such a case there could be no question of breaking the law. The amendment is good cosmetic stuff and I can vote for it tonight with a clear conscience, but I do not think that the basic debate takes the matter forward one jot.

Mr. Piers Merchant (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I shall speak briefly. I can speak only as a layman and as a parent, but I suspect that I am more in touch with the views of the majority of my constituents, who are overwhelmingly ordinary parents, than are all the world's so-called experts on this subject. In fact, it is the so-called experts who I am worried about, as I shall illustrate. My experience comes simply from the large number of letters that I have received from my constituents. Many people with real problems and concerns have visited me. My experience comes also from the sex education I received, on no fewer than three separate occasions, at different ages, when I was at school. My experience illustrates the sorts of problem that the subject poses to all schools and teachers—problems that I should not dismiss lightly.

I first encountered the topic at the age of eight when my classmates and I were so disinterested by the subject that

[Mr. Piers Merchant]

we were driven to boredom. At the age of 14, when I received my next dose of the subject, we giggled at the pictures and films. We found them highly amusing, but not especially educative. When, at the age of 17, we received our third instruction in the subject, we knew it all anyway and were only entertained by the embarrassment of the teacher who was trying to explain the facts to us.

Both the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mrs. Oppenheim), in a sensitive and understanding way, illustrated many of the difficulties that the subject poses to those teachers who try to teach the subject in the most positive and helpful way possible. The difficulty is that, in a sense, the whole debate can easily be turned into a nonsense by the exaggerated responses of people on both extremes of the argument. The extreme that worries me most concerns those who advocate the intensive teaching of sex education almost until it becomes a cause célèbre. I am perfectly happy about and do not quibble with the desirability of giving basic, simple sex education — I believe that one of my hon. Friends referred to it as "the facts"—as a necessary subject in school. What worries me is when the subject is extended, often considerably, to those areas of moral question that pose real difficulties for a large proportion of the population who are simply not prepared to accept the moral judgments of others. The subject may be considered to such an extent that all sorts of parents find themselves genuinely questioning the desirability of extending this form of tuition. Given that this is already happening and that much more is taught in many schools than many parents and I think necessary —indeed, these subjects are forced in a wholesale way on curricula—we must ensure that the House protects the rights of parents and children from the one-sided views of teachers or, even worse, in some cases those manipulators of the mind who want to bring about social change via the education system. There is no doubt that there are many such people around. Examples have been given in this debate.

I welcome the Government's amendments. I support in principle many of my hon. Friends' suggestions which have been designed to protect and, in so far as it is possible, to advance parents' rights. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State is prepared to accept a number of these amendments in practice, if not in legislation.

I should like to illustrate with one example the reason why I am concerned about sex education. A Newcastle city councillor, Mrs. Eveline Hannaford, sent me a letter. I do not want to mislead the House—the letter referred to a conference that took place three years ago, in 1983. I have checked with teachers in the Newcastle area and have no reason to believe that the position has changed in the past three years. The letter revealed openly the political and propaganda motives of some of those who seek to teach and guide the teachers. Unfortunately, some teachers will be influenced by that teaching and will therefore change their attitudes and influence the pupils in their care. Unless there is strict parental control, freedom and rights, I fear that there will be an insiduous process by which those types of objectives creep further into our schools.

The conference took place at the university of Durham school of education and was subsidised by that school and the Schools Council. It referred to the need to ensure that certain subjects were taught with a particular slant and designed to support and encourage one particular view on the role of women and relationships in society. Referring to the health and sex education session led by Hazel Slavin, Councillor Hannaford stated:

"This was horrific and I apologise for the sordid details I am giving."

She referred first to abortion, to which the hon. Member for Rhondda has referred also. She stated:

"I commented that I did not think that children should be told about the facilities for abortion as it would be against certain religions. The answer given was 'We must give them all the information and tell them their rights'."

Later, she stated:

"We were then given various pictures of men and women copulating and again the emphasis was put why should the woman have to lie underneath the man. She should be shown lying on top of the man. A picture was shown as outlined above with explicit commentary by the 'lecturer' of the movements of the woman. She continued to inform us that there were, of course, various different methods, but she did not have the time to tell us about them. (All these pictures, I understand, were from text books for schools!)"

That was the line that the conference was told should be taught in schools. After referring to a number of similar examples, the councillor stated:

"I felt horrified at what is being taught in schools and the two Labour Women Councillors from Newcastle (one of which had attended the same lecture in the morning) were also disgusted . . .

I feel very strongly that the Conservative Government pours in money so that all these extreme left wingers can spread their propaganda. This is particularly prominent in the Newcastle upon Tyne Labour controlled Council and there are some horrific examples."

Those are her fears. They are my fears too and those of many of my constituents. It is not a question of a backwoods reaction against all sex education; it is simply a desire to protect against abuse in a highly sensitive area. That protection requires vigilance by all involved, by teachers, governors and Ministers. The House should back that requirement.

1 am

Mr. Greenway: The speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) was not based upon theory—it would be so easy to base a speech on this important matter on theory—but upon his current experience of what a London borough is doing in schools and allied education institutions. I have discerned—I am not happy to say it—that the same sort of thing is happening in Ealing. I could not allow this debate to take place without making a contribution to it for that reason.

The fact is that the Ealing Labour party manifesto was virtually the same as that read out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green and for that same reason the parents and children of Ealing are being dragged along the same wicked paths. Something has to be done. I do not need to go into great detail because hon. Members have heard it from my right hon. Friend. However, I have to look, as my right hon. Friend is looking, for a guarantee for parents that they can opt their children out of sex education which is based upon pressure to accept lesbianism and homosexuality as more valid than heterosexuality. Parents write to me, come to my surgery and stop me in the street. They are on the verge of social violence. There was social violence in Haringey last night. It is a serious matter.

Ealing has gone one or two steps further than Haringey. The chairman of the education committee is on record as

saying—it is in print and has never been denied—that equality of this kind is more important than maths and English, and he means it.

The council education committee is on the verge of appointing a teacher and paying him to be in charge of sexual equality in each school. That is an abuse of public funds at a time when more mathematicians and others are needed. Surely that is where any extra money should be going. The House has to take account of the way in which parents respond to what local education authorities are doing. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the way in which he has responded. I want to be sure that what he is offering is a guarantee to parents in Ealing that they can opt their children out of sex education which is unacceptable. I am not certain that it is.

Think of the effect of sex education, which pressurises children to accept homosexuality and lesbianism as more valid than heterosexuality, upon Christians, Hindus, Moslems and so on. They are passionately opposed to and deeply upset by all that is going on. If the House does not take account of that it is not doing its duty and it is failing the nation and the children. We have no alternative but to presume that Christian teachers who cannot accept the policy of the education committee will not be appointed to schools because the Ealing Labour party manifesto states that only teachers who accept the council's policy will be appointed. If one has a policy, as Ealing council has, of appointing teachers regardless of sexual orientation how can the House be surprised at the parents' fears that their children will be put into the hands of perverts, practising homosexuals who are interested in children, lesbians and so on. Of course they are frightened, concerned and feeling violent because they will not allow that to happen to their children.

Notices are today being put up in high schools and youth clubs inviting pupils to apply to Gayline and Lesbianline for guidance. I do not believe, any more than parents believe, that those notices are innocently inviting children to seek guidance. If children need advice, they can approach doctors, clergymen and others who are well qualified to give it. Parents in my constituency believe that those notices entice children into a perverted form of life, and that is why they are beside themselves in opposition to them. This House must take deep account of the situation.

Some hon. Members have said that it would not be practical to allow parents to opt their children out of sex education because the subject touches the curriculum at so many points. Surely the same is true of religious education; it touches the curriculum at perhaps even more points. But it has been legal since 1944 for parents to opt their children out of religious education.

The very discipline on a school, on its head and its staff, of parents having the right to opt their children out of a subject results in those concerned with planning the curriculum taking infinitely more trouble to take account of the wishes of parents and the welfare of the children in arranging the curriculum. That is essential. Nothing less will do.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: It is interesting to reflect that for well over 100 years we had no legislation in Britain dealing with sex education in schools. Indeed, when the Bill was first introduced last autumn it did not contain any proposals for legislation on sex education. Even as late as April last the Government were arguing strongly in the other place against having such provisions in the Bill.

The essential question for the House tonight is whether any of the proposed amendments, or leaving unamended the clause that the Government inserted in Committee, would solve any of the problems about which hon. Members have been speaking. We must also consider whether the questions that have been posed tonight raise real or imaginary problems. Is it not a fact that this subject is proving a rich vein for self-publicists, for those who are anxious to put forward extremist views and for those who are anxious to grab headlines?

I seem to receive many complaints about what people allege is happening in other people's schools. I get few complaints from people about what is happening in their children's schools. Indeed, I have yet to come across one example of a parent who has told a head teacher that he or she is unhappy with the teaching of sex education in school, would like his or her child withdrawn from the lessons and who has been refused permission to withdraw the child. In other words, the present situation without legislation appears to working satisfactorily in the schools.

I suggest that in the majority of schools it works extremely well. Teachers realise that they have a responsibility to deal with the physiology of sex, that they have a duty to consult parents and that if the subject is to be taught well, parents should see the material—films, video or books—to be taught. That enables pupils who want to ask questions to have the choice of asking questions of their teachers after using the material or discussing it with their parents.

There was no fundamental problem in the schools until the Government decided to allow an amendment to be made in the other place to add words relating to moral considerations and the value of family life. From that point the Government have run into difficulties. As the circular stated, it is extremely difficult to define where sex education starts and finishes under that definition.

It does not matter whether we follow the proposals of the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) that there should be an automatic right for parents to opt their children out of sex education or whether we pursue the course of obtaining the governors' permission it will be extremely difficult, as the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) suggested, to draw the line. A position will always arise in which a teacher will not be certain whether a pupil should be allowed or told to withdraw from an area of teaching. On occasions in schools, a teacher must adapt what is to be taught. We are all aware that there have been some horrific assaults on children recently. Warnings might have to be given to pupils in schools which one would not wish to introduce to young pupils. Parents and governors should not have to be consulted. If a situation arises, the teacher should be able to take action quickly.

There are many occasions when joyous events happen in households which contain small children. In a natural discussion in a primary school, the arrival of a baby brother or sister in one child's house may raise questions which it would be common sense for the teacher to answer as they are asked. Other situations arise, especially in those schools which keep pets, which create questions which demand answers. It would be extremely difficult to draw the line between sex education and general education if we accept the opt-out principle.

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

There is also the matter of behaviour in schools. Time after time situations arise in schools where a teacher must deal with the issues involved, for example, the circulation of pornography by pupils and the unsatisfactory behaviour of pupils. Will a teacher be able to reprimand two pupils and discuss the objections to the pornography being passed around if one pupil's parents have asked for that pupil to be withdrawn from sex education? If that is the case, the teacher would be unable to discuss those issues.

The Government and those who want to opt out must face the problem that it is extremely difficult to do so once the definition of sex education is extended from the simple physiology of sex to include the questions of moral considerations and the value of family life.

The Government must also make clear whether they expect the headteacher to retain the right to allow pupils to be withdrawn from sex education or whether that right is being taken from the head and given to the governors. That would be disastrous. I can think of many parents who may have had unfortunate experiences or who know that their children have had such experiences, who would feel that they could discuss such matters with a head teacher and gain the head teacher's confidence and so ask for their child to be withdrawn from sex education in the school. They would not want to discuss such matters with the governing body; they would not want to talk about these matters with more than one person.

The Government must face one final problem. There is no evidence that governing bodies will behave any differently from councils. No doubt there will be very good councils and governing bodies and on occasion there will be councillors who, in my view, behave irresponsibly. There will also be occasions when governors behave irresponsibly. It will not be satisfactory for decisions to be taken in these matters by majorities of seven to six if, as a result of public fuss, the decision is changed at the next governors' meeting. How on earth can there be continuity of policy in a school if decisions are taken in that way? There must be a consensus in schools whereby parents and teachers work together to put across the problems involved in having responsible sexual relationships. Unless that genuine co-operation across the community exists, schools will not be providing good education.

Sadly, all the proposals to legislate in this area fail to meet the basic requirement of improving on the present position. I hope that the House will reject the proposals to change the legislation and will retain the present system, which has worked satisfactorily for more than 100 years.

1.15 am

Mrs. Rumbold: We have had a long and extremely valuable debate on this subject. I thank all those who contributed to the debate. I understand that they feel very strongly about the sensitive issues that have been raised this evening. Several hon. Members have explained explicitly the reasons for their worry, and the Government must, therefore, accept the challenge laid upon them by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) and exercise considerable vigilance in dealing with this matter.

My hon. Friends the Members for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) and for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) stressed the method by which sex education might be administered by teachers throughout schools. They mentioned the final version of the circular on sex education which followed "Health Education from 5 to 16". I wish to re-emphasise to my hon. Friends that that will be the appropriate vehicle for discussion of the detailed contents of sex education provision, and we are, therefore, taking on board the views that they expressed to us.

I should also deal with some of the points raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Hornsey (Sir H. Rossi) and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). I accept the strength —almost desperation—with which my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey expressed his views and his concern that the provision on sex education will not give parents the option that he believes his right. But I must dispute that with him on two counts. First, clause 26 places a clear duty on local education authorities, governors and heads to ensure that any sex education offered is set within a moral context and supportive of family life. Should parents have evidence that a school is failing to live up to those requirements, they should draw it to the attention of the Secretary of State immediately. The matter will be investigated fully, and should the school or the local education authority be found to have acted wholly unreasonably or in breach of the clause, he will be able to issue directions under existing powers, requiring that their sex education provision be brought into line with the Bill's requirements immediately.

On the anxiety about the exercise of parents' rights through the newly structured governing bodies, I am a little sad that there is so little faith among hon. Members for these new and improved governing bodies. Of course, elections for parent governors will have to include the opportunity for a postal ballot, which of course would be a secret ballot. Any interference in the democratic process by the local education authority would be liable to corrective direction from the Secretary of State. I hope that this will give those bodies some protection.

I should also point out that, recently, there have been examples where parental dissatisfaction has explicitly resulted in action. In one place, the head has been moved from the school and, in another, a suspended head teacher has been reinstated solely through the efforts of parents who feel strongly about it. I have made it clear why the Government do not believe that a statutory right of withdrawal would be an appropriate or effective way of using parent power in relation to sex education provision. When the parents feel strongly about the content and teaching approaches to be used, and they feel sufficiently strongly that they would be prepared to consider withdrawing their children from any teaching to which they objected, I am confident that they will be prepared to channel those efforts positively to improve sex education provision through the arrangements which we propose.

I am sure that parents will attend the annual parents meetings and that they will ensure that their concerns are expressed and debated. I am convinced that they will be able to pass resolutions which the governors will be required to consider, and I cannot believe that any governing body, faced with strong parental pressures, would fail to amend their policies on sex education or would fail to respond positively.

The House has had a long and earnest discussion about these matters. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the

Member of Gloucester (Mrs. Oppenheim) for her clear and sensible speech and to many other Members who have spoken.

I should like to clear up one point before we have a Division. Many Members have asked how amendment No. 233 will allow parents to negotiate the withdrawal of their children from sex education. The key is that the amendment gives governors clear responsibility for the content and organisation of sex education. The organisation of any aspect of the curriculum includes the day-to-day running of the teaching programme—that is, what pupils do what at any given time and who participate in which lessons — so the governors will be able to decide in response to parental requests that a child should do something other than a sex education lesson. Legally, of course, that is no different from deciding to allow some pupils to study, say, history while others study geography. The key is that the school remains in overall control of each child's programme.

I sense that it is time to reach a decision. I ask the House to support the Government amendments and to reject all others.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 300, Noes 138.

Division No. 285] **[1.25 am**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Mans, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin

Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Francis Maude.

NOES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'ah)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Don Dixon.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 233, in page 21, line 9, at end insert—

(1A) The articles of government for every such school shall provide for it to be the duty of the governing body—

(a) to consider separately (while having regard to the local education authority's statement under section 17 of this Act) the question whether sex education should form part of the secular curriculum for the school; and

(b) to make, and keep up to date, a separate written statement—

(i) of their policy with regard to the content and organisation of the relevant part of the curriculum; or

(ii) where they conclude that sex education should not form part of the secular curriculum, of that conclusion.'.

No. 234, in page 21, line 12, leave out 'subsection (1)' and insert 'subsections (1) and (1A)'.

No. 235, in page 21, line 23, leave out 'such statement' and insert 'statement under subsection (1) above'.

No. 236, in page 21, line 25, leave out 'such statement' and insert 'statement under this section'.

No. 69, in page 21, line 25, at end insert—

'(2A) The articles of government for every such school shall provide for it to be the duty of the head teacher to make any statement furnished to him under this section available at all reasonable times, to persons wishing to inspect it.'.

No. 237, in page 21, line 35, leave out 'that' and insert 'those'.

No. 238, in page 22, line 2, after '(i)', insert—

so far as it relates to sex education, is compatible with the governing body's policy (as expressed in their statement under subsection (1A) above) except where that policy is incompatible with any part of the syllabus for a course which forms part of that curriculum and leads to a public examination;

(ii) so far as it relates to other matters,'

No. 239, in page 22, line 6, after 'statement', insert 'under subsection (1) above'.

No. 240, in page 22, line 12, leave out 'subsection (1)' and insert 'subsections (1) and (1A)'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Clause 19

AIDED AND SPECIAL AGREEMENT SCHOOLS

Amendments made: No. 71, in page 23, line 8, at end insert—

'(2) The articles of government for every such school shall provide for it to be the duty of the governing body, when considering the content of the secular curriculum for the school, to have regard—

(a) to any representations which are made to them, with regard to that curriculum by any persons connected with the community served by the school; and

(b) to any such representations which—

(i) are made to them by the chief officer of police; and

(ii) are connected with his responsibilities.'.

No. 72, in page 23, line 8, at end insert—

'(3) Where the governing body of any such school make any statement in writing of their policy as to the secular curriculum for the school they shall furnish a copy of it to the head teacher; and the head teacher shall make it available, at all reasonable times, to persons wishing to inspect it'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Clause 22

DISCIPLINE

Motion,

That Clause 22 be divided into four Clauses, the first consisting of page 23, line 38 to page 24, line 35, the second of page 24, line 36 to page 25, line 20, the third of page 25, line 21 to page 26, line 44 and the fourth of page 27, line 1 to page 28, line 41.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

put and agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 74, in page 23, line 38 leave out 'Subject to subsections (2), (3) and (4) below'.

No. 76, in page 24, line 36, at beginning insert—

'( ) The articles of government for every county, voluntary, and maintained special school shall provide—'.

No. 77, in page 24, line 40, leave out 'and'.

No. 79, in page 24, line 46, at end insert 'and'.

No. 81, in page 25, line 4, leave out second 'he' and insert

'the pupil or (as the case may be) parent'.

No. 87, in page 26, line 4, leave out from 'permanent' to end of line 8.

No. 90, in page 26, line 37, after 'above' insert—

'*(ff)* for it to be the duty of the head teacher, where conflicting directions for the reinstatement of a pupil are given by the governing body and the local education authority, to comply with that direction which will lead to the earlier reinstatement of the pupil;'.

No. 91, in page 26, line 43, leave out 'subsection' and insert 'section'.

No. 92, in page 27, line 26, after 'by', insert 'the governing body or'.

No. 93, in page 27, line 27, leave out from 'authority' to end of line 30.

No. 95, in page 27, line 34, leave out paragraph *(d)*.

No. 97, in page 28, line 16, leave out '*(a)* or '.

No. 98, in page 28, line 16, at end insert—

'*(gg)* for it to be the duty of the head teacher, where conflicting directions for the reinstatement of a pupil are given by the governing body and the local education authority, to comply with that direction which will lead to the earlier reinstatement of the pupil; and '.

No. 241, in page 28, line 22, leave out 'subsection' and insert 'section'.

No. 99, in page 28, line 23, leave out from 'them' to end of line 41.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Clause 23

EXCLUSION ON DISCIPLINE GROUNDS: APPEALS

Amendments made: No. 101, in page 29, line 2, leave out 'to exclude the pupil permanently'

and insert

'not to reinstate the pupil following his permanent exclusion'.

No. 106, in page 29, line 10, leave out second 'the' and insert 'a'.

No. 107, in page 29, line 12, leave out

'to exclude the pupil permanently'

and insert

'not to reinstate the pupil following his permanent exclusion'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Clause 24

EXCLUSION: ADDITIONAL PROVISION FOR APPEALS

Amendment made: No. 111, in page 29, line 31, after '23', insert 'of this Act'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Clause 25

LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY'S RESERVE POWER

Amendment made: No. 112, in page 29, line 42, at end insert—

'(1A) The governing body and the head teacher of every aided and special agreement school shall, in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (2) below, consider any representations made to them by the local education authority.'.

Amendment proposed: No. 114, in page 30, line 16, leave out clause 26.—*[Mr. Freud.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 126, Noes 302.

Division No. 286] **[1.35 am**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Nellist, David

Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Meadowcroft and
Mrs Elizabeth Shields.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*

Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed: No. 118, in page 30, line 22 at end insert—

"(2) It shall be the right of any parent to withdraw his child from any sex education to which that parent objects.".—*[Mr. Bruinvels.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 46, Noes 301.

Division No. 287] **[1.50 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, John
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Cash, William
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Fox, Sir Marcus
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Ground, Patrick
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Lawrence, Ivan
Malins, Humfrey
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Den Dover and
Mr. David Amess.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Arnold, Tom
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Browne, John
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cockeram, Eric
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dubs, Alfred
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fatchett, Derek
Favell, Anthony
Fisher, Mark
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freud, Clement
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Harris, David
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Leighton, Ronald
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, William
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nellist, David
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard

Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patchett, Terry
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silvester, Fred
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stott, Roger
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Strang, Gavin
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winnick, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 27

FINANCE

Motion,
That Clause 26 be transferred to end of line 19 on page 47.
—[Mr. Kenneth Baker]—
put and agreed to.

Clause 28

GOVERNORS' ANNUAL REPORT TO PARENTS

Amendment made: No. 129, in page 33, line 3, after 'school', insert
'and all persons employed at the school'.*—[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.]*

Clause 29

ANNUAL PARENTS' MEETING

Amendment made: No. 133, in page 33, line 29, leave out 'subject to subsection (7) below'.

Manuscript amendment made, in page 34, line 29, after "which" insert "who are boarders".*—[Mrs Rumbold.]*

Clause 38

APPOINTMENT AND DISMISSAL OF CLERK TO GOVERNING BODY

Amendment made: No. 243, in page 43, line 12, leave out first 'for' and insert 'of'.*—[Mrs. Rumbold.]*

Clause 40

SCHOOL PREMISES

Amendment made: No. 141, in page 45, line 3, at end insert:
'and in so doing to have regard to the desirability of the premises being made available (when not required by or in connection with the school) for use by members of the community served by the school.'.*—[Mrs Rumbold.]*

2 am

Clause 41

FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN UNIVERSITIES, POLYTECHNICS AND COLLEGES

Mr. Freud: I beg to move amendment No. 46, in page 46, line 38, at end insert—

'(9) This section shall not come into force until the Secretary of State has consulted about the proposals the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics and the National Union of Students and such other bodies as he considers appropriate.'.

The original clause, to be inserted into the Bill whilst in the Lords, was published only a few days ago. On that procedural point, many of their Lordships took exception and the clause was withdrawn. Neither that clause nor the one under consideration today have been subject to anything approaching adequate consultation. The CVCP saw the clause only in the Minister's office. Whilst we are clearly not saying that it should have seen it before the House saw it, we are saying that it should have been consulted about the whole idea of legislating. The amendment seeks to apply the principle accepted by the Government on teacher appraisal — to consult the relevant education partners before implementation—to the question of freedom of speech.

The problem with clause 41 is that freedom of speech cannot be an absolute right. It must be subject to certain limitations, of which two have particular relevance to the clause—freedom of speech within the law, and freedom of speech within the integrity of the institution. I am not satisfied that the clause proposed by the Government properly accepts those limitations.

On the first—freedom of speech within the law—it is still not clear what the relationship will be between this clause and existing laws on, for example, race relations and public order. I ask the Minister to confirm, when he replies, that an institution that acts to uphold the right of a speaker to speak, who then breaks some other law, cannot be taken to court for aiding and abetting that breach.

On the second — freedom of speech within the integrity of the institution—I would like the Minister to say whether the clause permits the institution to decline or to cancel an invitation if either the speaker or the possible consequences of the speech will damage that integrity.

In Committee, the Minister of State explained that the institution could withdraw an invitation if it thought that

a breach of the peace was possible. It is important to have that confirmed today and for the Government to explain whether protecting integrity would also count as a reason under this clause for withdrawing such an invitation. As Lord Beloff wrote in *The Times* recently:

"What matters is the good of the institution as a whole, not some abstract notion of free speech which may or may not be relevant to a particular case."

In addition to the two limitations which we are not satisfied are met by the clause, the proposed legislation must be shown to be necessary and workable. I do not believe that the Government have done that. The 12 cases listed in a written answer by the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science — the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden)—on 25 June 1986 are given as reasons for having the clause. Some are clearly dealt with under existing laws, for instance, those relating to assaults—Sunderland polytechnic and Bradford university. Others are dealt with under the institutions' own disciplinary proceedings—Manchester university. Many of the others would not fall foul of the clause anyway, because they do not relate to people preventing speakers from attending. There is confusion over what seems to amount to deliberate provocation by some speakers. Those are the cases on which the edifice of the clause has been constructed — 12 cases in which more than one interpretation is possible out of the thousands of meetings which take place every term in all institutes of higher education.

The clause will outlaw no-platform policies, where they go beyond the aspect of speaking within the law. I do not support no-platform policies. The Union of Liberal Students has led the fight in many cases to abolish those policies. This argument should be fought at institutional level and won.

I remind the Minister that recently the Oxford Students' Union voted to abandon the no-platform policy. That decision was rightly taken by the students, not by some clause in this legislation. York university has put some pressure on students to abolish the no-platform policy. We contend that this is not a case for legislation, especially as those with a legitimate concern have not been consulted. The case for legislation has not been proven and the legislation looks decidedly faulty.

I shall not take to the vote my traditional amendment to delete the whole clause, but this is an important debate, infinitely more so than the previous debate which was much more heavily attended. I await the Minister's reply with interest.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I know that the hour is late, but I agree with the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) that this subject is of great importance. It concerns freedom of speech in perhaps the most important place where it should obtain, not excluding the House — our universities and institutions of higher education. I shall not detain the House long, but it is not my fault or that of Back Benchers that we are here at such an unseemly hour to debate freedom of speech. I welcome the clause. I differ from the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East, who spoke for the Liberal party.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals wrote last December and earlier to Members of Parliament.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: And again today.

Mr. Crouch: Yes, but I am talking about its December letter when it referred to its special cause for concern. Having seen the proposed legislation in clause 41, the Committee seems to have backed off. It appears to be worried about the legal difficulties that might arise from the drafting of the clause. It speaks of ambiguities and definitions. It wonders what is meant in the clause by a "visiting speaker" and "premises". I can understand that the Committee looks at this matter rather donnishly, academically and legalistically, as advised by its legal advisers. Of course the Committee is right to be concerned about the drafting of the clause but it should not be frightened off by the proposed legislation.

I refer the House to what the committee wrote on 13 December 1985:

"The present state of the law, defining rights of speech and of assembly and the limits thereon, and of the law governing meetings and demonstrations, and their regulation and control, abounds with uncertainties. If the position is affected by new legislation, as now seems likely, the Vice-Chancellors' Committee will advise universities further."

It went on to describe the nature and purpose of the advice and said:

"With the decline elsewhere of the open political meeting, universities and other institutions of higher education find themselves bearing special responsibility for the preservation of freedom of speech and lawful assembly. In the discharge of this responsibility they are in line as a target for small groups of extremists, not always students, who wish to create conflict through provocation."

Further, in December 1985 the committee reminded us:

"nothing excuses disruptive or intimidatory behaviour but students must be able to protest and to heckle at meetings as long as lawful freedom of speech and of assembly are not infringed."

I am sure that the House would agree with that, and as the Secretary of State faces this problem, he must ask the House to approve sensible legislation to deal with the tricky area of freedom of speech.

The notes from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals also drew our attention to what it described as "General Principles" which should govern the thought and the proposed legislation. For example:

"A speaker who incites an audience to violence or to breach of the peace or to racial hatred, for example, transgresses the bounds of lawful speech. Assemblies of persons, whether or not directed to lawful purposes, cease to be lawful if they cause serious public disorder or breaches of the peace."

All of that was sensible advice for universities, vice-chancellors, university senates and councils. I speak as one who is a member of a council of the University of Kent at Canterbury. I have been taking part in a sub-committee set up by that university to consider the question of the freedom of speech in our universities. The small sub-committee consists of the treasurer of the university, a lawyer, myself and a former Deputy Speaker of the House, the noble Lord Irving, who was the former Member for Dartford. We considered the problem, as we were required to do, before there was legislation in the proposed Bill. It could have been left to all our higher educational institutions to devise and produce their own rules and regulations within the university or other centre of education where such rules would have to apply. That is what the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals was aiming at at that time. I do not think that it is wrong that, in the event, we should have legislation to further strengthen and preserve the right to freedom of speech because that is what it is really about.

[Mr. Crouch]

I have studied this question closely in the university of Kent following the advice of the Commitee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. I have studied it not only with members of the academic staff, lay members of the council and others concerned with the university but with members of the students union. It has been an extensive consultation. An anomaly has already shown itself in Kent which I should like to draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I have come across it in the past few days. At Kent, the members of the Federation of Conservative Students have, for certain reasons, decided to disaffiliate from the students union. They have had a dispute with the union and disagree with it, making contributions towards political ends. They are denied funds as a result, the result being that when they seek to hold meetings and invite a speaker who might be considered contentious in some way—I put it no higher than that—and they consult, as they must, the person responsible for maintaining order in that part of the university—it is a collegiate university, so they consult the master of the college—they find that in certain circumstances the master requires the presence of extra stewards to safeguard the lawful procedures of such a meeting.

No attempt is made to keep out a person who is considered to be contentious. Extra stewards have to be engaged. Those additional stewards must be paid for, and the Conservative students about whom I am speaking find that they must engage eight or 10 additional stewards at, say, £10 a head. That means that political society having to find £80 or £100 to set up a meeting. No other funds are available to them, so they must come from their own resources. If they were not disaffiliated from the union, it would come from the students union.

I shall take up this matter with the vice-chancellor and the university this week. In the meantime I want the House to be advised of the anomaly. It could be a barrier to a contentious person speaking to a political group in a university, the members of which might say that because they cannot afford the additional expenditure, they will not invite him. In the case I have mentioned, if they were affiliated to the union the problem would not arise.

The rules that have already been drawn up at Kent, on the recommendation of the CVCP, are precise and I believe that they could have served to preserve this freedom of speech, and good order for the performance of that freedom of speech, without clause 41. But I am not against the clause. It puts into law what the CVCP put in a letter. Perhaps it is as well to have the provision, as it will act as belt and braces, so important a subject is it.

The law can, of course, always be misunderstood and the words to which the CVCP has drawn attention—about the premises and the speaker, who could be a lecturer, perhaps lecturing on scientific subjects—could be misunderstood. But I am sure that those words could be interpreted by the university authorities in each university and place where meetings are held and that even without the clause the matter could be handled in the way I have described. Universities will, in any case, have to examine their ordinances and the rules they establish by which, for example, students unions operate. Those rules may have to be changed, as is happening in Kent.

The Minister will find that most universities have taken that advice of a year ago and have acted on it. Nevertheless, I see no reason why we should not also have clause 41 as the belt to the braces already provided by many universities.

Mr. Stern: The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) suggested that the clause was not necessary. I shall draw on events in the city of Bristol to show why it is both necessary and wholly desirable.

The history of contentious meetings in Bristol in the last year or so has been the history of the growing need for the clause. It started with a violent meeting at which my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) attempted to speak but was unsuccessful.

The need for the clause continued with the threatened and actual violence to Professor John Vincent at the university. It continued with what was intended as a peaceful meeting addressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester), my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and myself at which the majority of the audience was admitted in an attempt to howl us down. Only last week many of us saw on television the effect of a small handful of anarchists in the students union. I am happy to accept that most of these anarchists came from outside the university. They succeeded in preventing a speech by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and they caused considerable violence and damage in their attempt to do that.

I referred to the activities of the students union. In justification for the clause being debated, I would cite the remarkable change in the attitude of the students union which has occured over a matter of months. Only within the past two months did the union produce a pamphlet called the "The Coming Troubles . . . " That pamphlet has a large picture of the right hon. Member for South Down on its cover. It contains phrases which state that meetings were organised which were determined to create violence. The final paragraph of the pamphlet refers to the Federation of Conservative Students using its provocative meetings as a basis for concerted disruption, as if there was a casual relationship between the expression of controversial views and the violence, which, according to the pamphlet, must inevitably follow.

That pamphlet appeared two months ago. As a result of some of the meetings which I have listed—I am not sure that he will appreciate praise from me but nevertheless he is going to get it—and as a result of the courage of the president of the students union, Mr. David Gottlieb, in pushing against a policy of no platform in the university and for pushing the need for Bristol to lead the way and show that it can conduct a meeting with free speech, the students union stepped up its security precautions and attempted to organise a meeting where there was a peaceful demonstration against the right hon. Member for South Down but at which he could be heard. Unfortunately, because of outside influences, they were unsuccessful. At an extraordinary general meeting of the union last night, the president went considerably further and not only persuaded the union to heighten security at future meetings but also spoke strongly in favour of calling in outside help for such security when needed. That is an admirable attitude on the union's part and it is an attitude which I am sure we would all wish to praise.

Fortunately, that attitude becomes even more admirable when it is constrasted with that of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals,

Throughout the dispute and the gestation of the clause that we are discussing, the CVCP's attitude has been—to use its own words—to "advise and guide". Not once has the committee taken a positive stand and stated that it was not just interested in giving advice but was committed to freedom of speech and that it would do something in the universities to encourage that freedom.

The clause is necessary to get the CVCP to commit itself to something which most of us regard as important in our civilisation, instead of simply sitting on the sidelines saying that it deplores what is happening but unfortunately it cannot do anything about it.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): I shall not detain the House for more than a few moments, but I wish to support the new clause as a Member of the House who has addressed Conservative and other audiences in almost every university in the United Kingdom. Most of the audiences that I have addressed have been prepared to give me free speech. Others have not, although I have not suffered from the grievous violence that has been suffered by my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle).

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) mentioned the university of Kent. Some years ago I was invited to speak there by the Conservative association and was prevented from speaking because hostile groups had occupied the lecture hall which had been properly reserved by the Conservative association. I was denied free speech within the university. Nothing was done by the university authorities. I am an Essex Member of Parliament and a member of the court of the university of Essex. I have stood up to vociferous audiences there, and I make no complaint about that. I welcome heckling when I speak. I have also been pelted in the university of Essex, and I could not obtain from the university even the cost of drycleaning my suit.

The reason for this new clause is not that university authorities do not believe in free speech; of course, they do. We need such a new clause because they have shown themselves impotent to make available free speech to visiting speakers, properly invited by students, and because of that inertness and impotence we need the new clause. I wish that it were not required. Therefore, I disagree with the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) and warmly support the new clause.

Mr. Winnick: I have doubts and reservations regarding the clause proposed in another place. I am certainly in favour of free speech. I exercise it myself and I see no reason to deprive other people of the same right. That right should apply at universities as it should anywhere else.

Some years ago, I was asked to chair a meeting of the student body at the London School of Economics to which a controversial academic and writer had been invited by the student body. Few voted against inviting him, but when he came along one or two people—in the main from outside the LSE—were determined to disrupt the meeting and succeeded in so doing. The following Sunday, those who disrupted the meeting and received a good deal of publicity at the time, in the early 1970s, were described in one newspaper as being CIA Maoists. Whether that was true or not, I was not to know, but the important point was that the students had invited the person, despite his being controversial, and the fact that the meeting could not take place meant that that person received more sympathy than he would otherwise have done. That illustrates to me how stupid it was to try to stop him from speaking. At the end of the day, the person who came out best was the academic, whose glasses were broken and who undoubtedly received a good deal of sympathy, including some from me, although I remain strongly opposed to his views.

Are the Government saying that students should not be in a position to say, in some circumstances, that they are so much opposed to a viewpoint that they do not want a speaker invited to attend the college concerned? Say, for example, a National Front speaker is invited. Can we argue that it is unreasonable to have strong objections? The new clause goes on to talk about the freedom of speech within the law. The National Front and other such organisations could argue that they are within the law, and undoubtedly they are legal organisations. That is not in dispute. I can well understand, however, that many students and possibly the majority at any given college would want to protest and to make it clear that they did not believe that a platform should be provided for that person. I do not consider that unreasonable. I consider it unreasonable, however, to go wider than that, as has happened in some cases, although I agree that it is difficult to draw the line between those who should be invited and those who should not. Therefore, in the main, I do not support a no-platform policy because I appreciate the difficulties involved.

2.30 am

The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) referred to the difficulty and disruption that occurred at Bristol. He was fair enough to concede that in the main the disrupters came from outside. They prided themselves on being anarchists, they wanted the maximum publicity, and they received it. For the life of me I cannot see how that kind of disruption, which I deplore, could have been avoided by clause 41. People who are determined to gain that type of publicity, for what it is worth, will carry out their disruption regardless to gain that publicity and no amount of provisions of the type now before us will prevent them.

Another reason why I do not greatly favour the no-platform policy is that one or two people — not necessarily the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), but one or two Conservative Members—have received a good deal of unwarranted prominence and publicity as a result.

Mr. John Carlisle: Name them

Mr. Winnick: I could name the hon. Gentleman himself. I believe that in some cases student bodies have played into his hands, because on occasions when his remarks would otherwise have attracted little or no publicity he has received far more publicity than he deserved. That is another reason why I believe some of the policies that have been pursued to be wrongheaded.

I believe that this is a matter for the good sense of student bodies and college authorities and not one that the House should decide. It is interesting to note that there was no such clause in the original Bill. The Government accepted an amendment in response to concern in another place. I believe that that was wrong and that far more good sense prevailed previously. For those reasons, I hope that the House will reject clause 41.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I believe that there is a need for clause 41 or something like it. In some universities there has been disgraceful and appalling interference with freedom of speech, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) and others have pointed out.

A particular difficulty arises, however, because there are some church colleges of education and university colleges specifically set up to promote religion. Some are Church of England and some are Roman Catholic. A famous one is St. Mary's college, Strawberry Hill, in my constituency. The trust deeds of the college and the contracts of the academic staff both imply a duty to promote a particular religious faith. What will happen under this legislation if some maverick student invites someone to speak, say, in favour of atheism or some other doctrine which is in conflict with the basic tenets of the religion that the college was founded to promote and uphold? Are the college authorities expected to facilitate that?

Clause 41(1) provides:

"Every individual and body of persons concerned in the government of any establishment to which this section applies shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students and employees of the establishment and for visiting speakers"

Subsection (2) further provides that

"the use of any premises of the establishment is not denied to any individual or body of persons"

for that purpose. Does that impose a duty on the college to allow a person invited by a maverick student to preach atheism in the college chapel? What would the legal position be as there is surely a legal duty on the college authorities to comply with the trustees, yet the Bill says that the college authorities must take such steps as are necessary to provide freedom of speech anywhere on the campus?

Yesterday I telephoned my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to suggest that there should be a Government amendment to cover that point. I have not seen it yet and I fear that there will be law suits relating to those conflicts of duties which will lead to an early need for amending legislation unless something is done.

Mr. John Carlisle: I think that the House will share the sentiments of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) on the necessity for this clause and I think that the House will join with me in regretting that it was necessary. But the facts which have been presented tonight by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) and others, and which, indeed, were apparent in the bitter experience of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) last Friday, and many others in the House and outside before, make it a necessity that the clause is approved by the House tonight.

Be it that I shall be the first to admit that the clause is not perfect. Be it that I shall also admit that the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) were correct in that those extremists who are intent on wrecking meetings, some of whom come from outside the universities, will not be put off by the clause. But the House has a duty to the universities and the tax-paying public to ensure that, of all places, places of academic learning are places where freedom of speech is practised.

When the hon. Member for Walsall, North speaks of the publicity that surrounds the types of meeting that took place last week, and, indeed, the types of meeting that I have attended or at which I have attempted to speak, and says that I and others have gained publicity because of that misfortune, let me say to him that if he were to come with me and suffer the sort of indignity and humiliation that I and others have been through, suffer the bullying tactics of the extreme Left, see those who come to hear me and others speak spat upon, beaten, and physically attacked, perhaps he would not so glibly say that some of these meetings now take place for the publicity of the speaker concerned.

The experiences that I suffered at Bradford and that many of my hon. Friends have suffered in the past few months were extremely uncomfortable and I would not wish them upon my best friends on the Conservative Benches and particularly on the hon. Member for Walsall, North.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): These things happen to visiting Members of Parliament. They also happen to people who are teachers in the universities. Is my hon. Friend aware of the fact that my constituent, Pamela Symes, a lecturer at the North-East London polytechnic, was beaten up and severely injured, yet the authorities did nothing? What is happening at Ruskin and what has happened to John Vincent is not to visitors but to people whose reputations and careers are being physically destroyed.

Mr. Carlisle: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I should also add that several others from other places of academic learning such as schools—for example, Ray Honeyford and others — have suffered similar indignities and physical intimidation in the way that my hon. Friend so aptly describes.

The clause is a message from the House to three different sets of people at universities. First, it is a message to the vice-chancellors that they must put their own house in order. It just will not do for them to send copies of various edicts to this place, to mouth words that they believe in freedom of speech and not actually back that up by actions in terms of disciplining the students and by attending some of the meetings and understanding the conditions under which some visiting speakers and lecturers have to attend. It is a strong message to them to firm up their own organisations and to become far more personally involved.

The second group of people to whom it is a message is the students and the students union. The House and the British taxpayer will not tolerate no-platform policies. It should not be a part of any university and the message goes from this House that the clause outlaws that policy.

Thirdly, the message is for those extremists—aptly described by others and experienced by myself—who are intent on putting their views across and preventing others from putting forward views with which they disagree. The message is that we will not tolerate violence on our campuses. Although this clause is inadequate and may not prevent the sort of violence which has occurred, if we pass it we will give a message to the country and to the universities that we will not tolerate this behaviour. We will give every protection we can to the people who, when speaking, keep within the law. That is what the country

and the universities wish to hear. I welcome the clause and I hope that it will proceed with the full approval of the House.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): At the great university of Bristol we have seen the denial of freedom in action and have seen the corrosive effects of bigotry as it eats away at the foundation of scholarship.

Without the right to disagree there is no debate, without debate there is no scholarship and the result is bigotry, dogma, slogans and learning by rote. My approach has been to ask how this clause will buttress the great good of free speech? How does it repair the erosion caused by those who would deny others the rights that they enjoy? How will the clause stiffen the backbone of the sometimes weak governing bodies of universities, polytechnics or colleges?

Clause 41 is a well-meaning but defective first step. It does not differentiate between those who belong to the academic establishments and those who do not. Although it imposes a duty to protect freedom of speech, it ignores the lack of resources and the means to ensure that protection.

I trust that no one would disagree that any member of an educational establishment, duly appointed, has the absolute right under the law to discharge his duties in that establishment. However, in Bristol there has been a virulent campaign of hate and violence waged against Professor John Vincent. He is a decent, honourable, able and kind man. Such a campaign demonstrates how necessary it is to provide academic freedom with a shield of statutory protection. I regret to inform the House that the result of the disciplinary hearings has been to let the perpetrators off and to send John Vincent away on a years's sabbatical.

I would not share a platform with the National Front or Sinn Fein, but, providing that they act and speak within the law, they have a right to be heard, however vile their views. Whether they should have the automatic legal right to speak wherever they like on private property is another matter.

This clause should have permitted governing bodies greater powers to determine who should have the right to speak on premises that they control. If a governing body should deny a guest a platform or the premises are inadequate, those members of the academic establishment who invited the guest in the first place should have recourse to the courts. Once a guest has been invited and authorised by the governing body, that body has a duty, using the police if necessary, to ensure that the guest gets a fair hearing. As self-restraining freedom has, at times, been absent from the very places of learning where it should be cherished, legislation is obviously necessary. This clause is a first step and it therefore deserves support. In view of its inadequacies, however, I fear that it will not be the last step.

2.45 am

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): In 1969, I went to Sussex university. I did not intend to get involved in politics. I rather hoped to spend most of my time playing rugger, but I found to my horror that many of my views were being attacked by the extreme Left, so I became involved.

Shortly after arriving at the university, in early 1970, the university Conservative association invited my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) to come to speak to us. He was and remains the Member of Parliament for and a member of the court of the university. For reasons best known to itself, the establishment of the students union said that he would not be allowed to speak in any of its premises.

Coming from a Quaker background, and believing that free speech and tolerance are perhaps the most important hallmarks of a civilised society, I could not believe that that action would be allowed and, with some others, I went to see the then vice-chancellor, Asa Briggs. I remember the meeting clearly as, on the wall of his study was a huge Chartist banner which proclaimed,

"We must awaken the people to a recognition of their rights."

Asa Briggs asked us what we wanted, and I said that we would like him to recognise that we, too, had some rights and that we would like him to provide a room in the university to hold the meeting.

After some discussion, which meant little from his point of view, Asa Briggs made it quite clear that he was not prepared to allow us to have any room on the campus. Now, when I hear or have letters from vice-chancellors saying, "Leave it to us. We are responsible people," I recall that meeting, when nothing was done. Neither he nor any of the other academic staff attempted to create a climate of opinion in which the no platform policy could be reversed. The High Commissioner for India spoke to an academic group some time later and was abused violently. It is a cancerous thing.

I and others arranged to hold the meeting in the Corn Exchange in Brighton. We managed for a short time to reverse the no platform policy at Sussex. My recollection is that the most active people came from religious backgrounds. They were Catholics and Jewish students, for example, who realised that once the cancer of no free speech took hold in the university, the freedom of all groups would soon be impaired.

It is no use vice-chancellors saying that we can leave it to them, and nor is it any good the Master of Balliol college saying, as he did today in *The Times*, that there is some distinction to be drawn between academic freedom and freedom of speech generally. If a mature democratic society is not prepared quitely to listen and respond to other people's points of view, there will sooner or later be no academic freedom either. It is the attitude of Asa Briggs in 1970 and that of Anthony Kenny and others which, more than anything else, makes me realise that there is something spineless in a part of the English establishment and which is the main cause of my being active in politics.

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on introducing the clause. We should remember that the vice-chancellors have had a long time to put matters right.

My right hon. Friend the previous Secretary of State raised the subject first and that led to the original guidelines. My private Member's Bill earlier this year, which was supported by Conservative students and those of other parties, forced the Government to reconsider and strengthen the guidelines. Subsequently there has been much talk, but nothing has come near the central issue, which is that the vice-chancellors have demonstrated a weakness in universities. They want "free speech, but" and that syndrome enables them to support, either directly or indirectly, a policy that is contrary to the ethos of universities.

[Mr. Fred Silvester]

I was horrified to read in *The Times* today an article that purported to separate freedom for members of universities to lecture from the freedom of visitors to speak at universities. It is surely crystal clear to university staff and, I hope, to hon. Members that freedom of speech is a seamless robe.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) says that it is wrong that the National Front should be allowed to speak, but he is wrong. The House determines the limits of free speech and the limits of tolerance. If a person makes a speech which is contrary to the Race Relations Act or any other law there is a remedy through the courts. If a person speaks in that manner at a university or anywhere else outside the House he will be arraigned before a court, and rightly so. If we find that the boundaries are inadequate it is for the House to change them. It is not up to a bunch of students, who are irresponsible to the law, to decide which person is suitable to have the right to speak at a university.

The root of the trouble is the no-platform policy. The universities know that, but they will not tackle the problem. Vice-chancellors need the Bill, because they do not take on the central issue which is that most problems arise not from staff of universities but in the student unions. The vice-chancellors have not taken sufficient control of the unions.

Students argue that they should have the right to decide these matters for themselves. If they were an ordinary club, that might be true—a Conservative club might wish to invite only Conservative speakers — but students join unions as part of the university structure. It is compulsory. Most Labour Members would wish to retain that system, but that requires that all students should be able to have a full expression of a range of views. If that is stopped it will not be possible to sustain the argument that all students must be members of the students union. It could lead to a dangerous conclusion.

I wish the clause well. I do not think that it is quite as good as my Bill, because it is slightly woollier. However, I hope that the clause will succeed.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): This is probably one of the most important clauses in an important Bill. As has been made clear in the speeches of my hon. Friends, the House is determined to ensure that the clause is retained in the Bill.

We have heard illustrations from my hon. Friends of distressing events that have happened to them. I wish only to say that I hope that the Government will not allow vice-chancellors to shelter behind the excuse of lack of cash to do the job. The obligations in clause 41 will involve extra expenses.

Some vice-chancellors do not agree with hon. Members who say that all universities must be places of uninterrupted free speech. They will do their best to disrupt the Government's intention. I hope that we ensure that the necessary cash will be made available in our places of learning.

Mr. Radice: The Opposition are strongly in favour of freedom of speech. It is essential to maintain that freedom in the campuses. We deplore events such as that at Bristol. It is important that people are able to express their views in universities and polytechnics, however unpopular those views are, provided that they are within the law.

Mr. Sayeed: Does the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) disagree with the no-platform policy?

Mr. Radice: I have made that clear on many occasions. We are totally against the no-platform policy. The question is whether we should ensure freedom of speech by legislation. That is the gamble the House is taking tonight. We share some of the vice-chancellors' concerns —some harsh remarks have been made about them by hon. Members. One might think that vice-chancellors were all members of the Labour party, but that is not so. Most of them are Conservatives.

The vice-chancellors are right to be worried. The legislation creates a number of problems. Demarcation is an issue, as is judging in advance that which is lawful. There is a problem about the conflict of duties. We covered such problems at length in Committee.

Vice-chancellors are worried that they might have to be judges and police. They are worried about vexatious legislation. They believe that the legislation might inhibit freedom of speech rather than protect it. That is a serious view. We shall have to see what happens.

I share the concern about those who try to stop people from speaking freely, but we have to be certain that legislation will improve the present position. I am not convinced by what has been said.

My view is that the best way forward—it is in the Bill—is through a code of practice. I assume that the Bill will rely on that code of practice because that is what the Minister said in Committee. If so, we should rely entirely upon the code of practice. That is probably the best way. We should not embark on a legislative path which might lead to many problems.

3 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. George Walden): Clause 41 honours the Government's undertaking in another place to introduce a clause to protect freedom of speech at institutions of higher and further education. The Government have no intention of resiling from their commitment to such a clause, and cannot therefore accept the proposal from the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) that the clause should be left out of the Bill. I repeat what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) in Committee—that the Government regret the necessity to introduce legislation on this subject.

I assure hon. Members that the Government preserve a sound sense of proportion on the whole issue—there is no sudden, massive threat to freedom of speech at our institutions of higher learning. However, the virus of intolerance spreads swiftly and insidiously. It is enough to recall the dismal roll-call of dishonour in the nine months between October 1985 and June 1986, not to speak of the incidents that we have witnessed in the few weeks that universities have been at work again. The case for action has been reinforced by those events. The Government do not intend to stand by and watch freedom of speech being eroded—all the more so since I am convinced that the case for action grows as it becomes clearer that a strain of degenerate illiberalism is emerging in our society as a whole. The mentality that insists of filling the minds of our children with sexual or political perversions at the earliest possible age is the same as that which will later tell the polytechnic student what opinions will or will not be tolerated on campus.

The authorities of our higher education institutions have shown their concern to defend freedom of speech. Their representative bodies have issued guidance on the subject to their institutions. But the number of recent incidents and the spirit of the times suggest that guidance is, unfortunately, not enough. Much as the Government regret the need to provide a legislative basis for the purpose, they remain convinced that one is needed so that members, students and employees of higher and further education institutions and visiting speakers should be free to express and to discuss any point of view within the limits of what the law permits.

A variety of concerns has been expressed about particular circumstances that might confront those responsible for the implementation of their duty under the clause. I shall not attempt to discuss in detail any of the hypothetical examples that have been cited either in the House or in the press—other than to observe that some of the suggestions vary between the fanciful and the farcical—for example, the suggestion that the legislation would allow people to talk loudly in libraries, or the completely mistaken concept that the legislation would allow the Moonies to force their way into a college chapel. It is inconceivable that the legislation could be interpreted in that way. If half of the ingenuity that has been devoted to manufacturing plausible hypotheses that are patently outside the Bill were devoted to ensuring that it works, that would be a service to democracy and to freedom of speech.

I wish to emphasise that the clause calls upon those responsible to take such steps as are "reasonably practicable"—that phrase is repeated three times in this short clause—to secure freedom of speech, within the law, for certain people on the premises of certain establishments. It does not seek to secure freedom of speech for everyone everywhere. We do not believe, as has been suggested, that the courts would have difficulty with the concept of a visiting speaker. Such a speaker is not any person who turns up unsolicited to speak on the premises of an institution; he is someone who has a claim to be there and his claim can be tested against the provisions of the institution's code of practice. My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) alluded to that point.

Again, the clause is not intended to give anyone a right to demand access to a particular part of an institution. If there is a lecture room which has traditionally been used by visiting speakers, the clause probably implies a right to the use of that room when it is available. But that does not mean that if all suitable rooms have been booked on a given date, a visiting speaker or a student society could demand the use, for example, of the senior common room or, as my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) suggested, the college chapel.

There has been the further suggestion that the reference to freedom of speech within the law might be read as demanding that institutional authorities should vet a speaker's text in advance, but the clause does not lay on the authorities of institutions any duty to ensure that the views expressed by speakers are within the law. That is for the speaker to worry about, and if anyone believed that a speaker or a group had abused the law, or was proposing to do so, he or it could apply to the police and ultimately to the courts like everyone else.

I should like to stress that this legislation is by no means a panacea. There is obviously an area where the law needs to be strengthened, but that law, by its very nature, cannot be impregnable. we have been reminded of that by the events in Bristol last week.

There has been a good deal of talk both within the Chamber and in the press about over-hasty recourse to law, vexatious litigation and the rest, but it seems that in real life, as has been said by a number of my hon. Friends, the first effect of this new legislation will be to concentrate the minds of a number of vice-chancellors and the directors of other institutions on their existing arrangements, which in some instances may be cobwebbed with time or otherwise outdated. I know that there are instances where vice-chancellors are examining their disciplinary procedures, and it seems that that is no bad thing. If the unhappy experience of the past few months is to be used to good advantage in the framing of codes of conduct, there will be little likelihood of recourse to vexatious litigation.

Mr. Rhodes James: Students are adults and they are subject to the normal criminal law. Why does not the Crown prosecution service become involved when there are clear cases, as in the case of one of my constituents to which I have already referred, of violent assault and physical abuse?

Mr. Walden: My understanding is that much would depend on the action of the victim herself. I am well aware of the detail or the outline of the case to which my hon. Friend refers, but I do not know whether the victim entered into litigation.

The Government do not believe that institution authorities will have anything to fear provided that they can demonstrate that they have taken—again I quote from the clause—

"such steps as are reasonably practicable"

to protect freedom of speech within the law. If they have done all that they reasonably can, they will have fulfilled their duty under the clause. It has been suggested that the clause will make institution authorities more cautious and thereby actually reduce freedom of speech, but the Government do not accept this argument. The instinct to be cautious will need to be measured against the possibility of an action being brought if

"such steps as are reasonably practicable"

to protect freedom of speech are not taken. Thus the clause will require authorities to exercise judgment, sometimes as to whether a meeting should proceed at all. It will not prevent them from concluding in the last resort, although they would do well to consult the police before reaching such a conclusion, that a meeting should be cancelled or at least postponed because the threat of a breach of the peace was too substantial. But the clause will be beneficial in requiring them to weigh the situation most carefully before reaching a decision, rather than simply taking the line of least resistance.

I should like to mention briefly one or two of the issues that have been raised during the debate. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East asked me a specific question to which I feel bound to give a specific reply. The answer is that the question posed by the hon. Gentleman is rather far-fetched. The position is no different from the present one. Disorder occurred, sadly, at a number of meetings and that is why we need the provision that we are discussing. How can a university or college authority be said to aid and abet a public order offence merely by allowing a meeting to take place? The other questions

[Mr. Walden]

raised by the hon. Gentleman have been dealt with already in my speech. I am pleased to note that Oxford university has abandoned its no-platform policy. I doubt very much whether that would have happened if the Government had not been so active in this area.

I take note of the many, varied and rather colourful examples which have been given to me by my hon. Friends. It would take too long to review them in detail. I found them most poignant, most telling, and I think excellent reasons for supporting the legislation, which I am sure we shall all do now.

Mr. Freud: There is no hon. Member who is opposed to free speech or who does not cherish the right to disagree. I do not believe that we have had a good reason from the Minister or anyone else why clause 41, which states in part "shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure freedom of speech within the law",
will do anything that has not been done previously. When the Minister said that this is a law to concentrate the minds of the vice-chancellors, it showed the complete paucity of his argument. I am not convinced that we need such a law, hastily introduced in another place, tacked on to the Bill at late notice. Until there is genuine consultation between the police, the National Union of Students, the student bodies, the vice-chancellors and the directors of the polytechnics, this legislation will not be——

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): What about the cleaners?

Mr. Freud: I agree; let us include the porters and the cleaners. Let us ensure that all the people involved have a say in making the legislation better than it would appear to be.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 17, Noes 173.

Division No. 288] **[3.11 am**

AYES

Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Boyes, Roland
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Freud, Clement
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Nellist, David
Patchett, Terry
Radice, Giles
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Fisher and
Mr. Derek Fatchett.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 43

DUTY TO SECURE BALANCED TREATMENT OF POLITICAL ISSUES

Amendment made: No. 151, in page 47, line 18, leave out 'should be' and insert 'are'.—*[Mrs. Rumbold.]*

Clause 46

APPRAISAL OF PERFORMANCE OF TEACHERS

Amendment made: No. 167, in page 52, line 40, at end insert—

'(4) Before making any regulations under subsection (1) above, the Secretary of State shall consult—

(a) such associations of local authorities, and representatives of teachers, as appear to him to be concerned; and

(b) any other person with whom consultation appears to him to be desirable.'.—*[Mrs. Rumbold.]*

Clause 47

GRANTS FOR TEACHER TRAINING, ETC.

Amendment proposed: No. 168, in page 53, line 4, at end insert—

'*(bb)* education welfare officers:'.—*[Mrs. Rumbold.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following—Government amendments Nos. 169 and 170.

Amendment No. 172, in page 53, line 7, at end insert 'and in making such payments shall have regard to the provision of training for teachers of children with special education needs'.

Amendment No. 171, in page 53, line 7, at end insert '*(f)* school librarians.'.

Government amendment No. 173.

Mr. Freud: Will the Secretary of State reconsider clause 47 in which, having got powers to distribute money for in-service training according to his priorities, he lists teachers, youth and community workers, educational psychologists, local education authority inspectors and education advisers employed by such authorities? I ask the Secretary of State to add to that list the training of teachers who deal with special educational needs.

The Government have a precedent in that their own amendments specify the inclusion of education welfare officers. I cannot see that the Secretary of State has good cause to include education welfare officers and ignore those teachers who deal with special educational needs. It would be silly to compete with groups deserving of special mention in the clause, but there is a case to be made for special needs. A very small percentage of teachers are qualified in special needs. Mary Warnock estimates that 20 per cent. of children have special needs at some time, so most teachers will need skills to enable them to cope.

I hope that the Minister, even if she will not allow me amendment No. 172, will commit herself to looking at the amendment and perhaps giving some hope to the people who are desperately in need of more teachers for children with special educational needs.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government acknowledge the importance of training for special educational needs. That commitment has been demonstrated by the fact that of the £200 million expenditure which is proposed under this clause in 1987-88 — about 10 to 15 per cent. up on present levels—it is proposed that £70 million should be used to support national priority areas, of which special education is one. It must be right, however, for areas of national priority to be decided from time to time in the light of the facts rather than to seek to predetermine them in legislation, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 169, in page 53, line 6, leave out 'and'.

No. 170, in page 53, line 7, at end insert—

'; and

(f) such other classes of person, employed in connection with the discharge of any of the functions of such authorities, as may be prescribed.'.

No. 173, in page 53, line 32, at end insert—

'"education welfare officer" means any person who is employed by a local education authority, or employed by any other authority in connection with education, and whose duties include securing the regular attendance at school of pupils of compulsory school age;'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Clause 48

RECOUPMENT

Amendment made: No. 177 in page 54, line 40, after 'apply' insert—

(a) in relation to pupils who do not fall within a prescribed category; or

(b) '.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Clause 53

TRAVELLING AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES FOR GOVERNORS OF SCHOOLS AND ESTABLISHMENTS OF FURTHER EDUCATION

Amendment made: No. 179, in page 59, line 20, leave out 'but not' and insert

'(including provision for allowances not to be paid in respect of certain categories) but shall not make different provision'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Clause 54

REPEAL OF SECTION 4 OF 1944 ACT

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move Amendment No. 224, in page 60, line 25, leave out clause 54.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It will be convenient to discuss at the same time Amendment No. 225, in schedule 6, page 81, line 11, leave out column 3.

Mr. Spearing: I regret that I cannot be brief in moving this amendment, for reasons which will emerge in the course of my remarks. *[Interruption.]* I see the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), saying from a sedentary position that I never am brief. Other hon. Members will know that often I am brief. However, I make no excuse for not being brief on this occasion, and the Minister, whose grace is less apparent than his intellect, may understand why when I speak about what he said in Committee.

The Report stage gives hon. Members with knowledge of these matters an opportunity to speak to the whole House, and for the Minister not to recognise that, having

[Mr. Spearing]

been in the House representing the people of Dartford for many years, is reprehensible, and I shall say no more on that topic.

The clause seeks to delete sections 4 and 5 of the Education Act 1944. I am concerned particularly with section 4, because it established central advisory councils for England and Wales. The 1944 Act was one of the most important bipartisan measures to pass through Parliament in the last 50 years. It laid the foundations of the post-war education system, which might be better than it is; this Bill would not be before us were there not serious concerns about education today.

That Act exemplified a great deal about education because education requires consent at every level, from Elizabeth house, where the Minister sits with his advisers, to every classroom in the country. Indeed, if I were giving priority, I would start with the classroom and end with Queen Elizabeth house.

The quality of our education system depends a great deal on the quality with which it is managed and discussed, both here and in Elizabeth house, and the status we give it in terms of public affairs. I make no apology for making that point because the whole of the 1944 Act was bipartisan, dealing with public affairs rather than politics.

An unfortunate trade mark of the present Government is that they seem to equate public affairs with anything to do with the state and do not put a ring fence around certain parts of it which are important to the quality of public life. One of the greatest problems in public life, which we all share—Dartford and Newham, Kingston and Durham—is that too infrequently——

Mrs. Rumbold: I remind the hon. Gentleman that I represent the constituency of Mitcham and Morden.

3.30 am

Mr. Spearing: I apologise to the hon. Lady. Her constituency is a borough within the general area to which I referred.

I hope that the Minister would agree that one of the problems in our national life, which is universal in all institutions whether they be public, private or parliamentary—and that includes all political parties—is that we are too unwilling to consult people who have knowledge and experience before we take decisions. Time and again we complain about the malaise in public life or in the public affairs of the nation. Almost without exception, if one considers the consultative procedures and the way in which we gather experience and place that at everyone's disposal—which is, after all, one of the central features of our Parliamentary democracy—we find something wanting.

If we were to mention to those who make a serious study of education or, better still, to those who have served in education for a long time the names Hadow, Spens, Crowther, Newsom and Plowden, they would mean a great deal. I am glad to see that the Minister is nodding his head in agreement with that. These were the nicknames of reports—named after the chairmen—of the central advisory councils which the Bill now seeks to abolish.

One of the features of these councils is their professionalism. They have a wide acceptance. On the whole, Parliament and successive Ministers of Education accepted them and, by and large, they were implemented. Not everyone agreed with them and I did not necessarily agree with everything that they said but they were able to bring a wide consensus into legislation and educational practice.

I will now explain why I cannot be brief. For 14 years before I was elected to the House I was a teacher in a classroom. I had no guarantee of being elected, it was merely chance as is the case with most hon. Members. But for that chance, I might still be in the classroom. I will not let this unique opportunity pass. I want to keep faith with what I was doing for 14 years, grappling with the central problems of secondary education, problems which are now looming large in national life and with which people are trying to deal. I want to keep faith with those in the classrooms at the moment. Hon. Members probably have no idea of the degree of mental and physical strain which is now apparant in our schools.

To understand these problems, one must experience teaching. I suggest that one should not experience it for a year or a week or two. Rather one should witness several rounds of the process. A round is not one year, it is the period in which a pupil passes through a school. It is really at least five years.

The central advisory councils were, by universal consent, useful. Why will they not be useful in future? My hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) asked the Minister during the Committee proceedings of the Bill why the councils should be done away with. The Minister replied that to accept my hon. Friend's argument he would have to

"behave in contrary fashion to the undertaking that the Government gave in their response to the Second Report of the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts during the 1981-82 Session." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 8 July 1986; c. 585.]

Select Committees are akin to those educational commissions, because they can gather the experience and wisdom of those who have spent a lifetime's experience in various areas. That is one of their great irrigating factors.

The Minister said, "We gave an undertaking." That sounds as though it was in response to a recommendation, but the Committee's recommendation was not that the councils should be abolished. Indeed, it was to the contrary. It recommended that the central advisory councils should be reconstituted because,

"We are . . . persuaded of the need for a body which can determine policy and set criteria, and we believe that there is a gap in the present arrangements. The technique of handling specific issues more generally within the education system by the appointment of committees or single individuals to conduct inquiries, while it has its uses, makes for discontinuity and uncertainty, and is also potentially open to abuse by a Secretary of State who wished to disguise a political decision by the appointments of committees or individuals who could be relied upon to support his view. (We should emphasise at once that we have no evidence that such a tactic has ever been used by a Secretary of State, but we wish to draw attention to the danger.) We see the need for more permanent bodies which can meet continuously, develop ways of working, and to which issues of many different kinds can be referred. We believe there is a need for permanent Central Advisory Councils which could advise, among other things, on examinations policy, and we have already made recommendations which would give the reconstituted Councils power to determine national criteria and to provide continuing guidance in examinations policy."

That could almost have come from the Committee stage of the Education Act 1944, which I recommend the Minister and all interested Members to read. It is perfectly in line with the spirit which set up the central advisory

councils and for which Mr. Rab Butler obtained universal support in the House. Moreover, section 5 of the Act said that there should be an annual report to Parliament on the proceedings of the central advisory councils, because they would retain some broad remit.

In answer to the Select Committee's recommendations, we had what the Minister called in Committee an undertaking. It was not an undertaking at all. It was slapped down. In his second response to that Select Committee report, which is Cmnd. 8648 of 1981-82, he said:

"Successive Secretaries of State have continued to value the contribution of informed outside opinion on a wide range of policy matters over the 15 year period since the last Central Advisory Council reports were published. Their approach has been to charge committees of inquiry or independent individuals specific remits, an approach which has the advantage that the constitution and duration of inquiries can be matched to the specific matters on which the Secretary of State is seeking advice . . . The Government believe that this approach has worked well and have concluded that there is no need for separate and permanent Central Advisory Councils: they will therefore take the first legislative opportunity which presents itself to repeal Section 4 of the Education Act 1944."

That is where we are now. In the meantime, there was a duty on the Secretary of State or Minister of State for Education of the day to appoint those councils, because Parliament had said that they should exist. No doubt the 1944 Parliament, in its wisdom, made the very same case that the Select Committee made in 1981-82. Had that central advisory council been sitting in continuous session with a revolving membership, as had been foreseen at the start, and not used for a succession of specific inquiries, some of the problems to which the House has been addressing itself recently in education might have been less difficult to resolve.

I make no party point about the fact that, from about 1967 onwards, successive Ministers refused to appoint central advisory councils. On 22 October 1971, I had an Adjourment debate on this very topic. In that debate I rehearsed some of the points that I have made today.

We must remember that the central advisory councils had an additional specific power. The 1944 Act provides that

"it shall be the duty of those Councils to advise the Minister upon such matters connected with educational theory and practice as they think fit, and upon any questions referred to them by him."

In other words, they could make their own inquiries. They did not have to wait for a reference from the Secretary of State as every successive single advisory committee — about 13 or 15 of them — has had to do. The councils were not entirely creatures of the Secretary of State although they were appointed by him and accountable to him in making reports to Parliament.

Could it be that successive Secretaries of State saw that as an area over which they did not have the control that they would have if they appointed individual committees? That interpretation certainly seems to carry some conviction. It means that over a long period from 1967 until now successive Ministers of all parties have been breaking the law. That was the theme of my Adjournment debate on 22 October 1971, in which the Minister replying was none other than the then Secretary of State for Education and Science—the present Prime Minister.

I had hoped that the then Secretary of State, having broken the law or at any rate not complied with it, on a bi-partisan basis, would either have defended the thesis that the councils were not useful and proposed legislation to put things right or, conversely, that she would consider the points that I had made and perhaps appoint a central advisory council in accordance with the law. The right hon. Lady, however, said no such thing. She said:

"The background is completely different and it is against this background"—

of many advisory committees—

"that the position of the C.A.C. should be viewed now. Against this background there has developed a tendency on the part of successive Secretaries of State during the past 15 years or more to leave the setting up of C.A.C.s until a major topic arises which only a council of this nature can appropriately deal with." — [*Official Report*, 22 October 1971; Vol. 823, c. 1197.]

That was better than nothing. We had our Crowther and Spens from that, but it would have been far better if the central advisory councils had been meeting permanently as Parliament required and sorting out some of the problems that have arisen in secondary education, drawing on the professional expertise of people with a commitment to that cause. Instead, they were not set up as Parliament required and now they are to disappear altogether. I challenge the Minister replying today to give the real reasons rather than talking about a commitment made to a Select Committee which in fact recommended that the councils should be reconstituted and that the law should be kept.

I close on this. I believe that the then Secretary of State for Education and Science quite possibly simply did not know what she was about. When I raised the matter at Prime Minister's Question Time on 17 July 1984 the right hon. Lady said:

"I do not think that I was ever taken to task for refusing to obey the law in the Education Act 1944." — [*Official Report*, 17 July 1984; Vol. 64, c. 168.]

It may have been a technicality for the right hon. Lady, but it was not and is not a technicality for people in the classroom because the professional approach of the central advisory councils exemplified the partnership in education.

I spoke earlier of consensus and agreement. Education can thrive only with consent. In this country we have a partnership of central Government, local government and the profession, a partnership of statutory maintained schools and the voluntary sector. Only if those with wisdom and experience come together in an atmosphere of trusteeship of our national heritage in education will our education system work properly. The central advisory councils irrigated, permitted and encouraged that partnership, but now they are to be destroyed.

3.45 am

Mr. Dunn: I do not wish to detain the House overlong, but the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has made a number of contentious points which need answering for the record and for history. He mentioned the bipartisan approach that we have had to education in Britain since 1944. I do not recollect that circular 10/65 was bipartisan. I do not recollect that the Education Act 1976 was bipartisan. I do not recollect that any commitments made by the Labour party about education in future were bipartisan. Far from it.

Mr. Radice *rose*——

Mr. Dunn: I do give way, as the hon. Gentleman knows, but I want to continue.

[Mr. Dunn]

The hon. Member for Newham, South talks about the 1944 Act being a totem pole at which we all worship, but I am not a blind worshipper of that Act. The hon. Gentleman is much older than I, in terms of service and chronologically, and he will recollect that the 1944 Act had only one golden period of 12 years between 1944 and 1956 when the movement away from the 1944 Act started in the county of Leicestershire with the comprehensivisation of our schools.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Dunn: I shall not give way, because this is a lecture to which the hon. Gentleman must listen.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, the 1944 Act came about entirely as a result of the Norwood report of 1938. He knows that the debates in the ensuing six years from 1938 to 1944 were precisely the result of that. Mr. Butler —Lord Butler as he became—only played a role at the end of the parliamentary span of the debate. The 1944 Education Act should really have been called the Ramsbottom Act, but Rab Butler, by his appointment for a few weeks at the end of the passage of the Bill, gave it the name of the Butler Act. Do not let us worship the cant that the hon. Gentleman expressed tonight. He is wordy and erudite, but he is so wrong, both in his interpretation of history and on the bipartisan approach that he claims was brought to education. Anyone who remembers, as I do, the circular 10/65 and the Education Act 1976 cannot agree with a single word that he said.

Mr. Radice: The Minister has stirred me up by being so partisan. Nobody got rid of more grammar schools than the Prime Minister when she was Secretary of State, and in that she was surely following a bipartisan approach.

Mr. Dunn: That may well be the case historically, but I do not want anybody to try to persuade the House that there has been a golden age of bipartisan approach to education. There is not and was not, apart from the 11 years between 1944 and 1955.

The hon. Member for Newham, South has read the proceedings of our Committee stage. I congratulate him. I suspect that he is the only person, other than Committee members, to do so. I am glad that he had the time to do so. But, as he knows, the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) probed the Government hard in Committee and we had an interesting debate. But even the hon. Member for Ipswich accepted the logic of our argument and finally capitulated with all the sweet reason that the hon. Gentleman can summon.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, advisory councils have not met and reported for nearly 20 years. He acknowledged that and I shall be fair to him, although I do not like being so in my present mood. The hon. Gentleman talked about the unprofessional nature of some of the advice that we have been given, or he hinted at it. Does he regard the Warnock and Swann reports as unprofessional and not worthwhile? They were not set up under section 4 of the 1944 Act as central advisory councils. They are examples of the ad hoc inquiry which all Governments of recent years—I am sorry that he has not moved on since he was at school—have found the best was of supplementing the advice that we receive within the Department and without from a variety of Standing Committees with specific functions. Of course the membership of those ad hoc committees will vary according to the specific terms of reference. He will remember too that they are quite unlike the central advisory councils whose members had a broad spread of expertise.

I do not want to spend much more time on the archaeology of the advisory councils. It is to no avail. They have given the hon. Gentleman a bit of a whirl tonight. He probably feels better for it. I certainly do not and I urge him not to press the amendment to a vote.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 56

MINIMUM AGE FOR GOVERNORS OF ESTABLISHMENTS OF FURTHER EDUCATION

Amendments made: No. 181, in page 60, line 41, after 'is', insert

'a student of the institution or is.'.

No. 182, in page 60, line 42, at end insert—

'(2) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision restricting—

(a) in relation to such matters or classes of matter as may be prescribed;

(b) in such circumstances as may be prescribed; and

(c) to such extent as may be prescribed;

the participation of any student of such an institution who is a member of its governing body in the proceedings of that body.

(3) The instrument of government for any such institution may make such provision in relation to restricting the participation of any such student in the proceedings of its governing body (in addition to that made by the regulations) as the regulations may authorise.'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Clause 59

INTERPRETATION

Amendments made: No. 183, in page 61, line 34, at end insert

'but does not include a governor appointed in acordance with any provision made by virtue of section 5 of this Act'.

No. 184, in page 61, line 34, at end insert—

'"exclude", in relation to the exclusion of any pupil from a school, means exclude on disciplinary grounds;'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Clause 60

COMMENCEMENT

Amendments made: No. 220, in page 62, line 21, leave out 'Section 55' and insert—

'Sections 55 and 57 to 59, this section and section 61(1) to (3) and (7)'.

No. 185, in page 62, line 29, at end insert—

'including, in particular, for the purpose of bringing particular provisions into force only in relation to particular schools or categories of school.'.

No. 186, in page 62, line 38, after 'Act', insert—

'(including, in particular, the provisions which the order brings into force)'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Clause 61

SHORT TITLE ETC.

Amendments made: No. 187, in page 63, line 2, after '1985', insert—

'and the Education Act 1986'.

No. 188, in page 63, line 12, leave out subsection (7) and insert—

'(7) In this Act—

(a) sections 45 *(Recoupment: cross-border provisions)*, 57(1) to (3) and 60(3) to (6), this section and so much of Schedule 6 as relates to any enactment which extends to Scotland, extend to Scotland; and

(b) section 44(11) and this section extend to Northern Ireland;

but otherwise this Act extends only to England and Wales.'. —*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Schedule 1

GROUPED SCHOOLS

Amendment made: No. 190, in page 64, line 16, after 'body', insert 'and head teacher.'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Schedule 2

NEW SCHOOLS

Amendments made: No. 191, in page 68, line 3, at end insert 'and head teacher.'.

No. 192, in page 71, line 9, at end insert—

'(4A) Sub-paragraph (4) above does not apply in relation to foundation governors.'.

No. 193, in page 72, line 4, at end insert

'; and shall recommend (with reasons) persons who belong to the community served by the new school and who are, in the opinion of the temporary governing body, suitable for appointment as co-opted members of the governing body.

(3A) Before making any recommendations under sub-paragraph (3) above, a temporary governing body shall consult representatives of the local business community.'.

No. 194, in page 73, line 32, leave out from '(6)' to 'shall' in line 33 and insert

'Sections 6 to 8 of the 1980 Act (admission to schools)'.

No. 195, in page 73, line 37, leave out sub-paragraphs (7) and (8).

No. 245, in page 66, line 38, at end insert—

'(2A) In co-opting any person (otherwise than as a temporary foundation or teacher governor) to be a member of a temporary governing body of a new school which will be a county, controlled or maintained special school, the temporary governors concerned shall—

(a) have regard—

(i) to the extent to which they and the other temporary governors are members of the local business community; and

(ii) to any representations made to the temporary governing body as to the desirability of increasing the connection between the temporary governing body and that community; and

(b) where it appears to them that no temporary governor of the new school is a member of the local business community, or that it is desirable to increase the number of temporary governors who are, co-opt a person who appears to them to be a member of that community;'.

No. 246, in page 71, line 5, after '(4)', insert

'Subject to paragraph 2(2A) above'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Schedule 3

EXCLUSION ON DISCIPLINE GROUNDS: APPEALS

Amendments made: No. 198, in page 77, line 44, leave out 'him' and insert

'the pupil or (as the case may be) parent'.

No. 199, in page 78, line 6, leave out 'him' and insert 'the pupil or (as the case may be) parent'.

No. 200, in page 78, line 24, at end insert—

'(3) No appeal against such a direction may be made by the governing body after the direction has taken effect.'.

No. 209, in page 79, line 9, after '23', insert 'of this Act.'.—*[Mr. Dunn]*

Schedule 4

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 211, in page 80, line 16, leave out paragraph 3.

No. 212, in page 80, line 25, at end insert—

'The Education (No. 2) Act 1968 (c.37)

. In section 3(3) of the Education (No. 2) Act 1968 (application of enactment to certain establishments)—

(a) after the word "applies" there shall be inserted the words "and special schools maintained by local education authorities"; and

(b) after the word "establishments", in the second place where it occurs, there shall be inserted the words "and schools".'.

The Local Government Act 1974 (c.7)

In paragraph 5 of Schedule 5 to the Local Government Act 1974 (matters not subject to investigation by Local Commissioner) after the words "Act 1944" there shall be inserted the words "or sections 17 to 19 of the Education Act 1986".

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (c.65)

In section 51 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (acts done under statutory authority) the following subsections shall be added at the end—

"(3) This section shall apply in relation to instruments of government and articles of government for schools made under the Education Act 1986 as it applies in relation to instruments of government and articles of government for schools made by or under any Act passed before this Act.".'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Schedule 5

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 213, in page 80, line 36, after 'is', insert 'in force'.

No. 214, in page 80, line 37, after 'force', insert 'and continues in force'.

No. 215, in page 80, line 39, at end insert—

'(2) Any such instrument shall, after the commencement of section 1, be treated for the purposes of this Act as having been made by order under that section.'.

No. 216, in page 81, line 5, at end insert—

'Recommendations by outgoing governing bodies

3.—(1) The governing body for any county, controlled or maintained special school which is constituted under an instrument of government or arrangement in force immediately before section 1 of this Act comes into force shall recommend (with reasons) to any governing body who will succeed them persons who belong to the community served by the school and who are, in their opinion, suitable for appointment as co-opted members of their successor.

(2) Before making any recommendations under sub-paragraph (1) above, a governing body shall consult representatives of the local business community.'. —*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Schedule 6

REPEALS AND REVOCATIONS

Amendments made: No. 217, in page 81, line 28, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 3(2), the words "or subsection (4) of section 2".'.

No. 218, in page 81, line 33, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 35(1), the words from "(other" to "*(b)*)".'.

No. 219, in page 81, line 34, at end insert—

[Mr. Dunn]

'1980 c.44. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980. Section 23(5) to (7)'.—*[Mr. Dunn.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mrs. Rumbold.]*

Mr. Radice: On Second Reading we said that the Bill was large but that it did not deal with the real issues. It has improved very little as it has moved through the House.

The balance on governing bodies is still not the way we would like it to be. We deplore the fact that the control of the curriculum has still been taken away from local education authorities. The Bill is still suffering from the Christmas tree effect with all the little bits added on—the clauses on freedom of speech, political indoctrination and sex education.

I wish to end on a brighter note. The only good thing was the windfall that we managed due to the discipline of the Labour party — thanks to the work of my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) and, perhaps, the fallout from the royal wedding — when we achieved a famous victory by abolishing corporal punishment. It may well be that in the end, the Bill will be best known for the fact that we managed to get rid of corporal punishment. I do not think it will be particularly famous for anything else that it will achieve.

3.54 am

Sir John Farr: I should like to extend a warm welcome to the Bill and refer to clause 16 on general responsibility for the conduct of schools and to clauses 28 and 29 concerning annual parents' meetings and governors' reports for parents.

During the summer, we had several meetings in my constituency about the desirability of some schools having a uniform. I suggested to my hon. Friend the Minister that mentioning uniforms in the Bill might be useful. He replied that clauses 16, 28 and 29 should give parents, teachers and governors the right to ensure that school uniforms are worn if that is the parental preference.

We have several important schools in the Leicester area which have concentrated on school uniform for many years. I am lucky to have in my constituency the Manor high school, which is being influenced by the local education authority. The parents and governors of the school regard the authority as having a non-uniform policy.

I asked my hon. Friend the Minister in June whether it would be right to refer to uniforms in the Bill. He replied on 9 July that clauses 16, 28 and 29 would meet the point. Decisions about uniform should rest with the head and governors, taking account of local values and conventions and the wishes of the majority of parents. If uniform does not appear in the Bill, it is important that it is referred to in the guidelines that may be issued so that there is no possibility of a local education authority overruling, undermining or watering down a decision that has been reached by the governors, the head and parents.

In his reply, my hon. Friend the Minister showed a sympathetic understanding of the wishes of parents of children at Manor high school at Oadby, and of governors. I have met them more than once and they all want to continue with uniform, which they find a great asset. I fully support them. My hon. Friend said:

"School uniform is not specifically mentioned in the Bill. However, as a general rule, matters not specifically assigned are allocated (under clause 16(1)) to the governing body as part of their responsibility for the conduct of the school. While 'conduct' as such is not defined, we take the view—and will be issuing guidance on this—that as well as being something of a residual responsibility, it is concerned with everything that goes to make up the ethos of a school. School uniform does, in our view, contribute significantly to a school's ethos and thus, under the provisions of the Bill, the question of school uniform would be one for the governing body."

Earlier tonight, governors and teachers from Manor high school were in the Public Gallery. They hoped that this debate would come up sooner. I should be failing in my duty if I did not make their anxieties plain. I hope that guidelines in the form spelt out in the third paragraph of my hon. Friend's letter of 9 July will appear before long. If that happens, this short debate will not have been wasted.

I give the Bill a warm welcome. It is long overdue and much needed.

4 am

Mrs. Rumbold: I note the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) about school uniforms.

I did not have the privilege of serving on the Standing Committee that considered the Bill, but I have considered the measure in considerable depth and I believe that, on the whole, the House has produced a good piece of legislation which I welcome.

The Bill incorporates a number of elements that I believe will produce considerable improvements in the running of schools and in the curriculum. I welcome the Bill. I hope that the House will welcome it and that the country will benefit from it.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Rail Freight Services (Harwich)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

4.1 am

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): I regard this as one of the most important Adjournment debates that I have initiated. I am trying to protect local jobs and the jobs of British seafarers in an area which has the highest rate of unemployment in East Anglia and the second highest rate in south-east England. According to the June 1986 Manpower Services Commission report, unemployment in my constituency averages 15·8 per cent. In Harwich it is nearly 14 per cent.

In my plea for the maintenance of a Harwich-based train ferry I have the support of management and the unions for a united rescue operation which will give the seafarers the chance to prove that Harwich is still the right place for these train ferries. In the view of the management of Sealink, that is an economically viable proposition, and that is why I am supporting it.

However, it is a backs-to-the-wall operation for us in Harwich, for we make our case against the background that a commercial buyer, Sea Containers, paid far too high a price for Sealink, the company for which the seafarers work. Sea Containers paid £66 million and I am told that the next offer was in single figures.

At the time of the sale in July 1984 the former Secretary of State for Transport said that the Sealink workers would "join a progressive and expanding group with the substantial resources necessary to make a real success of this important enterprise."—[*Official Report,* 18 July 1984; Vol. 64, c 313.] Alas, Sea Containers has had a very bad year because of the depressed state of world shipping. Therefore, it will not be able to subsidise Sealink through some of its present troubles unless everyone realises that this is a backs-to-the-wall operation. As a consequence, badly needed investment to replace long years of neglect by British Rail will not be forthcoming as quickly as Sea Containers would have wished, not only because of the bad year that Sea Containers has had but because the Channel tunnel go-ahead this year has made borrowing for shipping and ferry interests on our east coast far more difficult.

It is a strange coincidence that I should be given this debate on Trafalgar day as I try to protect seafarers' jobs against French subsidised competition. Indeed, we seem to face a deal between two state monopolies which will mean at least 100 seafarers losing their jobs which will, in the end, go to French seamen because the French state railways have subsidised the building of a giant new ferry.

This is neither fair competition nor a fair market place. British Rail, in conjunction with the French state railways, is eliminating competition ahead of the building of the Channel fixed link when it will have a monopoly over prices. That is why I think that this act by British Rail in forcing the ferries to move from Harwich should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The Government should ensure that no move is made until that has been done and a report received from the commission on British Rail's intentions and on the consequences of the move.

Apart from the action that I hope the Government will take, I shall explain why we in Harwich believe that it is an economically viable proposition to keep the Cambridge ferry operating from Harwich. If that is accepted, it makes the case for referring to the commission British Rail's action over forcing the move of the train ferries.

Our reasons are simple. The train ferry terminal at Harwich has been properly maintained and can continue in use for many more years. It can also cope with significantly larger vessels at a modest price. The marshalling yard at Harwich can cope with additional traffic. Its main arrival and departure sidings have been electrified as part of the total electrification of the railway to Harwich. This has been paid for by the EEC.

Rail services between Harwich and the midlands and the north of England can be routed to avoid London. Continuation at Harwich will avoid heavy redundancy costs for between 185 and 195 British seafarers and shore staff. Surely it is a waste of national economic resources to construct a train ferry terminal and marshalling yard at Dover or Ramsgate, especially with the Channel tunnel in prospect, when perfectly good facilities exist in Harwich.

The big sell has been the apparent long-term economic advantages of concentrating the Harwich services in Dover as the vessels can make more round voyages in a 24-hour period. This requires a brand new terminal at Dover which is estimated to cost between £8 million and £10 million. This gives rise to problems of justification and financing in light of the Channel tunnel project. There is every probability that British seafarers from Harwich who took part in the Falklands campaign will have their jobs taken by the French because their Government have subsidised the train ferry to replace the Harwich ferries.

Our Merchant Navy is now being reduced to a level that could not sustain support to our armed forces for a Falklands-scale operation, let alone our commitment to NATO. Let us not forget that it takes 13 years to produce a master mariner. We must pay much more attention to what is happening in our merchant shipping fleet. It is a serious subject for another debate.

Is it wise for more and more of our continental trade to be routed by French ports when 40 per cent. of our continental trade is with Germany and trade with eastern Europe and the USSR is likely to increase much more in future?

Is it not better to have a choice of two British terminals rather than one in the event of breakdowns or strikes? It is very rare in recent times for both the Harwich and Dover terminals to be blocked at the same time. The customers who own or use train ferry wagons prefer the choice of two British terminals.

I am a strong supporter of privatisation, particularly since I have seen how badly Harwich has fared under British Rail compared with Felixstowe, but we are now in an exceptional situation. Surely, in view of what has happened to Sea Containers, and bearing in mind that we are not competing on a level playingfield because of subsidies paid by the French, the Government should examine the situation again.

Over a month ago I wrote to the Prime Minister and spoke to the Secretary of State for Transport and told them that privatisation was on trial over what was happening about the Sealink operations. I was also in touch with the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who has responsibility for privatisation, because I was so disturbed by what was happening and about the difficult financial situation of Sea Containers.

When Sealink was sold for £66 million, it was not a knock-down price as was suggested by the Leader of the

[Sir Julian Ridsdale]

Opposition. As it turned out, it was far too high a price. It could be said that Sea Containers was shabbily treated by the Government and British Rail by their undeclared commitment, at that time, to the Channel tunnel and by BR's declared policy to move the train ferries to Dover. Surely it would have been better business, knowing the need for investment, to have warned Sea Containers that the price was too high. As it is, the serious position has put at risk the jobs of seafarers in Harwich and made investment doubly difficult, especially after the Channel tunnel announcement.

I hope that the Government will refer the action by British Rail, enforcing the move of train ferries to Dover, to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and persuade British Rail to renegotiate Sealink's plan to keep the Cambridge ferry at Harwich, at least for the time being, while the commission is considering the proposed move.

We are in a new position, caused by the difficulties of Sea Containers. The least that we can do is to help its subsidiary, Sealink—which is on its own—and press for a renegotiation to determine the new price that it can offer British Rail to keep the Cambridge ferry at Harwich. Indeed, if the Government cannot help, I hope that British Rail will pay attention to what I have said and at least bridge the gap that is so serious for the seafarers.

As Member of Parliament for the seafarers in Harwich, since the move was threatened at the beginning of August I have tried to persuade British Rail to support keeping the Cambridge ferry in Harwich, at least until the position becomes a great deal clearer. I must tell the Government that no satisfactory figures have been given to me, even in confidence. British Rail, to put it mildly, has a mysterious way of accounting. No figures seem to be available even over a five-year period. Yet in 1985 traffic levels were considerably up. It is no wonder that the seafarers are desperate.

I am sure that we have to make privatisation to be seen to succeed, and until it does we have an obligation to the seafarers affected by the current position. I have reached the conclusion that British Rail's intention is to break the back of our ferry operation in Harwich, so that eventually they will have a complete monopoly with French state railways. The move to Dover of the Cambridge ferry is a temporary expedient until the French ferry is built. That is why BR will not negotiate a reasonable price for Sealink to keep the Cambridge ferry in Harwich. They fear that Sealink will eventually build up a viable, competitive ferry service and show up the complete failure of British Rail to invest in our ports or modern ships over the past 20 years.

Indeed, in the recent negotiations between British Rail and Sealink, Sealink made an offer to which BR never responded. In my view, these are not commerical decisions — they are very suitable arrangements, or, to put it more unkindly, they are fixes between two state monopolies. That is why I think that it is the Government's duty to report British Rail's action to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It is the only way that we can be fair to ourselves, the seafarers, our country and the British merchant shipping fleet, which is dwindling every day — and many of us take very seriously the plight that it is in.

4.14 am

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): Despite it being 4.14 am, my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) has stated robustly the case on behalf of his constituents, expressed his concern to protect jobs and sought my intervention. It might be helpful if I begin by explaining the relationship between Government and British Rail because this is central to the difficult position in which my hon. Friend places me.

It is essential for the efficient management of the British Rail business that there should be a clear definition of the responsibilities which belong to Government and those which belong to railways. It is essential also that the railway management is given the freedom to get on and run its railway without constant political interference. That is why we gave the British Rail chairman a clear and comprehensive set of objectives in October 1983, and why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced new objectives for the chairman to the House earlier today. Both the 1983 objectives and those announced today endorse the policy of successive Governments for many years that British Rail's freight business should act as a commercial business. It has been made clear also that we expect the freight sector to provide an adequate return on capital in the same way as any other business.

I must tell my hon. Friend that it would be wrong if British Rail were to give subsidies to its freight sector, so enabling it to compete artificially and unfairly with its private sector road competitors. It is right that British Rail should receive no subsidy for freight operations. It can meet its target only by succeeding in the market place, which means meeting customers' requirements at prices that they are prepared to pay, and that is against very tough competition at present.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: Would my hon. Friend agree that there are difficult circumstances when the French Government are really giving subsidies for the building of a French ferry?

Mr. Mitchell: I take my hon. Friend's point and I shall address it shortly.

I believe that it is right that British Rail should operate its freight sector on a commercial basis, competing for the traffic for which it is best suited. We believe that the interests of the transport user are best served by the maximum competition, and competition is ultimately in the best interests of the transport industries themselves. Nobody likes the immediate effects of the difficult decisions which have to be taken, but that does not mean that those decisions can or should be ducked. The surest way to ongoing decline is to fail to adapt quickly to changing markets.

For a number of years there have been two train ferry services to the continent in the context of the debate, one from Harwich to Zeebrugge and the other from Dover to Dunkirk. The shipping services involved at Harwich were operated by British Rail's subsidiary, Sealink. When Sealink was sold in 1984 to Mr. James Sherwood's group, Sea Containers, BR entered into a contract with Sealink for the continued operation of the service.

Unfortunately, the train ferry business has been losing heavily for several years. The number of rail wagons carried on ships specially designed for that purpose has dropped from 114,000 in 1970 to only 66,000 in 1984, and

the train ferry activity in 1984 incurred substantial losses. Revenue failed even to meet shipping costs alone by £4 million per annum, and made no contribution towards direct rail costs. That scale of losses is pretty shattering. No business can operate profitably if it has to carry the overheads of a much larger volume of traffic than is now available. The operation is split into two separate activities and it is fundamentally uneconomic. The ships are too small and too slow to be cost-effective on the run from Harwich to Zeebrugge and the distance is more than twice that from Dover to Dunkirk. The two ships operating out of Harwich are able to achieve only one round trip a day each. At Dover, three ships of the same size can achieve eight round trips between them. The same volume carried in those eight round trips could be achieved in two round trips by a larger, faster vessel.

British Rail has, therefore, decided that the only way in which it can make the train ferry business pay is by using larger, faster ships on a short sea crossing. This will enable the trains to share the available space with roll-on/roll-off traffic, and the higher speed and shorter sea crossing will allow the ships to make a larger number of round trips each day thus reducing overall costs to something approaching £5 million a year. British Rail's decision was taken only after protracted negotiations in which Sealink reduced the price it was offering at Harwich, but that was not sufficient to make continued operations viable. British Rail's decision means that, from January, it will stop operating out of Harwich.

I turn to my hon. Friend's point about an alleged offer by Sealink which was not replied to by British Rail. My understanding is that in a telephone conversation it was made clear that that offer was no longer extant. In any case, it would not have been sufficient to change the decision.

British Rail tells us that its employees involved at Harwich will be offered redundancy terms or alternative employment on other BR services. I understand that there will be some redundancies among the merchant seaman involved, although I believe that some of them at least will be offered employment within Sealink. I very much regret the need for job losses, but from the evidence available it appears that BR has no realistic alternative. If it is to face up to competition in international freight transport, it has to find ways of reducing its costs. The whole future of train ferry operations is very much in the balance and there are clearly a number of difficult decisions facing BR. However, they are decisions that BR must take on the basis of its own commercial interests. It is only by this means that the long-term security of trade and jobs will be preserved. To do anything other than that would be nothing short of commercial suicide.

I understand my hon. Friend's concern, but I think that his suggestion that BR's decision should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is misguided. British Rail has no monopoly of freight services, internally or to the continent, and it will have no monopoly of freight services through the Channel tunnel. Freight is an extremely competitive business. That is why British Rail must retrench and rationalise to remain in this type of business. There is no way that it has a monopoly in this field.

Despite the financial and commercial arguments, my hon. Friend has left me in no doubt that the decision is hotly contested in Harwich, and that rumours are going around which imply that BR's motives were other than purely commercial ones. I should like to deal with some of those questions.

My hon. Friend claimed that privatisation is on trial. As I have pointed out, the proportion of rail freight is declining, and one of the two routes concerned had to go. It is geography and the economics of operation which dictate which of the two routes goes. The economics of operation are not likely to be substantially affected by any change of ownership. A change of ownership cannot possibly affect geography. The length of the crossing to Zeebrugge is the main reason why the Harwich service cannot be operated as economically as the Kent service. The decision would have been the same whoever owned Sealink.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: The Minister has referred to figures showing a decline in freight rates. My figures show that between 1984 and 1985 they went up by between 10 and 15 per cent. That is why I challenge some of the figures that British Rail has given the Minister.

Mr. Mitchell: If the figure has gone up by between 10 and 15 per cent., that represents a drop in the ocean of what is needed to make the operation viable. What is the wonder of the matter is that British Rail has continued to operate a service at a massive loss for so long. It is not that it has now reached the point at which it is rationalising one service across the continent. For a long time it has split its operations in two and has lost money on both of them. We must take that on board.

My hon. Friend raised the quesion of the subsidy for the French ship. I know that certain fears exist. It is suggested that the French SNCF vessel which BR plans to use instead of the two older, smaller Sealink vessels is unfairly subsidised. The information we have been able to obtain leads us to believe that no operating subsidies are available to that ship; nor do we have any evidence that it has received shipbuilding subsidies beyond those permitted within the EEC and which would have applied had it been built by BR in this country.

My hon. Friend suggested that the loss of the two ferries might have defence implications and affect the United Kingdom's ability to respond in an international emergency. Those ferries would be used in time of emergency not as rail carriers but for heavy vehicles. However, neither is ideal for that purpose. Any loss of vessels for defence purposes is undesirable but at present we are not short of vessels suitable for the roles that these two Sealink ships might play in an emergency.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: I am concerned not about the loss of the two vessels but about the loss of seafarers' jobs. I underline that it takes 13 years to train a master mariner properly. Because we shall lose seafarers' jobs in this case, we are in danger of putting our defence interests at risk.

Mr. Mitchell: I shall draw my hon. Friend's point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I accept the validity of his point about the length of time it takes to train seamen, but I do not think that, in the context of the massive losses which BR is suffering on the Harwich to Zeebrugge route, it would be proper to burden BR with a non-commercial remit to train seafarers. There must be other ways to approach that problem.

My hon. Friend expressed his worries on electrification. Most of the electrification project is unaffected by the

[Mr. Mitchell]

Harwich decision, but some expenditure on wiring of the sidings at Harwich has been rendered nugatory. That is unfortunate, but circumstances have changed since the original decision was made. British Rail will be trying to ensure that such waste does not recur. I should add that the EEC transport infrastructure grant was not paid for the train ferry electrification work. I am happy to relieve my hon. Friend's mind on one point: the transport infrastructure grant which the European Commission is paying towards electrification is purely for passenger services and is not affected by withdrawal of the train ferry service. My hon. Friend said that the operation to which he referred was a viable business proposition. I think that I have been able to explain that it is not. It has been losing so much money that it could not possibly continue.

I should like to end on a more optimistic note. United Kingdom passenger and freight traffic have been expanding for a long time. Prospects are for continued growth. Freight traffic generally through the port of Harwich has increased from 2·15 million tonnes in 1970 to 3·75 million tonnes in 1984. As my hon. Friend is aware, Sealink Harbours Ltd. has plans for further expansion of its facilities at Parkeston quay and is seeking powers from Parliament to enable it to undertake the necessary development. I am well aware that BR's decision is a blow to my hon. Friend and his constituents, but I hope that he and they will appreciate that in the circumstances which I have described BR had no real alternative and Harwich still has a bright future in other activities.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Four o'clock am.

House of Commons

Wednesday 22 October 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BLYTH HARBOUR BILL *[LORDS] (By Order)*

As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL BILL *[LORDS] (By Order)*

Read a Second time and committed.

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the City of London (Various Powers) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and shall be ordered to be read the third time;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[LORDS]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office no later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first time and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

Ordered,

That in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against bill)" were omitted;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

RIVER HUMBER (BURCOM OUTFALL) BILL *[LORDS]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the River Humber (Burcom Outfall) Bill [*Lords*] shall have leave to suspend further proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That, no petitions against the Bill having been presented within the time limited within the present Session, no Petitioners shall be heard before any Committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the Committee;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

Ordered,

That in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the works "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against bill)" were omitted;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

To be communicated to the Lords, and their concurrence desired thereto.

Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [21 October],

That the Promoters of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session.

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table with the New Clause as added on Consideration of the Bill as amended.

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

British Railways (Stansted) Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [21 October],

That the Promoters of the British Railways (Stansted) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on thich the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Area Tourist Boards

1. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to review the structure of area tourist boards and their relationship to other public bodies with similar promotional responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): My right hon. and learned Friend does not have any plans to undertake such a review. We consider that area tourist boards remain the most suitable mechanism for involving the private sector and local authorities in local tourism.

Mr. Pollock: I welcome my hon. Friend back to Scotland and wish him well in his new duties.

Does my hon. Friend agree that tourism is one of the most important aspects of the Scottish rural economy and that, for it to be fully effective, there must be the fullest possible co-operation between local authorities, Government agencies and the trade? Does he further agree that the welcome extension of the Highlands and Islands Development Board area to embrace parts of my constituency provides an opportunity for a reappraisal by all concerned of how best to achieve effective promotional and marketing opportunities?

Mr. Lang: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks and agree with him about the importance of tourism in the Scottish economy. I also agree with him about the importance of collaboration and co-operation between the

various bodies at national and area level. I am sure that my hon. Friend will find that the HIDB, the Scottish Development Agency and the Scottish Tourist Board are ready to co-operate locally to facilitate the advance of tourism in the Moray area.

Mr. Buchan: Will the Minister urgently ask his right hon. and learned Friend to consider the massive job and tourist implications of yesterday's announcement that Glasgow is to be the cultural capital of Europe? For that reason, will he persuade the Minister for the Arts to go back on the statement that there will be no Government funding? We require major Government funding if the proposal is to do a job for the economy and the culture of Scotland and of Britain.

Mr. Lang: I share the hon. Gentleman's pleasure at Glasgow's success in winning the contest. Progress in Glasgow during the past few years has been quite remarkable and I am sure that it will fulfil the role satisfactorily. I feel sure that the availability of funding from the private sector and from local authorities will be adequate to maintain the momentum that they are now developing.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that this is a likely area for the provision of new jobs in the future? To assist the industry, will he maintain the high Government expenditure on roads, particularly on the A75, where there have been unfortunate accidents lately, and do what he can to help the industry over the rating of caravans and caravan sites?

Mr. Lang: I, too, attach importance to the A75. Our record on increasing expenditure on roads is remarkable, as I am sure my hon. Friend will agree. That is reflected in the high quality of roads in Scotland available to the tourist industry and others.

Mr. Kirkwood: I wholeheartedly agree with the Minister's statement that the area tourist boards play an important and valuable role in the promotion of tourism in Scotland. If that is the case, will he confirm that the Scottish Office block grant to the Scottish Tourist Board for onward transmission to local tourist boards has not kept pace with inflation during the past three years? Many area tourist boards depend heavily on that subvention to promote their activities.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Tourist Board certainly has an important role to play, but an important role must also be played locally. The enthusiasm, local enterprise and initiative in area tourist boards are the factors that can generate the most effective tourism for each area in Scotland.

New Towns (Housing)

2. **Mr. Norman Hogg** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on general housing provision in the new towns; and if he will make a statement.

4. **Mr. Robin Cook** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has reached a decision on the moratorium on house building in new towns in the light of recent submissions of the development corporations.

Mr. Lang: Representations have been received from each of the new town development corporations, from Fife regional council and from the forum of Scottish local authorities with new towns. We shall take full account of all representations before reaching decisions on the policy review.

Mr. Hogg: Does the Minister accept that there is a need for some urgency in reaching a swift conclusion on this matter and that he should respond positively to the representations that were made to him on Friday 3 October when he met the forum of Scottish local authorities with new towns? Surely today is an opportunity to make such a statement. Failing that, can a statement be made in the next few days so that the local authorities with new towns will know where they are going?

Mr. Lang: I indeed had a most useful meeting with the representatives of the Scottish local authorities with new towns and with the hon. Members for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie). As I made clear to them, the considerations affecting these matters must also take account of the wider implications for the public expenditure survey. However, an announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Mr. Cook: Will the Minister recognise that this housing ban is causing particular hardship to a young community, such as Livingston, where every year 400 young couples marry and seek a home from a development corporation which is not allowed to build houses for them? Does he accept that all five local authorities representing new towns and all five Members of Parliament have called for the ban to be lifted, and that they are now supported by all five development corporations which were appointed by him and his colleagues? As nobody representing the new towns, whether elected or non-elected, now supports the ban, what possible mandate can the Minister claim for sticking to it?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman suggests that there is unity, and to some extent there may be. Nevertheless, there are differences between the levels of need as assessed by the new town corporations and by the local authorities. The demographic factor to which the hon. Gentleman refers was also brought out in the SLANT report and it is certainly to be taken into account. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that in Livingston private house ownership doubled within six years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: May I add my personal warm congratulations to my hon. Friend on his new responsibilities? My hon. Friend referred to the increase in house ownership in Livingston. Does he agree that the five Scottish new towns generally have an excellent record on selling their housing to sitting tenants? Can he give the House an indication of the overall position for the other new towns?

Mr. Lang: I am particularly grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome. He is absolutely right about the importance of increasing private ownership in the new towns. There has been a substantial increase over the years, but ownership is still at 34 per cent., which is rather below the Scottish average. However, he might like to know that the completion rates for private building have doubled during the past four years.

Mr. Lambie: May I add my representations to those of my two colleagues and ask that the decision on lifting the moratorium be given as quickly as possible? Is the Minister

aware that in the new town of Irvine not only are second generation families unable to be rehoused, but small businesses cannot attract key workers for the development of those businesses because the priority list is now much longer than the list of most of the other district council tenants?

Mr. Lang: I accept the importance that the hon. Gentleman attaches to the need to be able to continue to attract industry to the new towns. It is also worth mentioning that this year the HRA capital allocation to Cunninghame district council is 60 per cent. higher than it was two years ago.

Mr. Henderson: Has the rate of purchase of new town development corporation houses by sitting tenants been matched by other local authorities?

Mr. Lang: I cannot give my hon. Friend those figures now, but I shall write to him.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Does the Minister appreciate that the sale of housing does not meet the needs of many thousands of people? How long will it be before he once again permits the building of houses for rent?

Mr. Lang: I accept that it is necessary to achieve balanced communities and a proper integration between general and special housing needs. That is one reason why we give close consideration to the reports that we have received.

Mr. Maxton: Will the Minister assure us that the new clause rushed into the Housing and Planning Bill in another place by the Department of the Environment to allow housing in new towns to be privatised will not cover Scotland? If it does not, will he give an assurance that there will be no equivalent legislation in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: The policy on this matter has not changed.

Inverclyde Initiative

3. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Development Agency concerning the Inverclyde Initiative; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I discussed the work of the initiative with representatives of the Scottish Development Agency when I visited the offices of the initiative in Greenock in July. Accepting the difficulties the initiative faces, I am satisfied that sound progress is being made.

Dr. Godman: Has not the time arrived to increase the cash injection into the Inverclyde Initiative? If increased funds were made available to the manpower and venture training group, unemployed people, of whom there are thousands in Inverclyde, could be helped to set up businesses and, perhaps more importantly, to develop community enterprises. Recently, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry gave similar help to those shipbuilding communities which were badly hit by redundancies. Could not the same be done for Inverclyde?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has overlooked the major progress that has already been made. Plans for a £20 million redevelopment of the customs house quay site in Greenock, which could lead to the creation of 700 jobs, are well advanced. In addition, the Scottish Development Agency has acquired land in Port Glasgow for the construction of a new factory. Given that there was a five-year programme for the initiative to achieve about 2,000 jobs, it is encouraging that already projects are in hand which could achieve almost half of that figure.

Mrs. McCurley: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that congratulations are in order for Mr. Donald Draffan and his colleagues involved with the Inverclyde Initiative on the amazing amount of work that has been accomplished so far? Does he agree that a great deal more might have been achieved had it not been for the carping criticisms by the local Labour party in that area?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Those involved with the initiative believe that major progress is being made. I had useful discussions with them when I met members of the Inverclyde Initiative.

They did not put to me proposals similar to those put by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). They believe that they are making major progress in the way that I have described.

Mr. Ron Brown: Recognising that the Edinburgh *Evening News* and Lothian regional council have revealed that Leith has the highest unemployment on the east coast of Scotland, would it not be appropriate to give more resources to the Scottish Development Agency to expand the Leith project, so putting people back to work and doing the things which are essential to the community? Would that not be an appropriate use of public money?

Mr. Rifkind: I am not certain which part of Inverclyde the hon. Gentleman represents. Although I appreciate that Leith has serious unemployment problems, they come nowhere near to the problems of Inverclyde. That is why the Government have set up the Inverclyde Initiative.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. George Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the increase in unemployment in north Lanarkshire since May 1979.

Mr. Lang: Between May 1979 and September 1986 unemployment rose from 15,531 in the then north Lanarkshire travel-to-work area to 33,659 in the new Lanarkshire travel-to-work area, but because of changes in the travel-to-work area boundaries and in the method of count, these figures are not strictly comparable.

Mr. Robertson: When will the Minister realise the real human misery that lies behind those statistics of failure? What will people make of the contrast between the bland public relations nonsense from New St. Andrews House and the Government's view of the future for Strathclyde and north Lanarkshire contained in the report to the European development fund, which states that there is "little possibility of sufficient expansion in the economy to reduce unemployment significantly in the next few years." Is it not time that the Scottish people realised that we need not new Ministers at the Scottish Office but a new Government?

Mr. Lang: The Government take the problem of unemployment seriously. That is why we are dedicating almost £3 billion to employment and training measures. That is why almost five times as many Scots as in 1979 qualify for such measures. The document to which the hon. Gentleman refers was a working document based on

figures compiled from submissions from local and other public authorities. A similar document was produced in 1982, and it is highly irresponsible to make the use of it that has been made in certain quarters. This is against the interests of Scotland.

Mr. James Hamilton: Following the two announcements made in my constituency about Caterpillar and Honeywell, which are not labour intensive firms, but have at least allowed a consolidation of jobs, will the Minister recognise that in the steel industry, particularly in my constituency in the Clydesdale tube works, morale is at a very low level after a large number of redundancies? There could be further redundancies, which will further aggravate the position. Is the Minister aware that in the Strathclyde region, where we have 14·1 per cent. unemployment, this will be catastrophic? Is the Minister thinking of doing something about it?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is aware that we are already doing a great deal about it, as I have already said. I am glad that he welcomes the announcement made by Caterpillar of the £62 million investment in its Uddingston factory, securing the jobs of some 1,200 employees, and the Honeywell extension opened by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State the other day. Within Lanarkshire there are 4,600 community programme places and about 6,000 youth training places. There is evidence of our commitment to helping to solve the unemployment problem.

Dr. Bray: Is the Minister aware that none of the £30 million investment — announced by the Secretary of State during the recess — in Ravenscraig is new money, but merely for the relining of an existing blast furnace and for coal injection, and the attempt by the Secretary of State to suggest that there is any security there for the future is fallacious? Is he further aware that the male unemployment rate in Craigneuk in the ward that contains Ravenscraig is already 36 per cent.? Is he aware that there is no alternative but an entirely new industrial initiative, for the the future of Lanarkshire?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman's gloom is the last thing that Scotland needs at the moment. It was not my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State who made the announcement by BSC. I suspect that it is only the Labour party that would put £30 million into something that it intended to close.

Mr. Maclennan: In an earlier answer the Minister appeared to be casting doubt on the reliability of the figures that the Government have used to support bids for regional assistance from the Community. Does he accept the accuracy of these assumptions, or not?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman knows that the Government do not make employment forecasts. This was a working document compiled as the basis for negotiation for European regional development fund grants, from which Scotland has benefited over the past decade to the tune of around £616 million. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that it is a worthless exercise to submit a detailed document to secure these continuing grants for the benefit of Scotland, he is wrong.

Mr. Ewing: We congratulate the Minister on his appointment, and are immensely relieved that he will not be long in the job. My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Mr. Hamilton) spoke about Ravenscraig. Why is the Scottish Office, in the regional development document, talking consistently about continuing job losses in the steel industry in Scotland — which is obviously the official view of the Scottish Office — when we get double standards from Ministers deceiving the work force at Motherwell into believing that they are in favour of developing the plant? When will the Minister make proposals for investment in the coke ovens, which would be a clear sign of the future security of the Ravenscraig steel plant?

Mr. Lang: Again, I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman might welcome the substantial investment already committed by BSC to Ravenscraig. The hon. Gentleman knows that we do not make employment forecasts. We can rely more substantially on the fact that some 50,000 new jobs have been created in Scotland in the past three years. That is a higher rate of job creation than has been achieved either in Germany or Japan.

Labour Statistics

7. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures for Scotland with special reference to youth and long-term unemployment.

Mr. Rifkind: The full range of employment and training measures is being brought to bear on the problem. The YTS in particular is showing successes, with over 38,000 participants in Scotland in 1986-87 expected to reach a target of 51,000 for the year as a whole. Under the restart programme over 26,000 long-term unemployed have received assistance towards finding a job or training.

Mr. Hamilton: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that, despite the fiddling of unemployment figures no fewer than 16 times since 1979, the basic brutality is that unemployment is going up and up? There is no indication whatever that they are likely to come down between now and the general election, even if the Government change their policies — which they have no intention of doing. Does the Minister not recognise that 17 people in the dole queue are chasing each vacant job? Is that the image that the Government seek to portray, the image of a caring Government?

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman was prepared to use his normal compassionate and flexible attitude in considering these matters, he would acknowledge that the situation in Scotland bears good comparison with the situation in many other parts of the developed industrial world. I remind him that in Italy 54 per cent. of the adult population are in work. In Germany the figure is 59 per cent. and in France it is 60 per cent. In Scotland no less than 63 per cent. of the adult population are in work. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to give an objective assessment of employment in Scotland, he should explain why Scotland has more of its adult population in work than any other comparable European country.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will my right hon. and learned Friend ask the civil servants in his Department to estimate how much unemployment in Scotland would be increased if the Opposition had their way and we saw the cancellation of Trident, the destruction of nuclear power generation in Scotland, with the resulting costs for industry, and the rating of agricultural land and buildings?

It is widely believed that those factors would add some 20,000 people to the dole queue. Does he agree that the Opposition are hypocritical on this as [illegible] erything else?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right. Quite apart from the Opposition's defence policy leaving Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom defenceless, it would result in severe damage to the employment prospects in a number of parts of Scotland, especially parts of the west of Scotland which depend on defence-related jobs. The Opposition have not even begun to come to terms with the employment implications of their foolish policies.

Mr. Martin: Unemployment in Scotland is terrible. The redundancies in the railway workshops in my constituency mean that in some streets not one young boy or girl has a proper job. The only thing offered to them is the youth training scheme by which young people are being exploited. Will the Minister take action to provide proper jobs in my community?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has made the most disgraceful remark that I have heard for a long time——

Mr. Martin: I will get the evidence. The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows it.

Mr. Rifkind: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that of those in Scotland who complete youth training schemes more than 50 per cent. go straight into full-time employment and that a further 10 per cent. go into further training—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman thinks that that is exploitation he should discuss it with the youngsters who have got jobs through youth training schemes.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Further to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the SSEB has estimated that the Labour party's nuclear energy policy could increase electricity prices in Scotland by up to 25 per cent.? Is there any better recipe for wiping out manufacturing industry?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. Not only would such an increase in electricity prices be extremely unpopular with the wider public, but it would also have a devastating effect upon the ability of our industry to compete internationally. That factor gives rise to great anxiety.

Mr. Ernie Ross: What involvement has the Secretary of State had with his colleagues in the Department of Employment in the awarding of approved training organisation status under the new two-year YTS scheme? In my constituency young people involved in the scheme and their parents are worried about the lack of reviews and the lack of continuous assessment by many of those companies. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman look at this problem to ensure that companies that are given approved training organisation status have the structure and the facilities to back up the claims that are made?

Mr. Rifkind: Naturally, we shall look very carefully at any suggestion that they are unable to respond and I shall ensure that any information the hon. Gentleman wishes to draw to my attention is properly looked at.

Mr. Eadie: Surely the right hon. and learned Gentleman must be aware, since he has called for objectivity, that there is a feeling abroad in Scotland that, politically, his party has written off Scotland, and vice versa. Is he not concerned about this, particularly when one listens to some of the speeches of his Prime Minister? Unemployment in Scotland, however much the right hon. and learned Gentleman may try to wriggle today, is an absolute disgrace, and something must be done about it.

Mr. Rifkind: Given that unemployment is indeed at an unacceptably high level, the unemployment percentage in Scotland, nevertheless, is lower than it is in several parts of England. It is lower than in Wales. It is also lower than in Northern Ireland. It is false to suggest that Scotland has a particular problem that is unique in the United Kingdom. The simple fact is that Scotland's relative position with regard to unemployment is more favourable now than it was in 1979, compared with the other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Forth: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree with the view that has been expressed in the United States and Japan that the future increase in employment throughout the developed world is almost certain to come from the service sector and that an undue preoccupation, if not obsession, with manufacturing will not help future employment? Will he therefore agree that the main policy thrust should be to seek to take advantage of the service sector, not only in Scotland but throughout the United Kingdom? Will he confirm that this will be the policy of his Department?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not agree entirely with what my hon. Friend has said. While I believe that he is undoubtedly correct that many jobs are coming and will continue to come from the service sector, and while it is also correct that some of the older, traditional industries cannot expect to offer the same employment opportunities in the future as in the past, there is evidence to suggest that a large number of small businesses are being created in the manufacturing sector that will be able to produce important employment opportunities both in Scotland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dewar: I take the right hon. and learned Gentleman back to his Government's application for assistance under the regional development fund. Does he seriously agree with his junior colleague who suggested that it was highly irresponsible for either the Opposition or anybody else to take an interest in what clearly was a considered judgment and prediction by the Department of Trade and Industry? Will the Secretary of State say whether he accepts the quite clear prediction that there will be no significant reduction in unemployment in Strathclyde and in most of Scotland in the year 1990?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman has said, in putting forward its proposals to the European Commission the DTI seriously considered the case that needs to be put to create the maximum opportunities for regional investment in the various parts of the United Kingdom. The hon. Gentleman is well aware that we are talking about 17 volumes of evidence and that that part of it which refers to Scotland covers some 200 pages. If, in seeking to acquire regional funds for Scotland, the hon. Gentleman were to put a submission to Brussels which concentrated purely on what had already been achieved and on the remarkable achievements in many areas of employment, he would have very little prospect of a

continuance of the major funds that we have obtained from the European Community. No fewer than £600 million of regional funds has been acquired from the European Community to be spent in Scotland. It is on that basis that that report ought to be accepted.

Mr. Roy Jenkins: If the right hon. and learned Gentleman can escape for a moment from the mass of verbiage in which he has sought to bury that question, can he tell us whether the DTI was seeking to mislead the Commission, or whether it was telling the truth?

Mr. Rifkind: I am always happy to accept advice from the right hon. Gentleman on questions of verbiage. We were seeking to highlight those aspects of the situation in the United Kingdom that would maximise our prospects for achieving—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am trying to get on so that we can reach Question 14.

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well how the European Commission operates. He knows exactly the criteria which would best achieve maximum regional funds for Scotland as well as the United Kingdom as a whole.

Scottish Trades Union Council

8. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the general council of the Scottish Trades Union Congress; what subjects were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I last met members of the General Council of the Scottish Trades Union Congress on 20 June. Subjects discussed included shipbuilding, the steel and coal industries and the British Rail Engineering Ltd. workshops at Springburn.

Mr. Marshall: In view of that reply, does the Secretary of State intend to meet the STUC again in the near future, and will he then discuss the findings and recommendations of the Main committee report on teachers' pay and conditions of service? Will he make a statement to the House now as to his intentions regarding the cost of implementing that report?

Mr. Rifkind: I have not received any further request from the STUC for such a meeting. With regard to the Main inquiry, the Government, the Education Institute of Scotland and others involved in educational matters are giving serious and deep consideration to all the recommendations of the Main report. The EIS, as the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, has not come to any conclusion on these matters and neither have the Government. However, as soon as we are in a position to indicate our findings we shall make a statement to the House.

Mr. Pollock: When my right hon. and learned Friend next meets the general council, will he draw its attention to the highly successful job creation work of local enterprise trusts? Is he aware that last Monday at the annual general meeting of the Moray local enterprise trust it was announced that several jobs had been created or saved? *[Interruption.]* A significant number of jobs in the Moray area were saved or created at the remarkably low figure of £124 per job. In the light of that, will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that the Scottish Development Agency can continue to give full funding assistance, as it has done in the past year, of some £15,000 towards that excellent work?

Mr. Rifkind: The enterprise trusts are yet another initiative by the Government to help employment prospects and to achieve maximum co-operation between local business men and others. I pay tribute to what has already been achieved in that area.

Mr. Steel: How will the Secretary of State explain to the STUC that the Government are unable to give it a forecast of unemployment in Scotland and are unable to give the House such a forecast but are able to tell the European Commission that the Government's estimate is 331,000 in the year 1990? Is that to be regarded as lining on the begging bowl, or is it a real estimate?

Mr. Rifkind: If the right hon. Gentleman had read the report rather than a press release he would have seen that it makes it clear that the Government are making no forecast about employment, because we follow the same practice as previous Labour Governments and never make forecasts of that kind.

Mr. Dewar: I accept the Secretary of State's point about the need to look carefully at the Main recommendations. We all agree that the teachers, as well as the Government, must look at the package as a whole. We certainly do not want a rushed decision perhaps turning on one or two of the more complicated elements in an interlocking and important package. However, will the Secretary of State accept that the Government have their part to play? Is it not essential that the Government make it clear at an early stage that they will be prepared to fund their share of any settlement that is reached on the basis of Main and that they will also be prepared to look constructively and positively at the other parts of the Main package that require funding of staffing levels, which are set out or referred to in the Main proposals? Is it not also important that the Secretary of State makes it clear that local authorities, which will no doubt have to bear some part of the burden, should not find themselves caught under the guideline provision and paying penalties for honouring an agreement that may be reached on the basis of the report? Does he not accept that it is essential that teachers know where the Government stand, because that must be an important factor when they come to strike the final balance?

Mr. Rifkind: I have not the slightest doubt that the members of the EIS and other teachers' unions will need to know the Government's views on the recommendations of the Main report when they come to a conclusion on this matter.

The Main inquiry must be studied by the Government, local authorities and teachers, because the public and parents in Scotland attach great importance to the outcome being sensible and reasonable in terms of education in Scotland as well as being acceptable in relation to the overall issues.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say that there is a later question on this matter, and I am trying to get there.

Scottish Special Housing Association (Report)

9. **Mr. Hugh Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has received from the Housing

Corporation in Scotland on the policy review report of the Scottish Special Housing Association; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): My right hon. and learned Friend has received no advice from the Housing Corporation. The chairman of the corporation and the Scottish Special Housing Association have, however, offered full co-operation on follow-up action.

Mr. Brown: It is so long since I tabled the question that I have almost forgotten why.

At first glance this seems to be more of a cosmetic approach than one of substance. Will the Housing Corporation consult housing associations now, before they make a submission to the Secretary of State, or will it be when the consultative document comes out in the spring, presumably just before a general election?

Mr. Ancram: Before we get to the consultation document, I have asked the SSHA for a progress report on the policy review. I have asked the association and the Housing Corporation about a joint liaison group to examine matters of mutual interest. I think that that is in the interests of housing in Scotland.

The consultation document on a potential merger will be issued next spring. It will be drawn up by the Government in consultation with the SSHA and the Housing Corporation. We should wait to see what the document says and then have a public debate on it. I know that the hon. Gentleman supports housing associations. This Government have underlined their commitment to housing associations by spending on average over £100 million a year in terms of capital. That compares well with the £90 million spent over the total period of the last Labour Government.

Construction Industry

10. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the prospects for the remainder of the current financial year for the construction industry in Scotland; what contribution he expects the oil-related sector to make in this context; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): Current assessments suggest that the construction industry's output this financial year will be similar to that in 1985 and thus maintain the substantial improvement made over the past four years or so.

Mr. Kennedy: Does the Minister recognise that the oil-related sector of the construction industry is essential to the highlands of Scotland and that recently the Kishorn yard has gone into receivership? Is he aware that, using the Government's unemployment statistics, the development department for the Highlands region has calculated that when the receiver has seen over the finishing of the current contract in the Skye and Wester Ross travel-to-work area unemployment within the next two months will rise from 17 to 23 per cent.? Does the Minister recognise the devastating impact that that will have on the communities there, in addition to the deepening gloom in Easter Ross? What do the Government propose to do?

Mr. MacKay: Fabrication yards are regarded as being part of manufacturing industry, not of the construction industry. We share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the news from the Kishorn yard. We are watching the situation closely to see what develops. We hope that the receiver can achieve a satisfactory outcome.

Mr. Douglas: Does the Minister accept that in answer to a question tabled some time ago the Secretary of State requested the oil companies in the oil-related sector to take a long-term view? Are the present redundancies being announced in Aberdeen and elsewhere a result of the Secretary of State's overtures to the oil companies, or can we expect a continuing diminution of oil-related employment in Scotland, particularly in the light of the diminution of seafaring employment referred to in the excellent document submitted by the National Union of Seamen? Perhaps the Minister can give us his view when he has had time to consider.

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Member, who knows a great deal about these matters, knows that the oil industry's perception of oil prices in the 1990s and beyond will determine investment decisions and, hence, employment in those industries. Forecasting has always been a difficult business and in relation to the price of oil it must be the most difficult business of all. A wide range of estimates have been quoted. Future oil industry investment decisions will depend upon the perception of what is likely to happen.

Mr. Henderson: Is it not the case that the present output of the construction industry is at record levels and that there has been a dramatic increase in expenditure for the construction of roads and on the Health Service?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend is right. Since 1981 total construction output has grown by about 7½ per cent., with substantially faster growth in sectors such as private housebuilding, private commercial work and repair and maintenance work. My hon. Friend knows of my past involvement in the Health Service. I can confirm that a vigorous building programme is going on in the Health Service, and that will continue in future.

Mr. Kennedy: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the utterly unsatisfactory nature of the Minister's response, I shall seek to raise this matter on the Adjournment.

Labour Statistics

11. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current level of employment in the west of Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: Most of Strathclyde benefits from development area status, and I am encouraged by the 18,100 new jobs associated with offers of new regional development grant in Strathclyde in the year to end September. In addition, several area initiatives are currently under way in the region.

Mr. MacKenzie: Is the Secretary of State aware that, while he might be quite content with the figures in Strathclyde, no one else is? My colleagues and I have sat in this Chamber for the past three quarters of an hour listening to many slick answers on unemployment. Not one answer will give any comfort to the thousands of people in Scotland who are unemployed. As for the right hon. and learned Gentleman's answers on the regional development fund application, I am bound to say that I

have never heard such nonsense and rubbish in the time I have been a Member of Parliament. The documents were submitted by the DTI with a voice from the Secretary of State for Scotland. If there is to be only a plateau in the unemployment rate over the next decade, surely to goodness the Secretary of State should be man enough to stand up and admit that the Government have made mistakes in policy and that something must be done now to change it.

Mr. Rifkind: I am not sure what comfort the unemployed will have received from the right hon. Gentleman's question. There was not one constructive item in his question, despite his protests to the contrary. I am not saying to the right hon. Gentleman that the Government are content with the level of unemployment in Strathclyde. The right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that when he was in government unemployment in Strathclyde went up dramatically. He knows perfectly well that it has continued to do so since he ceased to be a Minister. The right hon. Gentleman might be more impressive if he were prepared to admit the failings of the Government of which he was a member.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Secretary of State remember that he and I spent part of the first day of the Labour party conference inside a disused brick kiln in Waterside in the Doon Valley? That area has the highest level of unemployment, not just in Strathclyde and Scotland, but in the whole of Europe. Does the Secretary of State recall the constructive proposals that were put to him by Cadet, the enterprise trust, the local authority and the Dalmellington trust? Has he had time to consider the proposals? Can he say something positive today? If not, when will he be able to say something positive to give some hope to the people of the Doon Valley?

Mr. Rifkind: I do recall that memorable experience in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I have a sense of guilt at keeping him away from his Labour party conference. I found the visit extremely helpful. Many suggestions were made, especially regarding the role of the Scottish Development Agency in the area represented by the hon. Gentleman. I have had an opportunity to have informal discussions with the agency on some of the matters raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Hunterston

12. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet the councillors of Cunninghame district council to discuss the future of Hunterston.

Mr. Ancram: The district council has asked for such a meeting, in a letter it sent on 8 October, about a proposed oil rig repair facility. We are considering that request.

Mr. Lambie: I am disappointed with the reply. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the port of Hunterston is stagnating, with the Clyde Port Authority, the SSEB, British Steel and the Hunterston company all involved in the development? Is it not about time that the port of Hunterston was split from the Clyde Port Authority and a Hunterston development corporation was set up to organise the future development of the port and the industrial areas, involving organisations such as the Scottish Development Agency, Strathclyde regional council and Cunninghame district council?

Mr. Ancram: I am interested in what I can only presume is Labour party policy for that area. The reason for taking time to consider whether a meeting is necessary is that consideration is being given to a planning application relating to the area. That is obviously a matter that we shall have to take into context in considering whether a meeting is either necessary or desirable. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman appreciates that the Hunterston site is of particular value because of its deep-water access. It is also an area of high amenity that should be developed only for industries that can exploit its particular advantages and bring major benefits to the entire Scottish economy.

Job Creation (Glasgow)

13. **Mr. Craigen** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what initiatives he has in mind to increase employment in the Glasgow area.

Mr. Lang: We aim to improve employment prospects in Glasgow as elsewhere by our policy of encouraging the build-up of a strong, competitive economy. Investment by the Scottish Development Agency and the full range of the Manpower Services Commission's employment and training measures will further help to create jobs in Glasgow.

Mr. Craigen: I asked the Minister what new initiatives he had, and it appears that he has brought forward none. With 77,000 out of jobs in Glasgow, will he have a word with his hon. Friend in the housing department to ascertain whether there are ways in which extra employment can be generated in the city by taking on new construction projects? Will the Minister ensure that Glasgow is getting its fair share of Government purchasing?

Mr. Lang: There are a number of specific initiatives that I could mention to the hon. Gentleman — for example, the GEAR project, whereby £281 million of Government money has generated a further £173 million of private money. The garden festival in 1988 will be a tremendous boost to Glasgow, and work on that project is already well advanced. Glasgow is benefiting enormously from the urban aid programme and receives about a quarter of the Scottish Development Agency's project programme moneys.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Prosecution Policy

38. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will make an official visit to the procurator fiscal at Cupar to discuss prosecution policy.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): I hope to visit Cupar in the near future and will be glad to discuss with him any points that he raises.

Mr. Henderson: I am glad to hear that from my hon. and learned Friend. Will he discuss the merits, and possibly some of the difficulties, of extending the principle of fixed penalties for a wider variety of motoring offences?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Perhaps I should emphasise that the fixed penalty system that was introduced in England and Wales and involves the police is not a system that is currently in operation in Scotland.

There is a fixed penalty scheme for moving traffic offences involving the procurator fiscal service, which is working extremely well and going a considerable way towards alleviating pressure on the courts. Fiscals have reported that there has been some criticism of the form of notice sent out to those who are offered the opportunity of a fixed penalty. I am examining this to ensure that the notice is properly understandable by members of the public.

Mr. Wallace: If the Solicitor-General were to go to Cupar, would he discuss what policy the procurator fiscal should follow? Should he, through absence of the sheriff-clerk, find that the sheriff court does not operate, will he be able to assure the procurator fiscal in Cupar that that court will not have the same fate as Kirkwall sheriff court in the last week in August, when, because of public expenditure cuts, the so-called Government of law and order could not stand the court keeping open?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is more interested in this matter than in shipping and terminals in Orkney and Shetland, a topic which was raised earlier this afternoon. If he wants to raise with me a specific issue relating to the cover of the sheriff clerks in any court in his constituency, I hope that he will let me know. We want to ensure that throughout Scotland criminal trials and civil cases can come before the courts to be dealt with as expeditiously as possible.

Procurator Fiscal (Kilmarnock)

39. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when he expects to meet the procurator fiscal at Kilmarnock to discuss staffing levels.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I have no plans to meet the procurator fiscal at Kilmarnock to discuss staffing levels, which are kept under review by the Crown Agent, who has, in the first instance, responsibility for those matters.

Mr. McKelvey: If the Solicitor-General has an opportunity to visit Kilmarnock, I am sure that he will enjoy it. Should he meet the procurator fiscal and discuss staffing levels with him, he will find that they are almost up to the required level, but that the accommodation is somewhat overcrowded. Will the hon. and learned Gentleman carry to Kilmarnock and the procurator fiscal the good news that some money will be provided for the refurbishment of the old Kilmarnock court so that accommodation can be made available in that building for the procurator fiscal's staff?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As the hon. Gentleman says, the staff in Kilmarnock are one short, which is expected to be made up in the very near future. As he will also appreciate, I am aware that there are also accommodation difficulties in Kilmarnock, particularly in relation to the sheriff court, but I think he will readily accept that what is more important is that we ensure that there is proper representation for the procurator fiscal in Kilmarnock and that he has adequate staff. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that at present that is so.

Mr. Speaker: We now go back to question No. 14. Sir Hector Monro.

Mr. McKelvey: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I see that I have the next question—No. 40.

Mr. Speaker: That question is to the Paymaster General, but today the questions are to the Solicitor-General for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. McKelvey: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Allow me to deal with it afterwards.

SCOTLAND

Teachers' Salaries

14. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on teachers' salaries and conditions of service.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The report of the committee of inquiry under the chairmanship of Sir Peter Main was published on 2 October. I am giving the report close and urgent consideration and have urged the teachers and their employers to do likewise.

Sir Hector Monro: Contrary to what the Order Paper says, my constituency is Dumfries, not Dunfermline.

Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that this is a matter of the highest importance and that the Main committee has given the Government, local authorities and teachers an excellent opportunity for resolving the problem of pay and conditions of service? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it would add to the harmony of the negotiations if all the teachers returned to normal duties?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct to say that many teachers are refusing to involve themselves in curriculum development and parental liaison, which are matters identified in the Main report as crucial to the role of the modern teacher. That is a regrettable factor. One hopes very much that teachers will return to full, normal activity that is compatible with the professional status they enjoy.

Mr. Donald Stewart: I understand the need for the Secretary of State to study the report closely, but would he be prepared to deny at this stage the belief that he will expect the increased pay to be funded by the wholesale closure of rural schools?

Mr. Rifkind: I know of no suggestion that the funding of the recommendations in the Main report should come about through the closure of rural schools. I noted that in the Main report the committee mentioned that some closures of schools would be justified, given the fall in pupil numbers, but neither the committee nor the Government have argued that the funding of teachers' pay should be brought about by the closure of schools. There are arguments that in certain areas certain schools are no longer required in the interests of the children's education opportunities, but that is a different matter.

Mr. Millan: In answer to an earlier question the Secretary of State implied that he would make a statement soon. Is he aware that it is no use him welcoming the Main report unless he gives the commitment that he will meet his share of the salary increases recommended in the report through the rate support grant system, and also by

increasing the guidelines correspondingly, otherwise we shall have the absurd situation of the local authorities being penalised for implementing the salary recommendations?

Mr. Rifkind: When the Government give their conclusions on the Main report, that statement will cover the financial aspects, including whether the Government's own contribution should be in a form recommended by the Main committee. The right hon. Gentleman will not expect me to comment further until we have concluded our consideration of the report.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: When my right hon. and learned Friend announces his plans for education in Scotland, having considered the Main committee recommendations, will he make it clear whether the city technology centre initiative announced by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will also be open to people in Scotland, and whether Scots will benefit from the principle of direct funding of schools in the state sector?

Mr. Rifkind: We are considering whether the initiative announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State might be useful in Scotland, but we have not yet come to a conclusion.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Secretary of State recognise that until he makes clear his position on the funding of the proposed settlement from the Main committee it will be difficult, if not impossible, to get normal working going and obtain a settlement? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman at least tell us that he will come to the House as quickly as possible with a firm and clear statement to that effect?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should be the first to acknowledge that, once the Main inquiry was established earlier this year, there was no justification for teachers not returning to normal working. If the hon. Gentleman believes that it was right to cause continuing disruption in the schools even while an independent inquiry was considering the matter, he should consult parents in his constituency to find out whether they agree with him.

Mr. O'Neill: Will the Secretary of State reconsider the response that he gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), when he spoke about the Government's responsibilities? Many of us are anxious about the responsibilities that will fall on local government in respect of the guidelines. In his statement, will the Secretary of State take account of the implications of any wage rises to be funded by local authorities in respect of the guidelines that they have to meet at his diktat?

Mr. Rifkind: There is no question but that if the Main committee's recommendations were accepted they would place an additional burden on central Government and on local authorities. Ratepayers would have to take that burden on their shoulders. Thus, responsibilities would lie with both local authorities and central Government as a result of the Main committee's recommendations. That is why it is sensible to look at such matters in detail instead of reaching a premature conclusion.

Mr. Strang: Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that teachers are justifiably concerned about some aspects of the document, including, not least, the anti-trade union bias that seems to pervade parts of the report? In those circumstances, it is crucial that not only the Secretary of State but the Cabinet should be prepared to adopt a wholly different approach to Scottish education. It would be a disaster if the Government failed to secure the negotiated settlement with the teachers that would enable us to reverse the decline in our schools.

Mr. Rifkind: I am rather puzzled, because the hon. Gentleman seems to be arguing that the Government should accept the Main report, while saying that it has an anti-trade union bias. It would be interesting to hear his explanation.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Does my right hon. and learned Friend not agree that the Main report also raises some important long-term questions, including the proposal for an independent review body for pay and conditions? Can he outline the likely time scale for the Government's response to those recommendations?

Mr. Rifkind: I accept that the Government's view of the committee's starred recommendations should be available to the unions before they and their members reach a conclusion about what their assessment should be. It would clearly be relevant for teachers in Scotland to take that consideration into account when determining their attitude towards the Main committee.

Mr. Dewar: I shall be brief, as to some extent my point has been met in the past 30 seconds. Does the Secretary of State accept that the largest teaching union and others who are affected are now going through a set timetable for consulting their members? For example, I believe that the EIS has a special delegate conference at the beginning of November and will then ballot. It is desirable and, indeed, essential, that the Government should make a statement. I accept that the decision has big implications, but the statement should be made before that special delegate conference takes place.

Mr. Rifkind: I agree that it would be desirable to make a statement. However, it is open to the EIS to determine its timetable in the light of the information that it feels it needs to know before deciding on the recommendation to make to its members.

Mr. Ewing: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise out of the questions?

Mr. Ewing: It arises directly out of questions. It is important that Ministers should make accurate statements to the House, but I believe that the Secretary of State may have inadvertently misled the House. In response to a question from the hon. Member for Moray (Mr Pollock) he claimed that the enterprise trust movement in Scotland was a Government initiative. He must know that that is simply not accurate. The enterprise trust movement was born out of Scottish Business in the Community. The worst thing that could happen to Scottish Business in the Community and the enterprise trust movement—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has gone well beyond the original question.

Mr. Rifkind: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is correct, but it is equally correct to point out that, through the Scottish Development Agency, the Government have taken the initiative in giving full support to that enterprise.

British Rail (Subsidy)

3.34 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the proposed reduction in Government subsidy to British Rail and the consequent cuts in services and increases in rail fares.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John Moore): The objectives which I set the board yesterday build on the success of those which my predecessor set in 1983. They have reduced the dependence of the railway on the taxpayer by over 25 per cent.—a saving of more than £200 million. This is a considerable achievement on which BR and its staff are to be congratulated. It has not brought any of the swingeing fares increases or massive service cuts which Jeremiahs on the Opposition Benches forecast then; nor will we see them now.

The new objectives ask for a continuation of this improvement in cost effectiveness. Increasing efficiency will mean that costs, and the need for grant, will fall. But we are also requiring a higher standard of service. Over the past three years many services have benefited from new rolling stock, refurbished stations and other investment. There are, however, other services where both we and the board agree that quality is not good enough. The Government have approved over £900 million of new investment and there is more to come. But we must get away from the idea that the only way to improve the railway is to throw more taxpayers' money at it.

Alarmist suggestions of massive fare increases are totally unfounded and show a remarkable lack of confidence in British Rail's ability to succeed. Fare levels are for the board, but — I stress "but" — the grant savings I am seeking from Network SouthEast and Provincial require a reduction of only 8 per cent. over three years. The remainder comes from the progress Inter City is making towards profitability. Most of the grant saving on NSE and Provincial will come from improved efficiency. But where quality improves, as I think clearly all of us want to see, it is reasonable for the passenger to pay a little more. But there will be no massive fares increase; nor will there be overall cuts in service. Our commitment to supporting the non-commercial railway and securing a modern efficient railway for the country is clear.

Mr. Hughes: I thank the Secretary of State for that lengthy reply, but I am bound to say that he would have improved his reputation in the House if he had made a statement yesterday instead of being compelled to answer a private notice question.

It is clear that the cut of 25 per cent. in the public service obligation in the next three years is a continuation of the Government's vindictiveness against British Rail. As the right hon. Gentleman's letter to Sir Robert Reid is clearly the result of prior discussions, he must know exactly how much fares will increase as a result of these cuts. He says that they will not be swingeing, but how much will fares increase in London and the south-east? Will it be 25 per cent. or more, as has been estimated in the newspapers? How much will fares on provincial services increase? Again, will it be 25 per cent. or more? The House has a right to answers.

The Secretary of State said that he wanted better standards. Why, therefore, did he say in his letter to Sir Robert Reid:

> "I value your assurance that you would consult me if unforeseen circumstances should at any time make it necessary to consider measures that would materially undermine quality."?

Did the chairman of British Rail tell the right hon. Gentleman that his current proposals could well lead to an undermining of quality? Why else was that put in the letter? There can be no other explanation except that he was warned.

The Secretary of State, in his letter to Sir Robert Reid, said:

> "we are not asking for a programme of major route closures."

For what is he asking? Will he give an assurance that no branch lines will be closed? If he will not give that assurance in the clearest terms, will he tell us which lines he intends to close? Why is he determined that British Rail must hive off to private enterprise every potentially commercially profitable part of its business—on railway stations, the up-keep of its business and its property?

Why, on the one hand, does the right hon. Gentleman's policy in general seem to be in favour of competition? Why, on the other hand, is he cosseting his pet friends, the new private bus operators, by erecting barriers to British Rail's competing against them where they think that that is necessary? That is clearly set out in the right hon. Gentleman's letter to Sir Robert Reid.

Why is the right hon. Gentleman determined that British Rail should subsidise private operators rather than invest in their own rolling stock to attract passengers? The whole package which he has presented today, and which he outlined in his letter to Sir Robert Reid, will drive passengers away from the railways; it will certainly not attract them. In the major cities it will increase congestion and pollution. The right hon. Gentleman really must answer the questions rather than replying to a private notice question in a way that shows that he has not thought about the results of his policy.

Mr. Moore: I shall deal first with the hon. Gentleman's last point, because quite the reverse of his suggestion is the truth. During the past three years the staff and management of British Rail have made the excellent achievement of reducing their grant, while there has been an increase in traffic of 3 per cent.

The cut in grant over the past three years has produced not a swingeing or massive increase in fares but, for the overall passenger railway, an increase of 7 per cent. in real terms. In addition, there are 22 more stations than there were in 1983 as well as grant aid being down by 25 per cent.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to estimate fares increases. As I tried to point out, the overall expectation of grant reduction within NSE and Provincial over three years is expected to be about 8 per cent. We trust that efficiency gains will ensure that there will be no need for any fares increases. However, we have encouraged BR to enhance the quality of its service and to add to its investment in quality service, so we should regard it as reasonable if that produced a minor and modest increase. However, the record of the past three years shows the nonsense of the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that this proposal will mean massive fares increases. To put the matter in perspective, the £50 million saving anticipated for NSE and Provincial should be compared with a cost for the whole area of £1·4 billion.

The hon. Gentleman asked why I had especially referred to quality in my letter to the BR chairman. We regard so highly the need to enhance quality that if the chairman found at any stage that there was some difficulty in achieving that I would clearly wish to be advised.

The hon. Gentleman asked about major closures. Exactly the same words were used in the objectives for 1983, and I have nothing further to add to that. I could continue, but I have the distinct feeling, Mr. Speaker, that you would like me to stop at this point.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members will note from the Order Paper reference to an affirmative order, so the matter will fall for debate in due course. As this is a private notice question, it will not be possible for me to call all hon. Members who wish to take part. However, I shall now call Mr. Toby Jessel.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Will my right hon. Friend consider what can be done to ensure that British Rail fares are equitable for residents in outer south London who already, through their rates, have to subsidise residents of other parts of London who are able to make greater use of the London Transport underground?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend knows that I, too, have a constituency that has the blessing and good fortune to have a British Rail station, but not a tube station. I recognise the point that my hon. Friend is making. If he carefully considers my statement, he will realise that we want enhanced quality, enhanced service and a better and more efficient railway for the customers whom he and I see also as constituents.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): As a result of this intensely depressing anti-rail statement, which will cause worse time-keeping and more overcrowding, will the Secretary of State promise and guarantee that the following lines in Wales will not close—the Cambrian coast line, the mid-Wales line, the central Wales line, the line from Shrewsbury to Wrexham and the line from Llandudno junction to Blaenau Ffestiniog?

Mr. Moore: Line recommendations and advice are clearly matters for British Rail, but I should have thought that the record of maintaining services during the past three years would be sufficient vindication. I regard the statement as a confirmation of the extraordinary ability of a first-class railroad to attain its objectives and to improve on them. We should be complimenting the staff and management rather than being so critical.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): A fair-minded person would pay tribute to the Government for the investment levels in British Rail during the past few years. It is curmudgeonly and silly to do otherwise. Perhaps I might tackle my right hon. Friend on the London and south-east network, however, which does not affect my constituency. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that rail services in the Greater London area and probably in other cities are an essential part of the urban infrastructure, just as roads are, and that it is unreasonable and unrealistic ever to expect such services to pay? Will he further confirm that the price for not funding them through the taxpayer is more congestion, more pollution and more stagnation? Will he therefore give a clear commitment indefinitely that the Government accept their responsibility in this regard?

Mr. Moore: I am conscious of my hon. Friend's support and that of the Government for an efficient and successful railway that serves customers and taxpayers. I know that my hon. Friend is aware of the massive investment programme, but I remind him that, during the past three years, above and beyond the enhancement and modernisation of stations, we have added, in the area about which he is concerned, the Bournemouth to Weymouth electrification programme, the Waterloo resignalling programme and the Snow Hill tunnel and electric multiple unit programmes. I recognise what my hon. Friend is saying about the London commuter and railroad area. It is an essential part of the nation's fabric. It should be enhanced, improved and made as commercial and effective as possible.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Does the Secretary of State agree that talk of enhanced quality of service on Network SouthEast will be regarded as pie in the sky by many London commuters when they still suffer sudden cancellations, delays and dirty, overcrowded trains? Does he agree that many are reluctant commuters, and that they have been forced to depend on British Rail because jobs have gone from their areas? What estimate has he made of the impact of a fare increase persuading still more commuters to crowd on to London's already congested roads?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Member is compounding the error that others have made by assuming that there must be a fare increase.

Mr. Cartwright: No fare increase?

Mr. Moore: No. I said that the hon. Member is assuming that BR cannot succeed through efficiency gains. The hon. Gentleman is ignoring my point, as are others who do not want enhanced customer service or better opportunities to travel by rail. He fails to understand our attempt to establish proper quality standards. BR has not succeeded in all respects, but, during the past three years, it has come within 0·5 per cent. of the objectives that it was given for quality standards. We are trying to enhance and increase that. I should have thought that that is what the hon. Member would want us to do, while encouraging more investment to improve quality to attract more customers.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, over the years, BR has made many promises, very few of which have been kept? Is he aware that many of us will believe in the second coming before we believe further promises on this subject? Most of us have a great and abiding faith in the word of Ministers of the Crown. Will he promise that, with the changes that he wants to bring about with yet another saving, the fare structure will not go above the rate of inflation? If it did, it would be damaging to commuters and to inter-city services. Can we all recognise that the country's future depends on a good, stable and growing rail system and not driving traffic on the roads?

Mr. Moore: I have difficulty finding my way between the second coming and an excessive faith in Ministers, but I accept my hon. Friend's intent. He is trying to do precisely what the Government are trying to do—to ensure that there is an efficient, effective and commercial

[Mr. Moore]

rail service and that railway grant for socially necessary services is delivered as efficiently as possible. Those are clearly the Government's objectives.

Mr. Gordon A. T. Bagier (Sunderland, South): Does the Secretary of State agree that there is a limit to how much the railway industry through staff reductions can be expected to contribute to these reductions? Does he agree that this further three-year programme which he has given Sir Robert Reid is almost impossible to carry out without damaging the railways or increasing the fares, particularly in the south-east? What exactly does the Secretary of State mean by saying

"we are not asking for a programme of major route closures?"

What closures does he envisage, because in his letter he also refers to bus provision for rail services in the provincial sector? What exactly does he mean by saying:

"In the light of these considerations, I want you to make a significant reduction in the . . . requirement"

for PSO grant in the south-east region? Does that not mean massive increases in charges?

The Secretary of State paid great tribute to the non-supported services and mentioned the sums spent on inter-city services, freight services, Freightliner, Travellers' Fare and so on. Is not his concern to make those services effective in order to move towards privatising them rather than merely to make them more effective?

Mr. Moore: No. My concern is precisely the concern that I expressed in the three-year objectives. Those are the targets, the aims and the goals, and there is nothing beyond them. I respect the hon. Gentleman. I know that he is Chairman of the Transport Select Committee and I know of his history in the railway industry. I hope that he will remember the past three years, as we should do if we are committed to a successful railway industry. If what he is now saying is true, the railways would not have been able to achieve the objectives in grant reductions, nor to add to the rail facilities and to those who travel on the railways, nor to enhance services. I expect and hope to see the same results from these objectives for the next three years.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): In view of my right hon. Friend's expressed hope in his letter to Sir Robert Reid that the private sector would play a greater part in British Rail's activities, and in view of his statement this afternoon, will he now consider ways in which the existing track could be opened up to other operators, thereby introducing on rail the type of competition which the Government hold so dear in the whole of public transport?

Mr. Moore: For those who have not had the opportunity to read yesterday's full written parliamentary reply, I should remind my hon. Friend of precisely what I said about the limits within the three-year objectives in terms of private participation. I said:

"Further steps to secure that others from outside the nationalised industry can play their part in the upkeep of the railway and its equipment, the supply of its needs, the development of its property, and the exploitation of the commercial potential of stations will all be welcome as ways of improving Railway finances." — [*Official Report*, 21 October 1986; Vol. 102, c. *774*.]

I would seek to have that participation to assist the success of our railways.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Can the Secretary of State say whether and to what extent the reduction in subsidy will affect British Rail's approach to the much needed rail link to Manchester International airport and the projected rail link to Stansted airport? Is he aware of how urgently the rail link to Manchester International airport is now needed in the interests of the north-west region as a whole?

Mr. Moore: I compliment the right hon. Gentleman on mentioning an issue in which we are all involved. It is not germane to these particular objectives—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] — because it comes within the context of the overall pattern and proposals of investment in British Rail. To that extent, the right hon. Gentleman and all hon. Members will know this Government's outstanding record on providing investment, which British Rail has acknowledged. I know the issue and that many hon. Members on both sides of the House are interested in it. I, too, am extremely interested in it and will certainly be giving it attention beyond the specific objectives that we are discussing today.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Will my right hon. Friend pass to the chairman of British Rail the congratulations of many of us who notice a real improvement in British Rail? Nevertheless, will he also transmit the message to the chairman of British Rail that hundreds of thousands of people who commute into the capital city every day do so in completely unacceptable conditions of discomfort? Will he tell the chairman of British Rail that our constituents expect a real improvement in those standards?

Mr. Moore: I welcome my hon. Friend's remarks, and I am sure that many hon. Members on both sides of the House would like to join in them. British Rail is to be congratulated. We should remember that British Rail sees these objectives as tough but achievable. I shall ensure that the chairman of British Rail is aware, as I know he already is, that we are not satisfied with the quality and standards. That is why we are seeking to enhance them.

The presumption by some Opposition Members that by throwing taxpayers' money at something it will improve efficiency and standards is bizarre. The chairman of British Rail is aware of the points that have been made, but I will ensure that I personally talk to him on the subject.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): Does the Secretary of State understand that, so far as the general public have been made aware, his policy and that of his Department has two objectives: first, to achieve more punctual and better services; and, secondly, to have less crowded trains? Does he understand that neither he nor history can guarantee the former and that the latter will arrive only by increasing fares and causing further congestion on the roads? Does he agree that, instead of listening to Bob Reid, he should listen to Mr. Public?

Mr. Moore: That is precisely what Sir Robert Reid, the board of British Rail and the Government are trying to do. We are trying to ensure that, on the one hand, we have an enhanced, efficient commercial railway and, on the other, that we allow the railway to continue to carry out its public service functions in areas where it is socially necessary, even if it is not commercial. Neither of those militates against those two objectives.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): As one who sits on the south-east Back Benches, I hope that my right hon. Friend

will recognise that there is some sensitivity about what he is doing in Network SouthEast. I understand why he is seeking to cut the subsidy, but does he think it right that, in making such a cut, he is driving passengers off the railway on to the already congested roads of the south-east?

Mr. Moore: May I remind my hon. Friend of precisely what has happened in the past three years. While there has been a subsidy reduction of £200 million, passenger traffic on the railways has increased. My hon. Friend will recognise that we are not only interested in an efficient railway, but we have a legitimate interest in the rights and roles of the taxpayer. If we can deliver benefits to the taxpayer and benefits to the railway and its customers, we shall be doing our job.

Mr. Ron Lewis (Carlisle): Is the Minister aware that morale among railway employees today is at its lowest ebb? It is all very well for him to pay tribute to those employed by British Rail, but at the same time he is holding a dagger behind his back, intending to make more men and women redundant. Is he aware that his statement today has been heard time after time from successive Tory Secretaries of State for Transport? There is a limit to the efficiency programmes that can be carried out. Will the Secretary of State leave his office and talk to the men and women employed on British Rail, who have to do the job? They will tell him that they are trying to do the same as the Egyptians did—making more bricks with less straw.

Mr. Moore: I understand the emotion with which the hon. Gentleman makes his point. I have spent much of my life travelling on British Rail, and in the past few months I have spent a great deal of time travelling on British Rail, and I have not found the conditions that the hon. Gentleman describes. I found a recognition among British Rail staff that the Government have committed a massive investment and are committed to British Rail. As I said in my speech at the party conference, "We believe in British Rail". We do, but we want it to be efficient and effective and not such a large drag on the taxpayer.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Does my right hon. Friend accept that some parts of the rail network will never be commercially viable, yet they form an integral part of the system? Is he aware that the entire rail network west of Plymouth—in Cornwall—is grant-aided and that any reduction in that system would work to the disadvantage, socially and economically, of the county of Cornwall?

Mr. Moore: I am conscious of the points made by my hon. Friend, and that is why I sought to make it clear that the Government recognise the need to maintain the socially necessary parts of the railway. As he rightly says, the provincial network is 75 per cent. grant-aided. To that extent, he will be conscious of the degree to which I have tried to correct the misapprehension which some may have. We are looking for an 8 per cent. reduction in grant for the whole of Network SouthEast and Provincial over three years, which is a modest target for efficiency gains.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): How can the right hon. Gentleman talk about seeking to improve the service and the railway system when he is cutting the subsidy? Is it not clear that in Western Germany, France, Italy and other European countries the railways are highly subsidised, and the people have a much better and more efficient service than we have? The right hon. Gentleman might shake his head, but I often travel on those railways and they are much better and more efficient than our service, which has deteriorated, especially since this Government have been in office. The Minister is suggesting further cuts in the service and ways to make impossible the life of those who are trying to make it efficient. It is time that the Government changed their attitude, stopped their ideological nonsense, and put the interests of the people before those of people like the right hon. Gentleman who think that profit is the all-important god.

Mr. Moore: No. I think that the consumer, whether he is a customer on the railway or elsewhere, is the person with whom we should concern ourselves. Because I am so conscious of the needs of the consumer, I do not always assume that subsidy is the way in which the consumer is best served. However, we are talking about a railway system large parts of which will continue to be in need of support, and to that extent this set of objectives does not diminish that opportunity.

Mr. Heffer: Yes, it does.

Mr. Moore: I apologise if the hon. Member was not here earlier or inadvertently did not hear perfectly what I said, but I shall repeat that railway traffic went up over the past three years when the subsidy went down. I repeat that for the record in case, unfortunately, the hon. Gentleman's problem of interrupting from a sedentary position meant that he was unable to hear me the first time.

Sir Hector Monro: Will my right hon. Friend give credit to Scotrail for introducing new electric services, much improving track mileage and, in particular, improving safety? Can he assure me that the investment in track mileage in Scotland will continue?

Mr. Moore: Network SouthEast has the benefit of the former director of Scotrail now running it. I make that clear for those who wish to make an issue of it. I recognise the needs of Scotrail, and to the extent that investment proposals come forward, British Rail has not, throughout the system, found the Government in any difficulty in ensuring that such commercial investment is advanced.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Despite what the Secretary of State said, this policy inevitably means that provincial fares will increase. In view of the consultations, the Secretary of State must know by how much fares are expected to increase. Will he come clean and tell us, for example, by how much fares in Scotland will increase?

Mr. Moore: What I have said, and keep repeating, is that the figures in terms of the expectations through the objectives of the next three years assume a relatively modest reduction in grant of 8 per cent. throughout Network SouthEast and Provincial. That can be achieved over three years by efficiency gains, to the extent that Network SouthEast is expected to see enhanced investment for enhanced quality. However, if that cannot be achieved by efficiency gains, there could be a modest increase in fares. That will be up to British Rail.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private notice question, not a statement, and I have already announced that there will be a debate about it. I shall call one Member from each

[Mr. Speaker]

side and then we must move on. Without making any absolute commitment, I shall bear in mind those who have not been called when the debate is held.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Is it not desirable to attract external investment in Network SouthEast? Therefore, will my right hon. Friend welcome the plan for £35 million of investment in a new rail terminal in Thanet? Does that not show tremendous confidence in the future of Port Ramsgate and British Rail in the face of the challenge posed by the Channel tunnel? Will he urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to allow that plan to proceed with all possible speed?

Mr. Moore: I congratulate my hon. Friend on seeking to get me to comment on an issue about which there is a planning inquiry. I recognise his legitimate interest in his constituency and the problems of Thanet and the way in which he has ardently argued for his constituents about what he sees as the problem of the Channel tunnel. I shall look at all rail investment in that area and any enhancement of it through as sympathetic eyes as I can.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Before the Minister rushes to congratulate the chairman on improvements in service, will he bear in mind the fact that in the recent past we in Wales have lost our sleeper service and now, in the new programme, there is no train after 6.30 in the evening from Swansea to London, and for most people there has been a deterioration in service? When he talks about efficiency savings, does that mean job losses? How many jobs does he expect to be lost on British Rail through so-called efficiency savings as a result of this announcement?

Mr. Moore: I do not believe, although it is a matter for British Rail, that this necessarily means changes in job levels. However, I did not rush to congratulate the chairman of British Rail about the standards. I have been a regular traveller on British Rail for many years. Some of us actually travel in other parts of the land. *[Interruption.]* I shall take as long as the hon. Gentleman wishes me to take, and until his hon. Friends can contain themselves. I also recognise that there is considerable discontent, and there has been for many years under many Governments, about the standards and quality of British Rail. What is different is that the Government, with the co-operation of British Rail, have sought to establish the quality standards that the railway seeks to achieve, and we shall seek to enhance those standards. We have no complacency about the present position.

Social Security Benefits (Uprating)

4.6 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the next uprating of social security benefits, which will take place in the week beginning 6 April 1987. This will be the third increase over 16 months, and covers the eight months from January to September 1986. It will complete the process of transition to the new timetable for benefit upratings which, in future, will take place annually in April. This will ensure that pensioners and other beneficiaries receive increases in their resources at the same time as most other financial changes take place.

The Government are pledged to increase pensions and other linked long-term benefits in line with the rise in prices. The retail price index published last Friday showed a rise between January and September 1986 of 2·1 per cent. Accordingly, the retirement pension for a married couple will rise from £61·95 to £63·25, an increase of £1·30 a week, and for a single person the pension will go up from £38·70 to £39·50, an increase of 80p per week. Widows' pensions and invalidity benefit will also be increased by the same percentage, as will public sector pensions. In the 16 months of the transitional period, the pension for a couple will have risen by £5·95 a week as a result of the three upratings and that for a single person by £3·70 a week.

I move on to benefits for families. The Government have made it clear that in considering the uprating of child benefit, account must be taken of priorities within the social security budget — every 10p increase costs over £50 million a year. We have decided that child benefit will go up from £7·10 to £7·25 a week, which is fully in line with the increase in prices. The Government also remain committed to the protection of low income families with children. The prescribed amounts in family income supplement will therefore rise by between 2·1 and 2·3 per cent., depending on the age of the child. This increase will ensure that low income working families with older children on FIS have seen the real value of their benefit increased by some 20 per cent. since 1978.

Over the eight-month period for this uprating, the retail price index, excluding housing costs, rose by 2 per cent., almost the same as for the RPI. The short-term rate of supplementary benefit will therefore increase from £48·40 for a couple to £49·35. There will be corresponding increases in the other scale rates. Additional requirements in the supplementary benefit scheme will be increased in line with appropriate elements of the retail price index. The cost of fuel and light has remained stable so that there will be no change in heating additions, but dietary additions will be increased—by 10p a week for someone receiving the higher rate of addition.

As in July, I have decided to link the increase in the basic needs allowance for housing benefit to the cash increase in the basic retirement pension and in child benefit. This will ensure that virtually all pensioners do not lose housing benefit as a result of the increase in retirement pensions. It will also minimise the operational problems for local authorities next April. Full details of the increases in the housing benefit needs allowance and non-dependent deductions, together with the other benefit changes, are set out in a schedule which I have placed in the Vote Office.

I also propose to adjust the rent taper for relatively better off housing benefit recipients — those with incomes above the needs allowance—from 29 to 33 per cent. Those at supplementary benefit level and some way above it will not be affected. This change is subject to consultation with the relevant organisations. The amount of earned income which is ignored in the housing benefit calculation will be held steady for the second uprating in succession. This will ensure that those on low earnings will continue to benefit from last April's tax reductions.

Benefits payable to sick and disabled people, including sickness benefit, invalidity benefit, severe disablement allowance and invalid care allowance, will all rise by 2·1 per cent., as will attendance allowance and mobility allowance. I am also taking the opportunity to make a further beneficial change. Funeral expenses will be paid in respect of war pensioners who die as a result of their accepted disablement whether the funeral is arranged privately or by the War Pensioners' Welfare Service.

The House will shortly have an opportunity to debate these changes. I should add that they will apply in Northern Ireland as in the rest of the United Kingdom. The changes that I have announced will add over £700 million to the social security budget next year on top of the £420 million from the July uprating. Since 1978-79, spending on pensions has grown in real terms by over 25 per cent. at an additional cost of £4 billion a year. About £1·75 billion of this reflects an increase of 850,000 in the number of pensioners and the remainder represents a real improvement in the value of the pension. The new rates mean that the retirement pension has more than doubled in cash terms since November 1978 and that we have protected the position of other beneficiaries, including low income families with children, and the sick and disabled.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): The 80p rise for pensioners is scandalous and miserly. Over the same period earnings have risen more than three times faster. There is to be no increase in heating additions and 80p is a paltry increase with which to face the winter. If I were to use the same crude techniques as the Secretary of State at the Tory party conference, I would throw over the Dispatch Box 10 pages of names of people who died as a direct result of hypothermia between January and April 1986. The statement by the Secretary of State means that pensioners will face the same roll call of premature death this winter.

Is the Secretary of State aware that if Labour's formula to uprate pensions in line with earnings had been used this year the pension increase would not have been 80p but over £2·50? Is he aware that every single Tory uprating, including this one, has pushed down pensioners' living standards in comparison with those in work? That means that this year, the seventh year in which the Government have been in office, a single pensioner receives £8 a week less and a married couple £12·75 a week less than they would receive under Labour's formula, if that were still operating. After seven years of Tory Government the single pension has fallen to precisely 20 per cent. of average earnings. Germany manages to afford a pension worth 50 per cent. of average earnings and France pays a pension of between 60 and 70 per cent.

The Secretary of State's decision not to uprate supplementary benefit in line with the RPI denies extra money to the poorest families. When the index for the supplementary benefit long-term rate rose last year more than the index for the pension, he levelled it down to the pension increase on grounds of administrative cost. Now that its index has risen less than for the pension he refuses to level it up to the pension increase. Is that not grossly unfair to the poorest families about which the Government like to preen themselves on allegedly targeting help?

We welcome the 15p increase in child benefit, but in no way does it make up for the 35p real cut last November, nor does it even begin to compensate for the destruction of the school meals service which has taken place since 1980 and which is gathering pace each month. The further big and highly damaging increase in the rent taper is probably the most significant feature of the statement. It will sharply worsen the poverty trap for low-paid workers who are only just above the poverty line and will work directly against the Government's own restart scheme, new workers' scheme, enterprise allowance scheme and community scheme. Will the Secretary of State tell us the average losses that will be suffered by workers at such levels of earnings? Is it not nonsense for the Government to try to encourage unemployed people to come off the dole and then to undercut their incentives if they take low-paid work?

Overall, the statement will do nothing to reduce the numbers of people condemned to live in poverty. That poverty is a national disgrace and has doubled since 1979, according to the Government's own figures, to more than 10 million people. The statement offers not a penny more than the amount for which the Government are strictly legally liable, despite the fact that one in five British people now live within or on the margins of poverty. That is an official figure. It is also despite the fact that, as each year passes, the divisions between those in and those out of work become an indictment of a civilised society.

Mr. Fowler: The response by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was derisory and bizarre. He talked about heating additions for the coming winter, but he should have understood that the additions that I have announced are for next April. Surely the hon. Gentleman understands the purpose of my statement. The heating additions are payable from next April and in any event there has been no increase in fuel costs. That means that the hon. Gentleman's first point was entirely daft.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about pensioners. The increases that I have announced mean that pensions have doubled in cash terms since 1978-79. In everything that he said the hon. Gentleman ignored the fact that we have brought inflation under control. In 1976, 10 years ago, inflation was between 13 and 23 per cent. Under the last Labour Government inflation went up by 110 per cent. and no one suffered more from that than the pensioner. The trouble with the hon. Gentleman's plans or proposals, or whatever he wants to call them these days, is that no one seriously believes him any more, not even his right hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor. The hon. Gentleman makes bogus promises and pledges which the public reject.

The changes that we propose in housing benefit mean that there will be an average weekly loss of 10p in the needs allowance for an owner-occupier and 40p for a tenant. There will be some weekly losses as a result of the taper changes and these will average between 47p and 56p.

As for the Rossi index, the hon. Gentleman is right that we did not uprate in line with the Rossi index in July. The difference between the Rossi index and the retail price index this time is only between 2 and 2·1 and it would

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make a negligible difference to the uprating. The hon. Gentleman ignores the fact that in this uprating we are spending an additional £700 million. The total expenditure on social security is now £43 billion a year, almost one-third of public spending. That shows our commitment to the beneficiaries of the social security system.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Does my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State accept that there is widespread failure to understand that over a period of 16 months pensions and other benefits will have been increased on no fewer than three occasions? Does my right hon. Friend further agree that as, inevitably, each of those three increases has been comparatively small, he should take every opportunity to repeat to the House and to the country a fact that I believe he mentioned today: that over that period not only has there been an increase in conformity with the inflation rate but that after next April we shall reach the position where pensioners and other social security recipients will have maintained the purchasing power of their incomes?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct that in the 16 months of the transitional period the pension for a married couple will have risen by £5.95 a week — almost £6—as a result of the three upratings, and that the pension for a single person will have risen by £3·70 a week. To take my hon. Friend's comparisons with the retail price index, between November 1978 and September 1986 the RPI increased by about 91·5 per cent. Pensions, without the increase that I have announced today, have already increased by 98·4 per cent. Including the changes, the increase is 102·5 per cent. In other words, the Government have fulfilled the pledge that they made at both elections to keep pensions in line with and above prices.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): It would help the House if the Secretary of State could tell us how many people are involved in the changes in the rent tapers and exactly how much that will save the Government in the housing benefit account. The Government's policy of price protecting pensions and benefits can be seen to be fair only if two things obtain: first, that the retail price index is an accurate measure across income spectrums. There is now wide evidence and anticipation of the fact that the retail price index does not accurately reflect the needs that have to be met by low income families. Secondly, over the period from 1 January to November 1986, earnings will have increased by 5 per cent., although the retail price index has increased by 2 per cent. At some stage there must surely be some reconciliation of the distance between these two figures.

Mr. Fowler: If we had used the pensioners price index — one of the alternative indexes which has been suggested — the increase would have been rather less than the one that I am announcing, because of the comparison with the retail price index. Many people have gone round this course, and the only sensible conclusion is that the RPI is the best comparison.

The hon. Gentleman also asked me about the needs allowance and the tapers. The effect of the needs allowance on public spending will be a saving of £23 million, and revenue forgone will amount to £17 million. As for the tapers, there will be a saving of about £28 million.

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): There will be a warm welcome on these Benches for the fact that all benefits, including child benefit, have been increased in line with inflation, and more particularly for the substantial increase in pensions over the 16-month period during which these increases have been phased in. Does my right hon. Friend not agree that it is a more preferable policy to have a guaranteed increase in benefits to keep pace with inflation, in a period of low inflation, than to scatter confetti money, as the Opposition would prefer to do, which would do nothing except raise inflation and unemployment and decimate the savings of old people?

Mr. Fowler: I agree absolutely. As I have already said, 10 years ago, under the last Labour Government, inflation was running at between 13 and 23·5 per cent. Nobody suffered more than the pensioners from that lack of control over inflation. Frankly, it is banana republic economics to prefer high inflation so that uprating rates seem to be higher.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): As child benefit always appears to be at its most vulnerable at the uprating period, I congratulate the Secretary of State on maintaining its real value since the last increase. However, as I am sure that he does not wish to become complacent on this front, will he remind the House that, had child benefit been maintained in real terms since 1979, it would today stand at £7·60 per child per week? Is the restoration of that cut a major objective of Government policy before the next general election?

Mr. Fowler: As I have always made clear, we shall consider the level of child benefit at each uprating. The hon. Gentleman has given the correct figures. In November 1985 we did not uprate child benefit fully. That is obviously known, and it was announced to the House. However, the hon. Gentleman forgets that at the same time we gave extra help through family income supplement, with the result that there is now a 20 per cent. real increase in family income supplement for families with older children and a 13 per cent. real increase for families with younger children. In other words, the Government have provided general support through child benefit, but they have provided above average support—above real increase support—for low income families.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Does not the response of the Opposition to my right hon. Friend's statement show the astonishing degree to which the Opposition fail to understand that the greatest fear that pensioners have is the fear of inflation? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that after next April's uprating a pension with a higher purchasing power than ever before will be paid to a much larger number of pensioners than ever before? Finally, it is a measure of my right hon. Friend's achievement that the Government are able to announce pension increases which will make the purchasing power higher than when the "caring" Labour party was in office?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He is also right that we are paying pensions to about 850,000 more pensioners than when we came into office. Before the Opposition lecture us too much, they might care to remember that this is almost precisely the 10th anniversary of their pensions fiddle, when they saved over £1 billion at the cost of the pensioners by changing the uprating method. That was perpetrated by the last Labour Government.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): The Secretary of State has assured us that there will be no increase in the allowances for fuel and light. Surely that implies that, had there been an increase in the cost of fuel and light, there would have been an increase in the allowances. Will the Secretary of State recognise the differential between the cost of fuel and light in Northern Ireland and its cost in England, Scotland and Wales and reflect it in the allowances that are made available to people in Northern Ireland, if he is to be consistent with the implication that he has accepted?

Mr. Fowler: I accept part of what the hon. Gentleman says about the general increase, but I should need to give very careful consideration to the matter before trying to set up regional indices of the kind that the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, but may I remind him that there remain a great number of families with dependent children among those on the lowest incomes and that, while the increases in family income supplement and one-parent benefit make a great contribution, they can be no substitute for child benefit. There are 7 million mothers and nearly 13 million children who will hear of this uprating with great relief.

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree with her that child benefit is the only recognition in the tax or social security system of the extra cost of having children and bringing them up. It is for that reason that we have fully uprated it at this uprating.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): When the Minister says that because there has been no increase in fuel prices there will be no increase in fuel allowances, is he wiping from his memory and his conscience all the pain and suffering that went on in previous winters because of the inadequate allowances? Is he also wiping from his memory the fact that places in the north-west, such as my constituency, have many people who suffer from hypothermia? Is he not going to recognise that the present system is totally inadequate? Please, do not rest complacently on the fact that there has been no increase this year.

Mr. Fowler: The proposals on the severe weather allowance have been put to the Social Security Advisory Committee. I understand that it will be responding to them shortly. Obviously, we will lay regulations as soon as possible following that report. On the matter of additional requirements, I must point out that the Government are spending £400 million on heating additions. That is £140 million more in real terms than the previous Labour Government.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I congratulate my right hon. Friend most warmly on maintaining the real value of child benefit. May I remind him that that is in accordance with the decisive vote of the House in June when my motion on this subject was supported by 152 hon. Members and opposed by only three? Will he bear in mind, when settling his policy in regard to child benefit, that it is by far the most rational and humane way of keeping families from the necessity of applying for supplementary benefit? It is also the best way to maintain incentives to work for people with family responsibilities and low wages.

Mr. Fowler: I understand the point that my hon. Friend makes. I admire and pay tribute to the work that he has done for child benefit. I think that my hon. Friend will be satisfied with this uprating since we have given a full price uprating too.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): Why is the Secretary of State so reticent about his housing benefit cuts? Why will he not admit that this is the fourth time in three years that the rent taper has been cut? Why will he not admit that over 2 million households will lose and that this will further intensify the poverty trap? Why will he not admit that he is perpetuating a fiddle that was tried out earlier this year by failing to uprate the needs allowance by the traditional formula which has been used consistently since 1973 when it was introduced by a previous Conservative Government? By departing from that he is surreptitiously cutting the benefit to people.

Mr. Fowler: I did not think that I was being in the least reticent about the changes I have made in the needs allowance or the tapers. I have given the House the figures concerning that, the figures of average losses and the figures of public spending changes that are represented by it. I have to point out that when the Government came to office housing benefit spending was of the order of £1·5 billion and it is now £4·5 billion. Housing benefit now goes to one in three households and goes further up the income scale than any other income-related benefit.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Would my right hon. Friend remind the House of the cost of Labour's much beloved and, I would suggest, bogus formula? Would my right hon. Friend also remind the House how often the Labour Government manipulated and changed that formula when they had the task of managing it?

Mr. Fowler: On the last point, there is nothing I can add to what I have already said. The fact is—there are many Opposition Members who remember and are deeply ashamed—that 10 years ago the then Secretary of State for Social Services, Mrs. Castle, completely fiddled the system and robbed the pensioners of something over £1 billion. There is no doubt or question about that.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), appears to speak for the Labour party at times. However, the £5 and £8 increased cost which he is pledging would cost about £5·6 billion. To move towards the half average earnings to which he is now pledging the party would cost at least double that figure. That is why the public do not believe the pledges and promises that he is making.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): At a time when the poverty crisis gripping this country is an all-time record, is not this statement thoroughly disgraceful? Does the Secretary of State not realise that pensioners, families in poverty and the long-term unemployed do not want to hear that Ministers care about them? They want more money. Will he understand that many of those people think that the retail price index does not in any way reflect their real needs? When is he going to give those people real increases so that their standard of living can increase in the same way as for those in full-time employment? Does he not accept that that is the problem which the statement does not address itself to?

Mr. Fowler: The people of this country, the pensioners and other social security beneficiaries want increased

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benefits. The result of this uprating is that we are spending £700 million extra and the total social security spending is now £43 billion a year, which is about one third of all public spending. The pensioners in this country also want low inflation and they know that this is the only Government who will give them that because they can remember only too well what happened under the Labour Government.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Will my right hon. Friend remind the Opposition that everything has to be paid for?

Mr. Fowler: That is certainly the case. One of the results of having public spending under control is the low inflation that this country has enjoyed.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Does the Secretary of State agree that those looking at this statement, especially the strictures on child benefit where it says that a 10p increase costs the country £50 million per year, would get a good insight into the values of the Government when we consider that for the sake of one week the Chancellor was prepared to borrow £4 billion?

Mr. Fowler: It is entirely fair and accurate to say that the cost of increasing child benefit is £50 million on the 10p increases. However, as I have said, we have increased child benefit fully in line with prices, which I hope is what the hon. Gentleman would support.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I congratulate my right hon. Friend and his fellow Ministers on the child benefit increase. It is in line with the early-day motion that I tabled some months ago, which was supported by many of my right hon. and hon. Friends. I also congratulate him on winning any battles that may have been involved. Does he not find it surprising that, on a benefit, which he and his predecessors in our party, in government or opposition, have long seen to be the prime way to assist in reducing family poverty, there should be any discussion about whether it should be increased by less than the rate of inflation, since any discussion should be on whether it should be increased by more than the rate of inflation?

Mr. Fowler: As my hon. Friend realises and understands, the decisions on child benefit are made at each uprating. We have made that position absolutely clear. I am glad that my hon. Friend shares my satisfaction that child benefit has been increased in this way.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): I join in the congratulations being heaped on my right hon. Friend for preserving the real value of child benefit. May I suggest that, to avoid the type of debate that has taken place over recent upratings, he could persuade the Treasury to accept an index-linking of the child benefit in the same way as we now index-link the tax thresholds?

Mr. Fowler: I cannot do anything other than refer my hon. Friend to the reply I have just given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire).

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): While looking at housing benefits, will the Secretary of State consider withdrawing the rules of guidance that have been sent out recently to Department of Health and Social Security offices which have resulted in many of my pensioners who receive concessionary cash in lieu of fuel having their rent increased by between £3 and £4 per week? Given that the concessionary allowance is awarded by reason of disability, infirmity and inability to handle fuel, that is a very cruel cut.

Mr. Fowler: I shall consider the hon. Gentleman's comment.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my right hon. Friend recall that he was berated for not giving pensioners any more than he was legally obliged to give them? Since the last Labour Government did not even do that, does not it amount to a shabby attempt to mislead the country for Opposition Members to refer to the amount that would be paid under Labour's formula when the Labour Government did not even acknowledge their own formula?

Mr. Fowler: That is right. The Labour Government were not only totally unsuccessful in controlling inflation, but they perpetrated a number of frauds on the pensioners, the greatest being in 1976. They also ended the Christmas bonus. The public will remember that. I certainly do not believe that the public are remotely likely to accept or believe any of the promises made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher).

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Now that the Government have admitted in their submission on regional development to the European Community that their assumptions are based on unemployment in excess of 3 million by 1990 and, indeed, well into the 1990s, should not the Government now be reconsidering the position of people who have to live on benefits, because neither Government nor industry is capable of providing jobs?

Mr. Fowler: The changes that we are introducing in April 1988 as a result of the Social Security Act include provision for the unemployed in the income support arrangements. We should be seeking to bring unemployment down. That is what this Government want to do. One of the ways in which that can be done is to provide a context of low inflation. That is certainly what this Government are doing.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Does the Secretary of State accept that the benefit increase, even if one regards it in the most favourable light, will mean that deprived people will at the best maintain a standstill position? Will the Secretary of State be able to ease his conscience next year in the Cabinet when it votes for a tax reduction to be introduced at the same time as it votes for the benefit increases? Will the Secretary of State bear in mind that a 1p reduction in the standard rate of income tax is worth £1 billion—more than the package that he announced today?

Mr. Fowler: Since 1978-79 social security spending has increased by 35 per cent. in real terms, so it is not immediately obvious how it has financed tax cuts. The point about tax cuts is that they take people on low incomes out of tax. I should have thought that that was what the hon. Gentleman would want.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Severe weather payments are very important to many pensioners in Scotland. That was demonstrated clearly early this year when thousands of payments were made following February's severe weather. Does the Secretary of State agree that any regulations relating to heating additions or severe weather payments must pay close regard to regional variations in weather conditions?

Mr. Fowler: We are awaiting the report from the Social Security Advisory Committee. We shall consider that and bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman says about it, although I do not want to raise his hopes that we shall do as he wishes.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Does the Secretary of State accept that, although the pensioners of Eastbourne fret themselves to sleep worrying about inflation, the majority of pensioners in Newcastle will fret themselves to sleep worrying that two days from pension day they do not have a penny in their purse? Does he further accept that the grotesquely unfair increase that he announced today will be further nails in the coffin for many pensioners with hypothermia at the tail end of this winter? Is he aware that the only good thing that comes out of the statement is that it will result in further nails in this Government's coffin?

Mr. Fowler: That is a pretty pathetic comment. The hon. Gentleman does not even understand that the statement is being made for next April, at any event. Whether in Newcastle or in Eastbourne, the people will remember that the Government of which the hon. Gentleman was a member presided over an inflation of 110 per cent. That was a disgrace.

Mr. Meacher: The Secretary of State has repeatedly referred to inflation and its effect on pensioners. In view of his constant references to 1976, will he acknowledge that what matters to pensioners is the real increase in pensions over a five-year period after taking account of inflation? Does the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the real post-inflation increase in the pension under Labour's last five years was 20 per cent., while in the last seven years of this Government it has increased in real terms by only 3 or 4 per cent.? That is the real difference between the parties and their treatment of pensioners. They did five times better under Labour.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman totally ignores that inflation at the levels over which his Government presided devastated the savings of millions of pensioners throughout the country. The hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of that record when he was a Minister and should certainly not boast about it.

Following are the details:

Schedule of main proposed changes in Social Security Benefit rates from the pay-day in week commencing 6 April 1987
(weekly rates unless otherwise shown)

	Old rates 1986	*New rates 1987*
Attendance Allowance		
higher rate	30·95	31·60
lower rate	20·65	21·10
Child Benefit—each child	7·10	7·25
Child's Special Allowance	8·05	8·05
Dependency Additions		
Adult dependency additions		
For spouse or person looking after children, with:		
retirement pension on own insurance, invalidity pension, unemployability supplement and, if beneficiary over pension age, unemployment benefit	23·25	23·75
non-contributory retirement pension, invalid care and severe disablement allowance	13·90	14·20
sickness benefit if beneficiary over pension age	22·25	22·70
unemployment benefit:		
standard rate	19·00	19·40
three-quarter rate	14·25	14·55
half rate	9·50	9·70
maternity allowance/sickness benefit		
standard rate	18·20	18·60
three-quarter rate	13·65	13·95
half rate	9·10	9·30
Note: Half and three-quarter rates for existing cases only.		
Child dependency additions		
For each child with:		
retirement pension, widows benefit, invalidity benefit, invalid care and severe disablement allowance, higher rate industrial death benefit, unemployability supplement and sickness or unemployment benefit if beneficiary over pension age	8·05	8·05
Earnings Rules		
Retirement pension	75·00	75·00
Invalid care allowance	12·00	12·00
Unemployment benefit subsidiary occupation (daily rate)	2·00	2·00
Therapeutic earnings limit	25·50	26·00
Industrial injuries unemployability supplement permitted earnings level (annual amount)	1,326·00	1,352·00
War pensioners' unemployability supplement permitted earnings level	25·50	26·00
Adult dependant's benefit with:		
Sickness benefit if claimant is		
under pension age	18·20	18·60
over pension age	22·25	22·70
Maternity allowance	18·20	18·60
Unemployment benefit if claimant is		
under pension age	19·90	19·40
over pension age	23·25	23·75
Retirement pension, invalidity pension, severe disablement allowance, unemployability supplement where dependent is:		
living with the claimant	30·80	31·45
living with the claimant and still qualifies for the tapered earnings rule	45·09	45·09
Retirement pension, invalidity pension and unemployability supplement where dependant not living with claimant	23·25	23·75
Severe disablement allowance where dependant not living with claimant	13·90	14·20
Invalid care allowance (wife or female housekeeper)	13·90	14·20
Child dependency additions level at which child additions payable with long-term benefits are affected by earnings of claimant's spouse or partner		
first child	85·00	85·00
each subsequent child	10·00	10·00
Family Income Supplement		
Prescribed amount for one-child family, where child is aged		
under 11	98·60	100·70
11-15	99·60	101·75
16 and over	100·60	102·80
Increase for each additional child		

	Old rates 1986	*New rates 1987*
under 11	11·65	11·90
11-15	12·65	12·95
16 and over	13·65	14·00
Maximum amount for one-child family where child is aged		
under 11	25·30	25·85
11-15	25·80	26·40
16 and over	26·30	26·90
Increase for each additional child		
under 11	2·55	2·60
11-15	3·05	3·15
16 and over	3·55	3·65
Guardian's Allowance each child	8·05	8·05
Hospital Downrating		
20 per cent. rate	7·75	7·90
40 per cent. rate	15·50	15·80
60 per cent. rate	23·25	23·70
Reduction where wife has pension on her own insurance (category A)	23·20	23·65
Resettlement benefit	62·00	64·00
Housing Benefit		
Needs allowances		
single person	48·10	48·90
couple/single parent	70·85	72·15
single handicapped person	53·65	54·50
couple (one handicapped) or handicapped single parent	76·40	77·75
couple (both handicapped)	79·00	80·45
pensioner addition	·85	·85
dependent child addition	14·60	14·75
Non-dependant deductions		
Rate rebates		
aged 18 to pension age, and not on supplementary benefit or youth training scheme nor qualifying for modified deduction after 56 days	2·60	2·70
of pension age, or over 25 and on supplementary benefit or qualifying for modified deduction after 56 days	1·10	1·15
age 16-17 and not on supplementary benefit, youth training scheme or severe disablement allowance, or 16-24 and qualifying for modified deduction after 56 days	1·10	1·15
Rent rebates and allowances		
aged 18 to pension age and not on supplementary benefit or youth training scheme nor qualifying for modified deduction after 56 days	7·80	8·05
of pension age, or over 25 and on supplementary benefit or qualifying for modified deduction after 56 days	2·80	2·90
aged 16-17 and not on supplementary benefit, youth training scheme or 16-24 and qualifying for modified deduction after 56 days	2·80	2·90
Disregards for:		
claimant's earnings	17·30	17·30
partner's earnings	5·00	5·00
various pensions etc.	4·00	4·00
maintenance of non grant-aided students (maximum)	23·85	24·35
Deductions for amenities		
all fuel	8·80	8·80
heating	6·70	6·70
hot water	0·80	0·80
lighting	0·50	0·50
cooking	0·80	0·80
Expenses allowed for sub-tenants		
furnished letting	3·00	3·00
unfurnished letting	1·50	1·50
garage or outbuilding	0·40	0·40
Industrial Death Benefit		
Widow's pension		
first 26 weeks	54·20	55·35
higher permanent rate	39·25	40·05
lower permanent rate	11·61	11·85
Child dependency addition	8·05	8·05
Industrial Disablement Pension		
18 and over, or under 18 with dependants		
100 per cent.	63·20	64·50
90 per cent.	56·88	58·05
80 per cent.	50·56	51·60
70 per cent.	44·24	45·15
60 per cent.	37·50	38·70
50 per cent.	31·60	32·25
40 per cent.	25·28	25·80
30 per cent.	18·96	19·35
20 per cent.	12·64	12·90
under 18		
100 per cent.	38·70	39·50
90 per cent.	34·83	35·55
80 per cent.	30·96	31·60
70 per cent.	27·09	27·65
60 per cent.	23·22	23·70
50 per cent.	19·35	19·75
40 per cent.	15·48	15·80
30 per cent.	11·61	11·85
20 per cent.	7·74	7·90
Maximum life gratuity (lump sum)	4,200·00	4,290·00
Unemployability supplement	38·70	39·50
plus where appropriate an increase for early incapacity		
higher rate	8·15	8·30
middle rate	5·20	5·30
lower rate	2·60	2·65
Adult dependency addition	23·25	23·75
Child dependency addition	8·05	8·05
Maximum special hardship allowance	25·28	25·80
Constant attendance allowance		
normal maximum	25·30	25·80
part-time rate	12·65	12·90
intermediate rate	37·95	38·70
exceptional rate	50·60	51·60
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	25·30	25·80
Invalid Care Allowance	23·25	23·75
Adult dependency addition	13·90	14·20
Invalidity Benefit		
Invalidity pension	38·70	39·50
Invalidity allowance		
higher rate	8·15	8·30
middle rate	5·20	5·30
lower rate	2·60	2·65
Maternity Benefit		
Maternity allowance		
full rate	29·45	30·05
adult dependency addition	18·20	18·60
three-quarter rate	22·09	22·54
adult dependency addition	13·65	13·95
half rate	14·73	15·03
adult dependency addition	9·10	9·30
Note: Half and three-quarter rates for existing cases only.		
Mobility Allowance	21·65	22·10
One Parent Benefit	4·60	4·70

	Old rates 1986	*New rates 1987*
Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis, Workmen's Compensation and Other Schemes		
Major incapacity allowance (maximum) and allowance for total disablement	63·20	64·50
partial disablement allowance	23·25	23·75
Unemployability supplement plus where appropriate increases for early incapacity	38·70	39·50
higher rate	8·15	8·30
middle rate	5·20	5·30
lower rate	2·60	2·65
Constant attendance allowance		
normal maximum rate	25·30	25·80
part-time rate	12·65	12·90
intermediate rate	37·95	38·70
exceptional rate	50·60	51·60
Exceptionably severe disablement allowance	25·30	25·80
Lesser incapacity allowance (maximum)	23·25	23·75
—based on loss of earnings of over	30·95	31·60
Retirement Pension		
on own insurance—category A or B	38·70	39·50
on spouse's insurance—category B (lower)	23·25	23·75
non-contributory—		
category C or D	23·25	23·75
category C (lower)	13·90	14·20
additional pension, guaranteed minimum pension and graduated retirement benefit	increased by 2·1 per cent.	
graduated retirement benefit (unit)	5·06p	5·17p
increments to basic and additional pension, guaranteed minimum pension, and graduated retirement benefit	increased by 2·1 per cent.	
maximum amount of additional pension (also paid with widows' and invalidity benefits)	24·03	24·53
addition for over 80's	0·25	0·25
Severe Disablement Allowance	23·25	23·75
adult dependency addition	13·90	14·20
Sickness Benefit		
over pension age		
single rate	37·05	37·85
adult dependency addition	22·25	22·70
under pension age		
full rate	29·45	30·05
adult dependency addition	18·20	18·60
three quarters rate	22·09	22·54
adult dependency addition	13·65	13·95
half rate	14·73	15·03
adult dependency addition	9·10	9·30
Note: Half and three-quarters rates for existing cases only.		
Supplementary Benefit		
Scale rates		
ordinary rates		
single householder	29·80	30·40
couple	48·40	49·35
non-householder 18 or over	23·85	24·35
non-householder 16-17	18·40	18·75
long-term rates		
single person living alone	37·90	38·65
couple	60·65	61·85
non-householder 18 or over	30·35	30·95
non-householder 16-17	23·25	23·70
dependent children		
over 18	23·85	24·35
16-17	18·40	18·75
11-15	15·30	15·60
under 11	10·20	10·40
Board and lodging		
personal expenses: short term		
single	9·80	10·00
couple	19·60	20·00
personal expenses: long-term		
single	10·95	11·15
couple	21·90	22·30
personal expenses: dependants		
18 and over	9·80	10·00
16-17	5·90	6·00
11-15	5·05	5·15
under 11	3·30	3·35
Allowances for personal expenses for claimants in		
private and voluntary residential and nursing homes	9·05	9·25
re-establishment centres	9·95	10·15
resettlement units	7·60	7·75
hospital and local authority accommodation	7·75	7·90
the Polish Home Ilford Park	10·95	11·15
Additional requirements		
Heating additions (including age-related heating additions)		
higher rate	5·55	5·55
lower rate	2·20	2·20
Central heating		
higher rate	4·40	4·40
lower rate	2·20	2·20
Estate rate heating		
higher rate	8·80	8·80
lower rate	4·40	4·40
Special dietary additions		
lower rate	1·60	1·65
higher rate	3·70	3·80
haemodialysis rate	10·65	10·85
Blind person	1·25	1·25
Over age 80	0·25	0·25
Laundry costs	0·55	0·55
Extra bath	0·30	0·30
Housing costs		
Reduction for non-dependants		
aged 18 to pension age, and not on supplementary benefit, a youth training scheme nor qualifying for modified deduction after 56 days	7·80	8·05
of pension age or over 25 and on supplementary benefit or qualifying for modified deduction after 56 days	2·80	2·90
age 16-17 and not on supplementary benefit, a youth training scheme or severe disablement allowance, or 16-24 and qualifying for modified deduction after 56 days	2·80	2·90
non-householder rent addition	3·90	4·05
maintenance and insurance allowance	1·85	1·95
Capital limits for		
receipt of supplementary benefit	3,000·00	3,000·00
single payments and related items	500·00	500·00
interest on loans for major repairs and improvements	500·00	500·00
lower rate voluntary unemployment deductions	100·00	100·00
Other limits for		
expenses on starting work	35·00	35·00
religious requirements—funerals	75·00	75·00
single payment for repairs and maintenance	325·00	325·00
Deductions for direct payment		
fuel bills		

	Old rates 1986	*New rates 1987*
5 per cent. rate	1·50	1·55
10 per cent. rate	3·00	3·05
housing costs	1·50	1·55
Earnings disregard—£4 and in the case of single parents half the difference between £4 and £20	4·00	4·00
Unemployment Benefit		
Over pension age		
single rate	38·70	39·50
adult dependency addition	23·25	23·75
Under pension age		
full rate	30·80	31·45
adult dependency addition	19·00	19·40
three-quarters rate	23·10	23·59
adult dependency addition	14·25	14·55
half rate	15·40	15·73
adult dependency addition	9·50	9·70
occupational pension abatement	35·00	35·00
Note: Half and three-quarter rates for existing cases only		
War Pensions		
Disablement pension (100 per cent. rates)		
private or equivalent	63·20	64·50
officer (£ per annum)	3,295·00	3,363·00
Age allowances		
40 per cent. to 50 per cent.	4·40	4·50
over 50 per cent. but not over 70 per cent.	6·85	7·00
over 70 per cent. but not over 90 per cent.	9·85	10·05
over 90 per cent	13·70	14·00
Disablement gratuity (£ per annum)		
specified minor injury	4,200·00	4,290·00
unspecified minor injury	2,310·00	2,359·50
Unemployability allowance		
personal allowance	41·10	41·95
adult dependency addition	23·25	23·75
addition for each child	8·05	8·05
Invalidity allowance		
higher rate	8·15	8·30
middle rate	5·20	5·30
lower rate	2·60	2·65
Constant attendance allowance		
normal maximum rate	25·30	25·80
part-time rate	12·65	12·90
intermediate rate	37·95	38·70
exceptional rate	50·60	51·60
Comforts allowance		
higher rate	10·90	11·10
lower rate	5·45	5·55
Mobility supplement	24·05	24·55
Allowance for lowered standard of occupation (maximum)	25·28	25·80
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	25·30	25·80
Severe disablement occupational allowance	12·65	12·90
Clothing allowance (per annum)		
higher rate	86·00	88·00
lower rate	55·00	56·00
Education allowance (per annum)	120·00	120·00
War widows' pension (private)		
widow	50·30	51·35
childless widow under age 40	11·61	11·85
age allowance		
age 65 to 69	5·40	5·50
age 70 to 79	10·80	11·00
age 80 and over	13·55	13·85
child addition	11·55	11·60
addition for motherless or fatherless child	12·60	12·70
Unmarried dependant living as wife	48·25	49·30
Rent allowance (maximum)	19·15	19·55
Adult orphan's pension	38·70	39·50
Widower's pension (maximum)	50·30	51·35
Widow's Benefit		
Widows' allowance	54·20	55·35
Widowed mothers' allowance	38·70	39·50
Widows' pension—standard rate	38·70	39·50
Age-related widows' pension		
age 49	35·99	36·74
age 48	33·28	33·97
age 47	30·57	31·21
age 46	27·86	28·44
age 45	25·16	25·68
age 44	22·45	22·91
age 43	19·74	20·15
age 42	17·03	17·38
age 41	14·32	14·62
age 40	11·61	11·85
Non-contributory widow's pension (category C) standard rate	23·25	23·75
age 49	21·62	22·09
age 48	20·00	20·43
age 47	18·37	18·76
age 46	16·74	17·10
age 45	15·11	15·44
age 44	13·49	13·78
age 43	11·86	12·11
age 42	10·23	10·45
age 41	8·60	8·79
age 40	6·98	7·13

Sheep Exports (France)

4.46 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the illegal interference with live sheep exports from the United Kingdom to France."

The BBC reported this morning that another consignment of sheep for immediate slaughter had been hijacked by French farmers, the sheep released and chased into a field. Some were sprayed with the highly dangerous insecticide, lyndane, which means that they cannot be safely marketed for at least two months. Others were said to have been injected with a substance to achieve the same results. Last week sheep and lambs outside Tours were similarly hijacked and the animals released.

Such exports are licensed by the Minister of Agriculture and the licence must state their final destination. That supposed system of protection, in which those of us who oppose live exports never believed, is in tatters. The Minister of Agriculture should immediately suspend all further licences until the proper welfare of live sheep exports can be guaranteed.

Such incidents, which threaten the welfare of live sheep, follow reports of a trail on a consignment of sheep from the United Kingdom which were licensed for export in France and which turned up in Spain 27 hours later having had no water or feed. Some sheep were dead. The Minister of Agriculture should ensure that a condition of the licence is that if the sheep or other live animals do not arrive at the destination stated on the licence the person holding the licence should face prosecution.

This vile trade in live sheep is bad enough when controls are attempted. It is unacceptable when shipments are hijacked and the welfare of the animals is put at risk to keep them off the French market. That is why I believe the matter to be urgent enough for our consideration.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the illegal interference with live sheep exports from the United Kingdom to France."

As the hon. Gentleman knows, my sole duty in deciding this matter is whether it should take precedence over the Orders set down for today or for tomorrow. I have to say that I do not consider the matter to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House. However, I hope that he will find other opportunities of discussing it.

Kidney Dialysis (Elimination of Waiting Lists)

4.48 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to establish procedures for eliminating the waiting lists of patients who require kidney dialysis by contracting out the provision of such facilities.

Experts have estimated that in England and Wales about 1,200 kidney patients are not being served by the dialysis transplant programme. It might help if I explain how that figure is reached. In 1984, in England and Wales, 35 new patients per million head of population received treatment. In many European countries—for example, in West Germany and Spain—the figure was 55 new patients per million.

Before anyone points the finger, I remind the House that, in recent years, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has brought about an enormous improvement. Provisional data for 1985 suggest that in the past year alone the number of new renal patients treated increased from 35 to 40 per million. Data received from the United Kingdom transplant service show that the number of transplant operations performed in the United Kingdom during the six months from January to June 1986 increased by no less than 24 per cent. That is excellent news for those people awaiting transplants.

However, I regret to say that the number of patients awaiting transplants will not reduce until there are more donors. Despite regular and widespread appeals for donors, there is still a tragic shortage. There is a waiting list of 3,000. Many opportunities to donate kidneys are lost through the relatives of someone who had just died failing to appreciate that another's life could be saved. I realise how difficult it is for hospital staff to raise the question of transplants with grieving relatives.

There is therefore a great deal of sense in following the example of certain American states which are considering putting doctors under an obligation to raise the matter with relatives, in suitable cases. If doctors are under an obligation to raise the issue, they will be saved the acute embarrassment of suggesting a donation of organs on the death of a loved one.

My Bill deals with the shortfall in the provision of dialysis treatment for those patients awaiting transplants and those for whom a transplant is not suitable. In that sphere, much has been achieved in the United Kingdom. Almost a quarter of Europeans receiving continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis receive treatment in this country. The United Kingdom has a first-class record on home haemodialysis. Few European countries have more than 10 per cent. of their patients treated at home. Yet over half of our patients have that advantage.

It is in hospital dialysis where we lag behind many European countries. Those for whom CAPD, or home dialysis, is not suitable must rely on hospital treatment. What concerns me is that the shortage of those treated is not through lack of equipment. Doctor Alex Davison, a consultant renal physician of the department of renal medicine, and Professor Geoffrey Giles, a professor of surgery at St. James university hospital in Leeds, in an

[Mr. Tony Favell]

article last year, estimated that the number of patients treated by hospital dialysis could double without the purchase of one additional machine.

That finding is supported by a study which reveals that each hospital dialysis machine in the United Kingdom supports only one patient, while in Europe the corresponding figure is 2·9 patients. In other words, one machine in England supports one person, whereas a machine in Europe supports three. That is an appalling waste of resources. No doubt some will argue that the position arises from a shortage of staff. Whilst that may be true in a limited number of cases, it is my firm belief that hospital dialysis machines are not worked to capacity because of inflexible working practices in many Health Service regions.

The best way to explain this is by considering what is happening in Wales. In 1984, 33 new kidney patients per million received treatment. In 1985, just one year later, about 56 new patients per million received treatment. That was due entirely to a bold initiative taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. He invited tenders for the provision of two new renal units. In each case, the district health authority submitted in-house bids in competition with the private sector. In both cases, the private sector bids were successful. Within five months of the contracts being awarded, the units were built, equipped, staffed and receiving their first patients. In each case, there was a substantial saving to the health authority concerned.

The units were brought into operation so quickly simply because the successful bidders were experts in kidney dialysis. They had set up units many times before. That is not so with most district health authorities. Recently, one district health authority took as long as seven years from the date of the go-ahead to bring a unit into operation.

The savings, which can amount to as much as £6,000 per patient per year, are accounted for in a number of different ways. I shall give examples of what is done at the unit at Carmarthen which I visited. Firstly, administrative overheads are kept to an absolute minimum. Secondly, the staffing patterns are flexible to minimise loss of staff time. For example, the staff customarily work three 11-hour days a week, which accommodates two sets of patients within an 11-hour shift. Most National Health Service units accommodate one set of patients in an eight-hour shift. Thirdly, the unit does not employ technicians; rather, it trains nursing staff to perform technical equipment work. Modern equipment is so reliable that technicians are not required on-site to service equipment. It is far better to keep one or two spare machines in case of an emergency and to make use of manufacturers' service contracts. Fourthly, the unit contracts out all its housekeeping and maintenance services.

Health authorities in England have been urged to follow the Welsh example and to put the provision of hospital kidney dialysis out to tender, but alas with no success. My Bill makes that compulsory. If a health authority, by improved working practices, wins a contract, that is fine, but, if not, resources will be released to treat more patients. When I visited Carmarthen, I found a well-run unit with which patients and staff were highly delighted. The National Health Service renal consultant whom I met had no criticism whatever. Most importantly, lives are being saved. I commend my Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Tony Favell, Mr. Ralph Howell, Mr. Roy Galley, Mrs. Anna McCurley, Mr. Gerald Howarth, Mr. Michael Forsyth and Mr. Peter Hubbard-Miles.

KIDNEY DIALYSIS (ELIMINATION OF WAITING LISTS)

Mr. Tony Favell accordingly presented a Bill to establish procedures for eliminating the waiting lists of patients who require kidney dialysis by contracting out the provision of such facilities: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 31 October and to be printed. [Bill 221.]

Orders of the Day

Sex Discrimination Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 1

SECRET BALLOTING

'The Secretary of State shall not make any order in relation to sections 7 and 8 under section 10(3) unless a secret ballot has been held to ascertain the opinion of the employees affected and a majority vote recorded in favour of the order proposed by the Secretary of State.'.—*[Mr. Evans.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.57 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I welcome the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment — the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee)—to his new post. Recently he moved from defence to employment. I commiserate with his hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) who has moved to a post in the Scottish Office. I do not know whether the activities of the hon. Gentleman in defence will be of any benefit to employment. However, at the outset—I may never do so again—I wish him all the best in his new position. We look forward to his participation in this afternoon's debate. We look forward to his acceptance of some of the amendments and new clauses that we have tabled for consideration today, especially the acceptance of new clause 1. I am sure that the fresh mind and the new ideas that the hon. Gentleman brings to his post mean that he will welcome new clauses such as new clause 1.

I think that the Minister will agree that the Government have often boasted about their views on employees participating in secret ballots. They have often claimed that they have extended democracy in many areas, so let us hope that the further extension of democracy that the Opposition are proposing will be acceptable to the Minister. The new clause would require a secret ballot to be held where any of the provisions set out in clauses 7 and 8 are to be withdrawn, and would cover both men and women. That is because the Government are proposing to repeal a number of protections that employees have enjoyed for a long time. Some of the protections that are being repealed were won by workers or employees after fighting for a long time for better conditions in some of the most difficult industries. That must be put on record immediately.

It must be put on record immediately also that under the Bill the Government are taking the opportunity to further their policy of deregulation in almost every sphere. It is useful to recall what the Government are repealing by means of the Bill. When the Bill is enacted, the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954 will no longer apply. It is disgraceful that the Government are repealing such an important Act which was passed not so long ago. It is not one of the Acts that were passed at the back end of the previous century when certain reformers were trying to protect workers in sweated conditions. The measure was enacted in 1954 and it stemmed from the dreadful conditions and dreadful competition which then existed within the baking industry. Against that background, the Tory Government of the day saw fit to place on the statute book an Act designed to protect workers in the industry. It is obvious that we have an entirely different Tory Government today from the Administration which was in office in 1954. The present Government are now proposing to repeal the 1954 Act.

A series of provisions specified in the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and the Factories Act 1961 will no longer apply. At present, women cannot work more than 48 hours a week, or nine hours a day. They can work only between 7 am and 8 pm or between 7 am and 1 pm—five hours—on a Saturday. No woman can work more than four and a half hours without a half-hour break. I think that most people would agree that those are minimum civilised conditions. Any Government claiming to be civilised would surely respect such conditions and keep them on the statute book. Women working in mines and quarries are subject to similar restrictions and I am sure that most intelligent, sensible and decent people would welcome such restrictions.

There are more repeals to come. For example, section 94 of the Factories Act is to go. The section provides that women must be given a full day's holiday on Christmas Day, Good Friday and bank holidays in England and Wales. I suspect that most people would be astonished and shocked to learn that the Government are proposing to repeal the section that provides that protection. That will mean that women will no longer be entitled by statute to days off at Christmas, Good Friday and bank holidays. Section 93 is to go as well. That is the section that prohibits women working on Sundays in factories.

Perhaps even more serious is the repeal of section 114. The section allows the Minister to regulate and make provisions relating to the health and welfare of women engaged in overtime working and other hours covered by exemption if the Minister sees fit, and is something which is currently entirely within the Minister's remit. The proposed repeal of section 114 is a mystery which has not been explained so far. The section places no obligations on the Minister and it would be implemented only if the Minister thought that it was necessary to deal with instances that came within it.

The Opposition's secret ballot proposal is an extension of section 97 of the Factories Act, which was derived from the Employment of Women and Young Persons Act 1936. It is interesting to note how much Parliament has returned over the years to the theme of increasing protection for various groups of workers, especially women and young children, but I am sure that the Minister is beginning to be aware that the Bill is the vehicle for overturning many of the successes that have been won by workers over the years. The 1936 Act allows the Minister, upon an employer's application, to authorise the employment of women and young people over 16 years of age on a system of shifts from 6 am to 10 pm on weekdays and 2 pm on Saturdays. It provides that the Minister must consult the work force to ascertain its opinions by secret ballot before any application is granted under the section. In other words, it is enshrined in legislation that workers shall be consulted in a secret ballot if their terms and conditions of employment are to be altered. That is something that will not apply after the Bill is enacted unless the Minister is prepared to accept the new clause.

[Mr. John Evans]

The Government are intent on repealing the sections of the Acts to which I have referred, and the new clause would extend the ballot to cover all changes in hours beyond the present legal limits. A similar amendment was introduced in another place in Committee by Lord Wedderburn of Charlton. My noble Friend withdrew his amendment in the hope that the Government would consider the matter further. He advanced his arguments and hoped that they would consider them. He withdrew the amendment partly because it proved to be slightly defective in that it referred to exemption orders when it should have cited authorisations. Needless to say, the Government did not consider the amendment or Lord Wedderburn's arguments. They engaged in nitpicking during the debate and wanted to know to what the proposed ballot would refer. They wanted to know whether the ballot would turn on the right to retain section 97 or whether it would refer to the hours that were to be altered. They engaged in nitpicking instead of addressing themselves to the main question.

My noble Friend did not care particularly what interpretations were placed on the amendment because he wanted the principle that lay behind it to be accepted, and the Opposition's ballot proposals in new clause 1 relate to the proposed conditions. My noble Friend recalled the words of Sir John Simon who was the Home Secretary in 1935, who has often been described as the scourge of the general strike. In introducing the current provisions in 1935, he said:

"All of us want to do the right thing for the workpeople, and I hope that every hon. Member will think that was a right thing to do".—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1936; Vol. 307, c1674.]

Why is such a ballot any less the right thing now than it was 50 years ago? The Government often boast that they have increased democracy within the trade unions. If that is so, why are they rescinding a right that was established in 1936? In this context we are told repeatedly that ballots are outmoded and unnecessary when they affect management, but I put it to the Minister that the work force is affected much more than management. If ballots were considered essential 50 years ago for work people in relation to their terms and hours of work and conditions, they are equally applicable today.

At all stages of the Bill's progress through Parliament the Government have stressed that they are doing no more than following the recommendation of the Equal Opportunities Commission in dispensing with protective legislation. They are keen to quote the 1977 finding of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys that 40 per cent. of women were in favour of repealing the night work provisions and that 60 per cent. wanted shift and overtime provisions to be repealed. They disregarded the fact that only 11 per cent. of those contacted were willing to work at night.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): That survey was taken before the deregulation of bus services, which will have a fundamental effect on whether transport is available during off-peak hours. That will affect women who work excess hours.

Mr. Evans: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for highlighting an increasingly important point. Sadly, in today's society we hear much about attacks on women at all times, but especially in the evening and at night. The declining role of public transport will create severe conditions for women who lack their own transport. The people most affected by the Bill will be those who lack their own transport and who rely on public transport.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): In the part of the world from which the hon. Gentleman and I both come, public transport is improving since bus deregulation. Does he not accept that, if an employer wants women workers, he must——

Mr. Evans *rose*——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: If the hon. Gentleman will contain himself, I shall deal with the point.

Does he accept that if employers want women to man their shifts, they will have to supply the transport or quite simply they will not get them?

Mr. Evans: Apart from the fact that there is a fair distance between the hon. Lady's constituency and mine, and that different conditions exist in the two constituencies, the question of employers supplying transport is not, unfortunately, enshrined in this legislation. All we have is the hon. Lady's word on the matter.

Deregulation in public transport is imminent, so I suggest that the hon. Lady waits for a few months until we can see the outcome of it. I suspect, as I am sure do many people, that although there may well be some cut-throat competition in cities and towns with large populations, in many rural areas such as the hon. Lady's constituency, all the signs are that there may not be a great deal of public transport.

We are discussing transport late at night, and in the middle of the night, and the chance of any public transport being available at such times is remote.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): In the areas that my hon. Friend and I represent, perhaps unlike Lancaster and the plush areas around Morecambe, we had quite a fight to try to maintain the transport service, and it will still be difficult. As many of the shifts will be late at night or in the middle of the night, it is highly unlikely that operators will find it profitable to run transport systems then. That is what we are talking about when we discuss the baking industry. Because of unemployment, it is likely that women especially will have to take jobs of any sort, whatever their disadvantages, and that could lead to tragedies.

Mr. Evans: Evidence supports my hon. Friend's argument that, given the depths of unemployment and constantly growing poverty, especially in families where the husband cannot get a job and is unlikely to get one in the future, particularly in areas that now lack heavy industry, women are increasingly having to accept part-time, poorly paid jobs. When the Bill comes into effect and the current protection of women's hours of work is removed, they will be forced to take shift work, often working late at night and finishing after midnight.

5.15 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), who raised this point originally, is absolutely correct that the Bill will seriously endanger the health and welfare of many women. I am sure that that is not what the Government intended. However, my hon. Friends and I have pointed out the problem to the Government, so that

in future they will be unable to claim that they were unaware of it. It has been driven home to Ministers throughout the passage of the Bill.

I now refer to the views expressed by women working at night who were included in the poll. The previous Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, now the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, constantly sought to promote the views of the minority. He was always quick to highlight minority opposition to the removal of restrictions. He said:

"Needless to say, those collective agreements can in some cases override the wishes of the minority of individual workers." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee A;* 19 June 1986, c. 92.]

In other words, if a minority of workers wanted the safeguards to be removed because it would be beneficial to them, their views had to be heard. Unfortunately for the Minister, but perhaps fortunately, the normal concept of democracy is that the views of the majority will prevail. On this occasion, and for their own purposes, the Government seek to promote the views of the minority. I remind the Minister that new clause 1 asks for nothing more than that a simple majority should decide whether to dispense with the restrictions once and for all. The workers will be consulted and will be able to vote on the proposed alterations to their working conditions. Surely even the Minister will accept that it is fair to give a voice and a vote to employees whose conditions are to be altered.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I dealt with those provisions in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. It troubled me then that there were situations, although by no means universal, where men could receive remunerative overtime for working on a Saturday afternoon whereas women could not go to work on the same Saturday afternoon and receive the same remuneration. If women are the minority in that situation, should the majority of men, who are able to discriminate to earn remunerative overtime, have a veto or should there be consent by the minority of women who wish to align their position?

Mr. Evans: I am sure that my hon. Friend's important point will be pursued later. He did a splendid job during the passage of the 1975 Act with well-rehearsed arguments. It suits the Government to promote the minority point of view at the moment, but it may well suit them to drop that argument altogether on other occasions, as I shall demonstrate.

It is not just women workers who will benefit from a vote on their conditions. Applications for exemption orders for women provide a platform from which better conditions can be negotiated for all workers. *Labour Research,* an excellent publication which has produced some splendid data for the benefit of those who are prepared to purchase it, reported in December 1985 on the findings of a survey of 92 companies including such giants as Metal Box, Shell UK at Stanlow, Cadbury Bournville and British Nuclear Fuels Limited. It was found that companies that had had to apply for exemption orders provided a minimum meal break of half an hour or more, the average being 33 minutes. The figures for those that had not applied for exemptions were far more varied. Indeed, five reported that they had no guaranteed breaks, and that meals were taken, if at all, as and when work allowed. The average length of break was 25 minutes. The survey concluded that

"this suggests that the need to obtain HSE exemption may improve the type of system operated."

Once the HSE exemption had been applied for and the workers were consulted about the proposed changes and the exemption, they took far greater interest in the operation of better conditions.

The need to hold a ballot may also encourage employers to improve their workers' conditions in an attempt to secure a favourable vote. The aforementioned survey demonstrated just how lacking some large companies are in essential provisions — essential and elementary provisions such as a reasonable meal break in a reasonable place where workers can enjoy their midday meal.

According to the same survey, 76 companies provided some medical facilities for shift workers, although half were first aid only. Twelve had no medical facilities whatsoever, and just 14 had trained medical assistance on all shifts, usually a nurse. Thirty said that public transport was available on all shifts. A staggering 48 said that it was not available, so it was clear—*[Interruption.]* Whatever was in force, 48 companies said that public transport was not available on shift work. That is the reality of shift work. The clauses that were added to the Bill in the other place—on equal protection orders, unfair dismissal and a code of practice—might have improved the situation. The Government saw fit to remove those clauses in Committee, to their everlasting shame, but new clause 1, on secret balloting, would go some way towards upholding some of the standards that the Bill will lower.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): My hon. Friend referred to the low number of companies that had transport facilities in the area in which they operated, which was available for shift workers. That is important. The hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) sought to turn the argument into one about regulation and deregulation. As my hon. Friend knows, in my area the bus transport system has deteriorated significantly since deregulation because of underfinancing and because of the need for the passenger transport authority to cut back on subsidies. But does not the argument simply come down to this? If the hon. Member for Lancaster is convinced that in her area the transport services are sufficiently good to allow for safe working practices, that would be an inducement for the work forces to vote yes in any secret ballot. All that we are asking is that they should have the opportunity of being consulted on whether transport facilities are adequate. The people in Lancaster might vote yes and the people in Manchester might vote no.

Mr. Evans: I am sure that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) will accept my hon. Friend's point, that that would be one of the factors that would sway the judgment of the workers involved in a ballot on the alteration of their conditions.

For example, some of my constituents have written to me complaining about not only the shortage of buses but sometimes their complete non-appearance. Every time I write to the transport undertaking I am told, almost by return of post, that the reason for the deteriorating service and sometimes the non-appearance of a service, especially in an area such as Billinge, is the requirement placed upon the undertaking to reduce staff in the light of the forthcoming deregulation, which means that it cannot provide the service that it accepts the people are entitled to.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: I did not raise this matter—it was raised by the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon). I was seeking to dispel some unfortunate misconceptions, which it is important to dispel. In many areas in the city in my constituency, not just in the rural areas, old-fashioned double decker buses could not get round the corners. Those areas were not served. Now, with deregulation and 19-seater minibuses, areas can be served that were never served before. That will be of tremendous assistance to women. Nobody—no woman in particular—would ever wish to put a woman at risk. I believe that women will be better served under the new conditions than in the past.

Mr. Evans: The problems in constituencies such as mine and, no doubt, plenty of other constituencies are not connected with double decker buses not being able to get round corners. Double and single decker buses are not appearing on first-class highways where there is plenty of room for two double decker buses side by side. They are simply not appearing. I suggest that once the new system has been in operation for a few months, we shall all be better able to judge.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Stick to sex.

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman is more expert than I. People, particularly women who will be required to do shift work at night, will suffer as a result of the Bill. That is my point, and it has been well made by my hon. Friends. Deregulation of the bus services will add to the problems created by the Bill.

Mr. Dixon: Will the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) tell the House whether many bus services in her constituency are running at 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): The hon. Gentleman must not appeal to someone to rise and make another speech.

Mr. Dixon: The hon. Member for Lancaster said that I had raised the issue of deregulation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a misconception to suggest that employers would provide transport if women were to work these peculiar shifts until 3, 4 and 5 am. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) will recall that when we had to work peculiar shifts finishing at 3 or 4 am some of our colleagues had to sleep on the premises until the bus service arrived at 7.30 am. That will happen to some of the women working those peculiar hours.

Mr. Evans: It is a pity that my hon. Friend did not have the opportunity to elaborate on the bus services that existed in the shipbuilding areas on Tyneside for shipyard workers such as himself and myself.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Hire a bus.

Mr. Evans: For the hon. Gentleman to say that from a sedentary position shows his lack of knowledge. If that is the best he can do, he should make no further comments from a sedentary position.

It should be borne in mind by Conservative Members that the Bill will worsen the situation for women when they are asked or required to do shift work. The point has been well made that deregulation of public transport will add to their problems.

I return to the point that I was making previously. The Secretary of State for Employment said in the other place on Second Reading that

"we should remove any restriction with care".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 27 February 1986; Vol. 471, c. 1209.]

The noble Lord seems to have forgotten that because now almost everything is being removed. The secret ballots that we advocate would test just how careful the Government were because the employees would be given the opportunity to participate in any change that was suggested. The Government will say that such a provision is unworkable, yet it has existed in a reduced form for 50 years. The original ballot did not apply to newly established factories. Nor will ours. It will continue to be run jointly by the employer and the workers' representatives.

Harmonious industrial relations are essential. Hon. Members in all parts of the House agree on that. I welcome the new Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Front Bench, but his predecessor, when describing his utopian view of the world, said:

"It is not a battle between one side and the other, but a partnership between the two. If employers' interests are safeguarded, employees' interests will also be protected".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*; 26 June 1986, c. 160.]

5.30 pm

That of course applies the other way round. It should be a matter of common sense that employers provide conditions that are as good as possible. We must remember that the millions of unemployed mean that the ballot will be unrealistic. All the workers involved will be well aware of the threat to them and they will always take a realistic view of whatever suggestions or arguments are put to them. The Government should have no fear of a secret ballot.

If the Minister refuses to accept our new clause, we intend to press it to a Division because we want to see how many of the Tory Back Benchers who so eagerly proclaim the right of trade unionists to hold ballots really want to deny workers—it is often the poorest paid whose terms and conditions are gravely affected—the right to vote on changing their conditions of work. For that reason I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the new clause.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): I shall speak for only a couple of minutes and then I shall ask the indulgence of the House because I must leave for a short while to attend a meeting of the Select Committee upstairs.

I can help my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) on a matter which puzzles him. He made a massive and overwhelming case for the new clause and said, understandably, that the part of the Bill which puzzled him most was that which repeals section 114 of the Factories Act. It is understandable that he should be puzzled by that because, as he told us, that section gives powers to the Secretary of State which he may or may not exercise, entirely at his own discretion. It places no obligation on him.

The repeal of section 114 represents a reduction of the Secretary of State's powers. Almost all of our legislation increases the powers which are given to Ministers. I strain my memory back over the years to try to recall, and I cannot, the last occasion on which there was a provision in a Bill to reduce a Minister's powers. Why do the Government wish to shed this power which, as my hon.

Friend the Member for St. Helens, North said, places no obligation whatever on the Minister but gives him absolute discretion over what to implement and where to implement it?

I have the answer. It is simply that the Minister does not expect to be sitting in his present place after the next general election, and his powers are being reduced because the Government know very well that a Labour Minister after the next election would use those powers to regulate and to make provisions relating to the health and welfare of women engaged in overtime and other hours covered by exemptions to improve and enhance their health and welfare.

The reason for the Government's apparently strange action in diminishing a Minister's powers is that they want to diminish the powers of a Minister of another party. Clearly therefore that action shows that the Government expect, 'ere long, that there will be a Minister, and therefore a Government, of another party. That is the solution to the mystery. If the Minister has any other explanation, I shall be intrigued to hear it when he replies.

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): I shall make a short speech in support of the new clause. I have been disappointed so far because the Minister has not intervened to say that he has accepted the principle of the new clause. The new clause is quite straightforward, clear and just in its intentions. I should have thought that, after having had the long recess in which to reflect on these matters, the Government would have approached the Bill in a more sober and generous frame of mind. However, that is not to be, so the case will have to be argued.

The new clause's intention is quite clear. It seeks to ensure that ballots are organised before workers' rights are scrapped. That is a simple and just principle to argue because, after all, clauses 7 and 8 destroy a great deal of legislative protection. I should have thought that the Government would consider this clause in a favourable light in view of the seriousness of their proposals.

During the past two years the Government have alleged that they are a great friend of ballots and balloting. They have put out so much propaganda in trade union Acts in favour of balloting that one might imagine that they had invented the concept of balloting. But now that my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) has put forward a proposal for a ballot in a vital area of industrial protective legislation, the Government have immediately shown that their support of ballots was pretty partial and selective.

I shall be interested to hear how the Government support that partial line of argument and that partial philosophy of industrial democracy. After all, we have had ballots for elections to national executives of trade unions, balloting before strikes and in respect of political funds, but now that there is a proposal for balloting to discover whether people are in agreement the Government do not want to know.

Mr. Hoyle: My hon. Friend referred to balloting for political funds. Is it because the Government did not achieve their objective there and got a bloody nose that they are not now so keen on ballots?

Mr. Weetch: That is a sound intervention. The plain fact is that all the Government's plans were based on a total miscalculation of political ballots. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) has made the point well, and will probably make it much better than I can subsequently. If there is a ballot, it will show more accurately whether the legislation is wanted in certain industries.

So far we have had only a doctrinaire and ideological statement from the Government saying that free enterprise in this sort of area is good for all. But that is not a self-evident proposition. If the Government put it to the test in ballots, they would find out that they were wrong. However, we could then obtain some accurate information and would not have to listen to the sort of vague assertions that the Government make.

If there was a necessity for ballots before the Bill's provisions came into operation, many employers offering bad working hours or conditions of work would have to sharpen up considerably in order to win those ballots. Ballots would be a great incentive for employers to improve conditions. I could imagine workers in some industries that I know of being pretty sceptical about throwing away legislative protection because they know full well their existing conditions of work. Of course, that is why the Government intend to dodge the issue. This could be a Bill for bad employers and, in some cases, it will probably be so.

An argument of principle underlies the legislation and, in particular, clauses 7 and 8. Section 1 and part 1 of the first schedule to the Hours of Employment (Conventions) Act 1936 will cease to have effect, along with certain provisions of the Factories Act 1961 and the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954. Under clause 10(3) the legislation is to come into operation by Government order on the due date.

The bedrock of principle underlying the Government's argument is that it is a desirable sort of equality for women to lose legislative protection so that they can be subject to the less favourable conditions "enjoyed" by male workers. But that type of equality finds no response in me. Throughout the industrial revolution factory masters argued that if women and children had legislative protection they would somehow be inferior citizens. That proposition was always disputed by my parliamentary predecessors.

I make no apology for holding the old-fashioned view that women often need special legislative protection. It is wrong in principle to withdraw such protection. The Government are in a headlong rush towards deregulation and do not care how many casualties there are along the way. But we oppose that viewpoint. The new clause sets out the principles that we believe in, and is willing to test them in a democratic vote. Ultimately, that will be the litmus test. There are overwhelming arguments for the new clause. I hope that the Government will give way and accept it, but, if they do not do so, I hope that we shall defeat them in the Lobby.

5.45 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd: My hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) made an important point when he said that the assertions made on Second Reading and in Committee could be put to the test. After all, it has been asserted that the legislative framework that the Government want to dismantle is outmoded. I must welcome the Minister to his place, but he comes late to this issue. Unfortunately for him, the Bill has slipped through several hands before coming to his. If he is unfamiliar with the arguments, and if he does not feel confident about

[Mr. Tony Lloyd]

arguing against secret ballots, we can at least accept that he is acting from ignorance, unlike his colleagues, who simply lacked any arguments.

Indeed, one of the Minister's predecessors wrote to the general secretary of the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union about the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954. He said:

"Investigation has led us to conclude that the Act is outdated and unnecessary. The particular problems of the industry which the Act sought to solve in the 1950s are no longer significant."

In Committee we challenged that statement and we were never given any evidence to support it by the then Minister. We also wanted to see some evidence to support the Government's assertions about their proposals involving the Factories Acts. We wanted some evidence that that protective framework was no longer necessary, but we were just given the statement that the Government had come to a considered judgment about the matter. The Government did not want to pursue the custom even of previous Conservative Governments of setting up an inquiry or examining in detail the industry's conditions. Ministers have merely asserted that the present legislative framework is a burden on industry.

However, people in the baking industry can work 72 hours a week on night shifts. In this day and age it is a disgrace that someone should spend well over half his waking time working in the baking industry six days a week and 12 hours a day. It is nonsense and an insult to those working in such industries to say that the present legislation is burdensome.

However, if the Minister still insists that the legislative framework is outdated and no longer necessary, he should remember that there are women who rightly fear being cast on to the streets of our industrial cities in the middle of the night or early in the morning when no adequate transport service exists. The Minister may insist that people do not need protection against excessive hours of work, but he should at least let those involved decide whether they agree with him.

The Government assert that they have knowledge or information, which they will not give the House. They insist that that information exists in principle. The people who know about working conditions are those who work in the industry. Surely, if there are adequate transport services, through deregulation or any other mechanisms, and acceptable working conditions in those parts of industry where women do not work, women themselves would know that and be able to put that to the test by voting in the secret ballots which the new clause would introduce.

Surely, on the same basis, it would be possible for those who work in the baking industry to decide whether the existing framework, which in any case allows for exemption from the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act, is no longer necessary. They would have the opportunity to vote it out of the way in a secret ballot. But, for that 30 per cent. of the baking industry who are not members of trade unions and for those who work in that largely unorganised sector of the baking industry where only 2 per cent. of the work force are members of trade unions and where there is no negotiated framework, the present structure is all that exists to protect them.

If workers feel that 72 hours are not enough hours in the week to work, they will have the opportunity to vote for longer hours. There are only 168 hours in the week. Perhaps they will vote for a working week of 168 hours under the benign management in those companies that already operate long shifts. Although I would disapprove strongly of those people downgrading their working conditions in such a dramatic way, the Government, who have committed themselves to the mast of the ballot on each and every occasion, must stick with the principle of allowing those in work to make that decision.

On the Second Reading of the Trade Union Bill, the then Secretary of State for Employment said that he gave a message to the unions. That message would be applicable across the board to those who operated in industry and those who wanted to maintain good communications and good industrial relations. He said:

"The message . . . must be that thinking that admiration and respect can be gained through conscription and compulsion is a very dangerous philosophy." — *[Official Report*, 8 November 1983; Vol. 48, c. 159.]

The Minister used that telling phrase to justify ballots and the need for trade unions to consult their members. Certainly the trade union movement, as my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) has pointed out, took to those ballots with alacrity and proved that they would be able to serve the needs of their members. In every case the Government's proposals were overwhelmingly defeated in the ballots on which they insisted and the trade unions were vindicated in their stance. If the Government are so confident about the irrelevance of the existing legislation, let them use the test of the ballot and put it to the vote. They should not downgrade the working conditions of people in industry simply on the basis of allegation. Let us put it to a proper test—the test of those ballots which, it appears, will do for everyone but the Government.

Mr. Hoyle: I never give up hope of a change of mind. I should have thought—my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) made this point—that, by now, with such a reasonable clause as this there would have been a general acceptance by the Government. I always have great hope, particularly when a new Minister takes over, that a fresh mind will look at these problems.

Mr. Dixon: Unfortunately, he had already been sullied in an another Department.

Mr. Hoyle: He may well have been sullied in another Department, but I know the new Minister. I have always had hopes of him. Often he has been regarded as a humane person. I am sure that he would not want to worsen the working conditions of some of the most impoverished people in the community, particularly women who do not work in ideal conditions. We cannot argue that they have high wages, short hours and the best conditions possible. Indeed, the opposite is true. In many cases they work very long hours for very low pay in conditions that should not be tolerated in the 1980s. Yet the Government intend to worsen those already bad conditions. They say, "We will remove the protection afforded by clauses 7 and 8 of the Bill." They hope to get away with that.

The consequences of the Government's actions were well spelled out by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans). He drew attention to the fact that people will work long hours in intolerable conditions. What will happen to them at the end of the shift,

particularly night shifts? I am sorry that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) has left the Chamber. I do not share her view that bus services in Lancaster and Morecambe are so marvellous that they should be extended to the rest of the country. Our experience has shown that, with the current deregulation, transport services during normal hours are often likely to be cut. Is it possible that, if bus companies are asked to make a profit on these services in open competition, they will run buses in the middle of the night? It is claimed that these employers who are far from the best employers—indeed they are among the worst—will put on buses at their own expense.

The Government cannot have it both ways. Sometimes they say, "We need this type of legislation because of the burdens on employers and the need to cut costs." They imagine that they will pass costs on to employers who will provide transport. I do not think that the Minister or any Conservative Member would pretend that such services would be provided.

What will happen? We have heard the fearful stories of people, particularly women, being attacked. We have heard that it is unsafe for them to go out at night and that many are afraid to do so. Because this protection is to be taken from employees, they will put themselves in danger by working these hours.

Given the unemployment level under this Government, workers are under pressure — whatever danger they might be in and whatever poor working conditions they have to endure for long periods—because in many cases they are the only breadwinners in the family. They are likely to say, "If we have to work shifts and work at night, so be it. We do not like doing it, we do not want to do it, but that might be the only way forward." Many of the poorest workers, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) suggested—I am sorry that he has left the Chamber—do not even have the protection of a trade union.

We are asking the Minister to allow workers to hold a ballot. What is wrong with that? After all, the Government believe in ballots, and have introduced ballots for all sorts of matters applying to trade unions — which were the most democratic institutions in Britain even before the Government introduced the new regulations. The Government are not prepared to do anything about employers and shed only crocodile tears for workers. They insisted that trade unions hold a secret ballot before calling a strike, and portrayed a picture of mass meetings with workers having to hold up their hands. That picture bears no similarity to any of the meetings that I have attended. The Government said that trade union members needed to be protected against their own unions at such meetings. Does not the reverse apply? Is not protection needed against bad employers? Should not the Government be including that sort of protection in clauses 7 and 8? Are they not being a little shallow in saying that there is no need for that protection?

All that we are saying — and it is no more than reasonable — is that workers should be asked for their opinion. They have no other protection, and I cannot imagine why anyone would want to refuse them that simple protection. If the Minister has any humanity he will accept our new clause and will say, "I will not allow conditions to worsen unless people have the right to vote on whether they want to work shifts, nights or whatever."

6 pm

All that we are asking for is a simple majority in a ballot. If, by a simple majority, the workers decide what they want to do, so be it. Surely a Government who are so concerned about democracy and ballots — especially secret ballots for trade unions — should prove that they are not only friends of the employers, but friends of the work force. The workers may decide in the ballot to accept a worsening of their conditions, but on the other hand they may not. If they did, at least the choice would have been theirs. It would not be thrust upon them because of economic conditions, mass unemployment or because of the necessity for a wage, however poor and whatever the dangers in which they put themselves. I simply cannot imagine that anyone would wish to refuse them that right. Ours is a most reasonable request — that the Government should extend to workers the democracy that they apply to the trade unions and give them the right of choice. I hope that the Government will agree to do that.

Mr. Dixon: We all wait with interest to hear what the Minister will say when he argues against our proposal for ballots. After all, this Government believe that they invented ballots. They want ballots before strikes, ballots for closed shops and so on. Our proposal for a ballot requires only a simple majority — not the 85 per cent. majority that the Government insist upon before a strike can be called. The Government have asked for ballots for the election of trade union leaders and say that union members should have the right to choose their leaders—yet they still accept that the Prime Minister should appoint the chairman of the Conservative party. That is somewhat inconsistent.

The Paymaster General said that he had worked in the baking industry. At least he was protected by legislation, yet he now wants to take that away from women. The Bill will mean that women will be expected to work all sorts of hours, on Saturday afternoons and on Sundays. They will have difficulty in finding transport late at night or early in the morning because the Government have deregulated our transport systems.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) said that it was inconsistent for the Government to withdraw a protection that was introduced 50 years ago. I remind my hon. Friend that the Wages Bill abolishes the Truck Acts, which were introduced in 1836 to protect workers. They have also reneged on the International Labour Organisation convention giving protection to low-paid workers, to which 94 nations were signatories. This measure is a continuation of the Government's attack on low-paid workers, especially women and juniors.

I think that, tactically, we made a mistake in tabling the new clause. We should have used the words, "unless a ballot has been held", because the Government would then have immediately tabled an amendment to put the word "secret" in front of the word "ballot".

We all look forward to the new Minister's speech and hope that he will accept the new clause. Indeed, we shall be interested to hear the grounds on which he could argue against it, bearing in mind the Government's record on ballots. How can he justify workers not being allowed to ballot on a protection that they have enjoyed for 50 years?

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Despite the aroma of roast potatoes, meat and cabbage that is pervading the Chamber, I do not wish this clause to pass without making

[Mrs. Ann Clwyd]

certain points. You may not have noticed the aroma, Mr. Speaker, but it has most hon. Members' taste buds working.

It is incredible that a Government who have such a bad record on anti-discrimination should pretend that they are heart and soul behind the Bill and that they want to equalise the protection for men and women. We know that they want to equalise down rather than up. This Government have been brought before the European Court of Justice more often than any other Government in the European Community because they have failed to move with the times and plug the loopholes in our anti-discrimination laws. It is only because of the European Court of Justice ruling that the Government have been forced to consider presenting a Sex Discrimination Bill. Therefore, I do not have great faith in the Government's intentions.

I have found the new Minister agreeable, tolerant and concerned about people. He did not have much opportunity to show those qualities with his previous brief, but he now has the opportunity that he so richly deserves to show his true compassion. Given the Government's commitment to ballots, especially secret ballots, I cannot believe that he will not accept our new clause. Not to accept it must be contrary to his natural inclinations, and certainly to the inclinations of his party.

Women are already at a considerable disadvantage and are among the lowest paid workers. Many of them are not members of trade unions, and the Bill will mean that they will lose the very little protection that they have. I appeal to the Minister, who, if he were given a free hand, would certainly fully support most of the points made by my hon. Friends. I hope that, after hearing their pleas and the poignant and persuasive arguments that they have advanced, he will say that he accepts the new clause. That would be only natural justice for workers in this country.

The Government have an appalling record on anti-discrimination legislation. The case of women has been put back about 50 years since 1979, and this is the Minister's opportunity to show that the Government have had a change of heart. I am sure that many women and other workers are waiting to hear the Minister's support for the new clause.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): I should like to thank the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) for his kind personal remarks and to thank other hon. Members for what they have said. I do not profess to be the world's leading expert on employment legislation, but my previous role in the Ministry of Defence meant that I was conscious of the fact that our defence expenditure sustains about 1·2 million jobs in Britain. I chaired our joint Whitley council and we employed about 500,000 people as service men and civil servants, so I am not wholly unaware of the employment scene.

It makes a pleasant change to be berated on employment matters rather than, as before, being berated by the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) about the lack of orders for Swan Hunter, or by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) about the air-land battle doctrine. I do not want, however, to throw any more smoke grenades into this debate.

New clause 1 seeks to ensure that, before the Secretary of State makes an order for repeal, under clause 10(3), of the restrictions on hours and other conditions of work set out in clauses 7 and 8 there would have to be a secret ballot of the employees who will be affected and that that ballot would have to produce a majority vote in favour of repeal. In other words, the new clause could require us to hold what would effectively be a referendum of the 1·5 million or so employees affected, the results of which would determine whether we should proceed with the proposed repeals.

I must oppose the new clause on the following grounds. I am sorry to disappoint Opposition Members. First, there is the principle involved. It is surely unnecessary to demand, as the new clause effectively does, secret ballots of those who may be affected by the proposed changes in legislation. Presumably falling to the Government to organise, ballots would be tantamount to nationwide referendums on the repeals involved. We do not believe that the changes involved will be in any way fundamental or radical. The concept of dealing in such a way with such matters, which involve no hint of constitutional change, offends against the principle of parliamentary democracy. To confine it only to employees affected as the new clause proposes leaves out of account the interests of the others involved, in particular, the employers and the consumers of the products of the industries concerned.

The proponents of the new clause have made debating points about the selectivity of our vision when it comes to applying the principle of balloting, but the situation we have with these repeals of discriminatory restrictions on hours of work is not in any way analogous with the provisions on balloting required by the Trade Union Act 1984. That Act sprang from a widespread concern about trade union democracy and the way in which trade unions are run. It requires the proper secret balloting of a union's membership before the election of members of the union's executive committee, and prevents unions from ordering their members to stop work and take industrial action without obtaining a proper mandate by holding a secret ballot. The issues are simply not the same here. This Bill will remove restrictions on people working. It will not force them to stop work against their will. It aims to remove outdated and discriminatory restrictions on women's hours of work so that they can lose, once and for all, the somewhat second-class status that the restrictions impose on them and, at the same time, relieve their employers of an unnecessary bureaucratic burden. These repeals will not be to women's overall detriment. On the contrary, they will open up opportunities and increase flexibility which I would have expected the Opposition to welcome.

6.15 pm

The hon. Members for St. Helens, North and for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) mentioned section 114 of the Factories Act 1961. The section is being amended so that the reference to women is removed. It will still apply to young people. It applies only to people employed in pursuance of an exemption to the hours of work provisions in that Act. Once they are repealed in regard to women, there is no need for the section to apply to women. Section 114 will therefore no longer apply to them either. An employer will continue to be under a duty under the

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees.

Mr. Hoyle: When talking about flexibility, the Minister seems to be neglecting the fact that there will be a worsening of conditions. Why, therefore, is he refusing a ballot?

Mr. Lee: We do not believe that the Bill will necessarily worsen working conditions. The vast majority of women and men are not covered by the restrictions that we are repealing. I am convinced that secret balloting as provided for by the new clause is completely unnecessary. There is no reason to believe that the repeal of these restrictions will result in a dramatic change in working hours. Any manufacturer who wants to employ women at normally prohibited times is almost certainly already doing so under a special exemption order, of which some 4,000 are in force covering 200,000 of the 1·5 million women in manufacturing.

The provisions of the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954 have largely been replaced by the terms of collective agreements gaining exemption from the Act. We should not forget the vast majority of working women in unregulated sectors and men in employment other than baking who have never been subject to the restrictions this Bill seeks to repeal—more than 10 times as many as are immediately affected by these repeals. They settle issues to do with hours and related working conditions through negotiation, either individually or collectively, and this system seems to meet their needs entirely adequately. We believe that the proponents of this new clause underestimate the abilities of employees to sort out these things satisfactorily for themselves.

The new clause's advocates have not fully addressed the numerous practical problems involved if it were accepted that there were arguments of principle for a secret ballot. There would be practical difficulties in identifying all the employees who stand to be affected by the repeals. It is not clear whether employees covered by special exemption orders should be balloted. We have already stated our intention to implement some of the repeals quickly, but delaying others, and I shall put our specific proposals later when we discuss amendment No. 13. This clause would clearly make implementation more difficult and costly for whoever is charged with paying for the ballot. Its practical consequences would be lengthy delay—if not, indeed, to block repeals completely because of difficulties in meeting the exact requirements of the clause, even though a majority might wish to vote for a repeal.

That is not our principal argument against new clause 1. To sum up, it would be inappropriate to require what amounts to a referendum before implementing what we believe will be a useful measure both for women whose opportunities will be enhanced, and for their employers, whose flexibility of operation will be increased: and which gives further encouragement to enterprise from which we all stand to benefit.

I accordingly ask the Opposition to withdraw the clause, otherwise I shall have to ask my colleagues to oppose it.

Mr. Evans: One of the penalties of being an Opposition spokesman on employment is that one has continually to come to the House to have one-sided debates on issues such as this. Whenever we discuss social measures regarding employment, there is no interest from the Tory Back Benches and plenty of interest from my right hon. and hon. Friends. Many have made excellent speeches today, but we have had not one speech from the Conservative Back Benches to justify their voting down the rights of workers.

I appreciate the Minister's difficulties, that he is new in post and that he has to take the brief that has been given to him and read it. I make no complaint about that—it is one of the difficulties which always occurs with reshuffles. I am sure that when he rereads what he read to the House he will wish that he had taken a different view on some matters.

I particularly take the Minister to task for saying that the ballots would offend against the principles of parliamentary democracy. It is all very well to have parliamentary democracy in places such as this where we can pay tribute and compliment each other, but we are debating the terms and conditions of millions of men and women who are often the lowest paid and who often work in deplorable conditions without trade unionism.

The reason why much of the protective legislation has been put on the statute book over the years is that there has not been effective trade unionism in many of those sectors. Parliament in its wisdom through successive Governments has taken the view that workers in certain industries and sectors who lack the ability to protect themselves through normal trade union activities should be protected by Act of Parliament. The Minister referred to other industries where workers do not have these protections, but they do not need Parliament to protect them because they have the protection of their trade unions and, if necessary, can enforce that protection by industrial action. The workers in the sectors that are covered in this Bill do not have the strength of trade unions and cannot protect themselves.

The Minister explained section 114 of the Factories Act 1961 and pointed out that it would still apply to young people, but for how long? We have seen what the Government have done for young people in the Wages Bill. They have removed the protections afforded to young people by the wages councils. How long will young people have the protection of section 114? Will the protections afforded by section 114 be removed from young people in the further acts against workers and of deregulation that Ministers are continually promising us?

I agree with my hon. Friends, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), who rightly pointed out that the Government's record on the protection of women and on promoting women's equality is deplorable. It is a scandal that a woman Prime Minister has presided over a seven-year period in which we have seen the constant erosion of the rights of women, few though they are. That is why I hope and expect that every woman will consider what is happening in the House of Commons with this Bill and will recognise in the not-too-distant future that she will have the opportunity of a parliamentary secret ballot to get rid of the Government.

Tonight we are simply dealing with new clause 1 and I ask my hon. Friends to join me in the Lobby in support of it. We want to see on the record how many Tory Members will take this opportunity to deny millions of workers the right to a secret ballot about the terms and conditions of their employment.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

[Mr. Evans]

The House divided: Ayes 181, Noes 227.

Division No.289] **[6.23 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Don Dixon.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John

MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Richard Ryder.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 2

PROTECTION OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

'(1) In this section the relevant enactments are the provisions of the Hours of Employment (Conventions) Act 1936, the Mines and Quarries Act 1954, the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954 and the Factories Act 1961, which are mentioned in sections 3 and 4 above and in Part II of the Schedule to this Act, and any subordinate legislation made under or by reference to those provisions (in this Act called "protected conditions").

(2) Schedule (Rights of established workers covered by protected conditions) to this Act shall have effect for the purpose of giving certain rights concerning workers covered by the protected conditions so employed at the commencement of this Act.'.—*[Mr. Evans.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

6.30 pm

Mr. Evans: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the new schedule—*Rights of established workers covered by protected conditions*—

Right not to be dismissed

1. Subject to paragraph 3 below, the dismissal of an employee who is employed on the day before the commencement date shall be regarded as unfair for the purposes of Part V of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 ("the 1978 Act") if the reason for the dismissal (or if more than one, the principle reason) is that he has refused to do work that was previously subject to a protected condition.

Right not to have action short of dismissal taken

2. Subject to paragraph 3 below, every employee who is employed on the day before the commencement date shall have the right not to have action (short of dismissal) taken against him by his employer for the purpose of compelling him to do or agree to do, or penalising him for refusing to do work that was previously subject to a protected condition.

Exclusion for contractual exemptions from protected conditions

3. Paragraphs 1 and 2 above do not apply where the work in question is work which at the time of dismissal or, as the case may be, of the taking of the action the employee was obliged to do that was originally subject to a protected condition by virtue of an agreement made by him before the commencement date or of a written agreement made by him on or after that date.

Modifications of 1978 Act in paragraph 1 cases

4. Section 54 of the 1978 Act (right not to be unfairly dismissed) shall apply to a dismissal regarded as unfair by virtue of paragraph 1 above regardless of the period for which the employee has been employed and of his age; and accordingly sections 64(1) and 64A(1) of that Act (which disapply the right not to be unfairly dismissed in cases where the employee has not been continuously employed for qualifying periods or has attained retiring age) shall not apply to such a dismissal.

5.—(1) Where in the case of a dismissal regarded as unfair by virtue of paragraph 1 above an additional award falls to be made under section 71(2)*(b)* of the 1978 Act (compensation where employee not re-enstated or reingaged in accordance with an order for reinstatement or re-engagement following unfair dismissal), the amount shall be not less than 26 and not more than 52 weeks pay.

(2) For the purposes of this paragraph the amount of a week's pay shall be calculated in accordance with Schedule 14 to the 1978 Act.

6. Subsection (3) of section 57 of the 1978 Act (determination of question whether dismissal fair or unfair) shall have effect subject to paragraph 1 above.

Application of 1978 Act provisions in paragraph 2 cases

7.—(1) Sections 24 to 26 and 133 of the 1978 Act (complaint to the industrial tribunal, compensation and conciliation officers) shall apply in relation to paragraph 2 above as they apply in relation to section 23 of the Act.

(2) The following provisions of the 1978 Act, namely—

section 129 (remedy for infringement of certain rights),

section 132 (recoupment of unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit),

section 136 (appeals), and

Part IX (miscellaneous and supplementary provisions), shall apply as if paragraph 2 above were contained in Part II of that Act.

Meaning of "protected worker"

8.—(1) Where on the day before are commencement date a protected worker's relations with his employer have ceased to be governed by a contract of employment, he shall nevertheless be regarded for the purposes of paragraphs 1 and 2 above as having been employed as a protected worker on that day if that day falls in a week which counts as a period

[Mr. Speaker]

of employment with that employer under paragraph 9 or 10 of Schedule 13 to the 1978 Act (absence from work because of sickness, pregnancy, etc.).

(2) Where section 56 of the 1978 Act (failure to permit women to return to work after confinement treated as dismissal) applies to an employee who was employed under protected conditions under her original contract of employment she shall be treated for the purposes of this Schedule as if she had been employed as a protected worker on the date on which she is treated as dismissed under that section.

General interpretation

9. In this Schedule—

"action", "contract of employment", "employee", "employer", "employment" and "original contract of employment" have the meanings given in section 153(1) of the 1978 Act;

"commencement date" means the date on which the Act is passed;

"dismissal" has the same meaning as in the 1978 Act;

"the 1978 Act" means the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978.

Mr. Evans: It would be remiss of me if I did not offer a comment on the result of the vote that has just been announced. I can only assume that there have been substantial abstentions on the Government Benches. Apparently many of the Government's troops are missing for one reason or another. I can only hope that they are missing as a result of the force and power of the arguments put forward by myself and my hon. Friends. These arguments must have persuaded many Government Back-Bench Members to abstain on this important issue.

I would go further and take this opportunity to suggest that those Conservative Members who abstained in the previous vote should go a little further than that on the vote on new clause 2. I suggest that they should vote with the Opposition and we will carry the day.

Although the previous new clause was important, new clause 2 is even more important in relation to workers' rights. New clause 2 will make it illegal for a worker to be dismissed for refusing to work any periods previously forbidden under the legislation which is repealed by the Bill. Although it could be said that the previous new clause dealt with more academic issues such as giving workers the right to have a vote on changes in their terms and conditions of employment, new clause 2 is even more fundamental. It will extend protections to workers if they refuse to work the new hours which an employer might impose upon them.

New clause 2 and the new schedule follow on from old clause 7, which was inserted in the Bill in another place with all-party support. Sadly, clause 7 was removed by the Government in Committee. The gist of the new clause and the old clause is similar. The new schedule would tighten some of the drafting criticisms made by the Government about my noble Friend Lord McCarthy's clause 7. It is interesting to note that the Government always criticise the drafting of Opposition amendments which prove to be difficult. The Government know as well as I do that it is not the drafting which is the issue but the principle of the amendment. In this case, I hope that the Minister will spare us any criticisms about the Opposition's lack of ability in drafting the schedule and will concentrate upon the principle involved.

What we are trying to do can best be understood by a brief examination of the paragraphs in the new schedule. Paragraphs 1 and 2 make it unlawful to take any action, including dismissal, against any employee who refuses to do work that, before the passing of the Bill, would not have been allowed. For instance, women in factories will not be dismissed because they refuse to work for more than 48 hours a week or nine hours a day — one would assume that a Government would be anxious to maintain such a provision — or outside the hours of 7 am and 8 pm. They will not have to work for more than four and a half hours without a break. Again, that is a civilised provision that one would assume that the Minister would be only too happy to accept. Such criteria are similar to those in the Mines and Quarries Act and the Factories Act. These unfair dismissal procedures will also apply to men working in the baking industry.

It is worth putting on record again what my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) said about the hours being worked in the baking industry. He talked in terms of 72-hour weeks and 12-day shifts. It is a legitimate fear of the men and women who work in the baking industry that once the protective legislation is repealed they will go back to the situation of 1954, before the passage of the Act, when they were at the mercy of ruthless competition, working awful hours in awful conditions. I suspect that they will be proved right. However, if, before the passage of the Bill, workers have agreed to work outside the prohibited hours, the clause and schedule will not apply. That is the effect of paragraph 3.

Paragraph 4 dispenses with the usual criteria for qualification periods for unfair dismissal claims. Paragraphs 5 to 9 relate to other technicalities, compensation, and so on.

If any Tory Back Benchers, or even the Minister, have taken the trouble to read the new clause and schedule, they may have realised that there are certain parallels with a clause and schedule in the ill-fated Shops Bill. It is worth recalling that the infamous Shops Bill was defeated by people coming together from all parts of the House in voting down unnecessary and ill-considered legislation. I hope that all those Tory Back Benchers who abstained in the vote on new clause 1 will join us in the Lobby, particularly after I have drawn to their attention the fact that this clause and schedule are similar to those in the Shops Bill.

Apart from several certain technical alterations, the two clauses in the two schedules are virtually identical, and this is intentional. The schedule was introduced in the Shops Bill by the Government in the other place. Our contention is that the parallels between those working in shops and those affected by the Bill, and the effects of both Bills, are such that there should be no reason for the Government to oppose our new clause and schedule. I do not expect the Government to object to our proposition on spurious drafting grounds.

In Committee, Ministers constantly stated that the previous clause 7 would cause great difficulties for employers because they would have to cope with a two-tier work force — that is, those who were employed before the Bill became law and those who started work afterwards. However, the Government saw no problems with a two-tier work force in shops. The Minister in the other place, the noble Lord Glenarthur, said on the Shops Bill:

"The reason why the Bill distinguishes between existing and future shopworkers is clear and straightforward. It will radically alter the position of existing shopworkers, many of

whom may have been attracted to shopwork in the first instance because they would not have to work on a Sunday. I can well understand the concern of existing shopworkers, and our proposals recognise their special position. But I do not believe that a similar consideration applies to new recruits".—*[Official Report, House of Lords,* 21 January 1986; Vol. 471, c. 223.]

The Government were content with a two-tier system as a result of the Shops Bill.

6.45 pm

The noble Lord Glenarthur was to renounce the sacred Tory doctrine on opposing protected conditions on three more occasions during the passage of the Shops Bill through the other place. Worse was to come a few weeks later when he announced a small concession to extend such rights to existing shopworkers who subsequently changed employers. In other words, workers who would have retained their rights and positions in a particular shop would have maintained those rights if they changed employers. This was done in response to a remark in Committee by Lord Wolfson who warned that failure to extend the right

"could well lead to resentment and would not be helpful to good human relations in the trade."

Possibly more critical was his comment:

"It could also have the effect, which is not intended, of prohibiting occupational change."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 11 February 1986; Vol. 471, c.177.]

The Government saw no parallels with the Sex Discrimination Bill. The problems of a two-tier work force were suddenly of paramount importance. The right not to be unfairly dismissed, so important in shops, was now an "outdated and outmoded restriction". That was what Lord Trefgarne said on 11 March. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary omitted to mention that one way to cope with a two-tier work force was to talk to and negotiate with it. He was not aware that there are already many two-tier work forces. Perhaps most importantly, he never mentioned that in almost all instances, after the Sex Discrimination Bill becomes law, there will be a two-tier work force. This will be because of the restrictions to which women are subjected, which will also cover young people. However, for the moment, as the Minister confirmed in his comments about section 114 of the Factories Act, yound people are still protected, and that will continue under the scope of the relevant sections of the Mines and Quarries Acts as well as the Factories Acts. In any case, when arguing about old clause 7, the then Parliamentary Secretary claimed that parallels with Sunday trading were not correct. Sunday working had never been a relevant prospect for women, whereas shift work had always been a prospect, with the possibility of a health and safety exemption. There is some truth in that, but it omits the fact that the work force had the chance of either protesting against prohibited work and/or bargaining for better conditions against an exemption order.

In 1984-85 the factory inspectorate granted more than 4,000 special exemption orders, covering 200,000 women, 80,000 of which were relevant to night work. An exemption order is hardly ever refused. This begs the question: why are we abolishing the process? When the Auld committee recommended in its report on Sunday trading the deregulation of shops, it also stated that this should occur within the framework of continued wages councils protection. As it said in paragraph 288:

"We also urge that there should be proper enforcement of the Wages Council Orders, by an adequately staffed Wages Council Inspectorate."

In fact, the number of inspectors has decreased by one third since the Government came to office. The Wages Bill will reduce the total staff from 223 to 145, of whom only half are inspectors. This is directly relevant to the Sex Discrimination Bill as the wages inspectorate covers the baking industry. The Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954 is to be repealed and in the not too distant future we will see the net result of that. Has the Minister a date in mind for repeal of that Act?

There was quite a campaign throughout Britain by supporters and opponents of the Shops Bill. By February 1986 the Prime Minister had received 100 replies in favour of the Shops Bill and some 34,000 against. The parallels between the two Bills are obvious. Some 63 per cent. of shopworkers are women and the Sex Discrimination Bill affects women most directly. Opposition to the Shops Bill was divided between the effect of such legislation on society and its implications for the work force. Both effects apply equally to the current Bill.

Even in their particulars the Bills show similarities. Shopworkers could not work for more than five hours without a 20-minute break. For factory workers the limit is four and a half hours and they must have a break of half an hour. The arguments about similiarity are thus reduced to the degree of effect of repeal. However, the essence is the same. A previous Parliamentary Secretary said in Committee that the Government did not expect the Sex Discrimination Bill,

"to prompt radical changes in hours immediately."

He also said:

"There is no evidence to suggest that the removal of restrictions on women's hours of work will result in employers imposing radical changes in working patterns, forcing women to work at night or work unsocial hours against their will."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A,* 26 June 1986; c. 93, 160.]

That begs the question: why go to so much trouble to repeal the relevant legislation? If employers will not take advantage of it, why are we wasting parliamentary time? There is evidence to support the belief that employers have been awaiting such a repeal. In recent years there has been a considerable increase in night hours being worked.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: In column 160 the Minister also said:

"as the legislation stands, employers may obtain exemptions from the Health and Safety Executive allowing women to work otherwise prohibited hours and many employers take advantage of the opportunity".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A,* 26 June 1986; c. 160.]

The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) shares my interest in the welfare of women. The career prospects of women are opening out in fields such as engineering and it would be a pity if we were to put a stumbling block in the way of their employment or promotion in such occupations.

Mr. Evans: I take the point made by the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) and I appreciate her concern for the welfare of women. She has expressed such concern on a number of occasions. The class of women that she is talking about will not be strongly affected by this legislation. I agree that progress in the fields she mentions has been slow and not good enough, but the women referred to by the hon. Lady are not restricted by the terms of this Bill. Unfortunately, we are talking about

[Mr. Evans]

women who are doing the most menial of tasks and not about women who are moving into engineering and other such industries.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) raised a point with which we all sympathise, the need to encourage more women to enter industries such as engineering. The general context is recognised, but we are talking largely about new employment and about how to encourage new people into those industries. This clause would apply only to people already in the industry and would not cover new recruits to engineering.

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) is right. We are talking about employees who are currently employed in areas where the Bill will repeal the protections that they enjoy. With the greatest respect, I suggest to the hon. Member for Lancaster that her fears are misplaced. I hope that she will support the new clause.

The Government do not seem to be sure of the effect of repeal. We are told on the one hand that the repeal of protective legislation will have little effect. On the other hand, we are told that it is a tremendous burden on employers who are clamouring for its removal. Government Ministers frequently tell us that. The Government's bottom line is that the repeal of such legislation will increase the number of jobs. That has been said most recently in the 1986 White Paper "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers". On page 35, paragraph 7.1, it says in relation to health and safety and employment protection:

"This legislation taken as a whole undoubtedly imposes significant costs on employers, and there is evidence that it has acted to reduce employment e.g. by discouraging some employers from recruiting."

We have not seen any evidence to justify that statement. Undoubtedly, it is true that in areas where there is health and safety protection legislation that is bound to impose costs upon the employers. The implication that could be taken from the paragraph is that to benefit employers we should reduce the health and safety protections offered to employees.

In March 1985 the then Secretary of State for Employment, the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), introduced measures to take away the unfair dismissal protections from some 3·5 million workers. He said the action was justified because of the costs imposed on employers as a result of their involvement with tribunals in unfair dismissal cases. Such simplistic equations have been cited throughout the passage of the Bill. The major evidence seems to come from the United States of America and it is asserted that as it happened there it could happen here. I do not believe it happened there and I certainly do not think it will happen here without gravely affecting the workers concerned. A study undertaken by the Department of Management Studies for the Department of Employment gives the lie to that belief. The report of the study is entitled "Unfair dismissal Law and Employment Practice in the 1980s". It aimed to show whether employment protection practices introduced by the Government in 1979-80 and which related mainly to unfair dismissal and small employers had any impact on employment policies and practice.

Of the 81 companies surveyed, 65 per cent. employed 50 or fewer people and of those 35 per cent. employed 20 or fewer. That is the very type of business that the Government say is being hindered by such protective legislation. Only 4 per cent., 7 per cent. of the smallest firms, saw unfair dismissal claims as a barrier to recruitment. Only 8 per cent. mentioned unfair dismissal at all. The only relevant areas were in terms of casual and limited term work. No firm had altered its probationary period because the Government had extended the qualifying period for unfair dismissal, and only 5 per cent. of the firms had probationary periods as long as one year.

Some 68 per cent. of the firms had adopted disciplinary procedures in the mid-1970s as a response to legislation and the ACAS code of practice. Some 72 per cent. gave complying with the law and avoiding possible unfair dismissal claims as the main reasons for adopting disciplinary procedures. While 25 per cent. of larger firms quoted unfair dismissal law as a reason for reluctance to dismiss workers, just 7 per cent. of small employers did so. The study confirmed the findings of Daniel and Millward's "Workplace Industrial Relations in Britain 1983" and showed:

"There was very little sign . . . that employment protection legislation was inhibiting industrial recovery or contributing to the high level of unemployment by discouraging employers from taking on new employees."

Thus, a study undertaken for the Government has shown that not only has employment protection legislation not hindered expansion, but that it has kept employment figures higher than they might otherwise be. It focused on the Government's favoured small business sector.

7 pm

The Government are eager to point out that they are following Equal Opportunities Commission's recommendations in repealing employment protection legislation for women, yet there were two dissenting voices in the EOC team that drew up the report. However, even its advocates believed that

"It is necessary to ensure that those who may have their hours of work altered significantly so that they cannot stay in their employment are legally protected. Clearly this may well arise for women on the repeal or relaxation of the present legislation. Generally it will arise for workers (mainly women at the moment) with dependants. We consider that provision in this area is essential and we recommend the introduction of a code of practice on hours of work, and specific legal provision for women in employment now who would be seriously affected by a change in the legislation."

The Government have paid no attention to this part of the EOC's recommendations. In the other place, the former clause 8 was added in Committee. That excellent clause, which introduced a code of practice, was removed by the Government. Furthermore, the former clause 7 covered the legislative requirements.

In its briefing on the Sex Discrimination Bill the Equal Opportunities Commission stated that these two clauses

"give effect to the Commission's overall view in a way that a simple repeal of the existing protective provisions failed to do."

I do not need to remind the House that the Government established the Equal Opportunities Commission to comment on and try to improve employment protection for women, yet when important recommendations are made by the EOC the Government choose to ignore them.

The Government removed both of those clauses in Committee. Our new clause 2 attempts to put the substance of the EOC's recommendations back into the Bill. However, the remedies contained in new clause 2 will be limited in effect. Only 5 per cent. of successful

applications in unfair dismissal cases result in reinstatement. There is no legal aid for employees who appear before tribunals, although employers are invariably legally represented. Further, the Government have announced that they intend to charge employees £25 even to go before a tribunal. That will be refunded only if an employee wins his case.

I ask the Minister to look again at the imposition of a £25 charge before anybody can appear before an industrial tribunal. I thought that the Secretary of State and the Paymaster General did not want to create a situation in which people would not be prepared to go before a tribunal simply because they dared not risk losing £25. That would be disgraceful in 1986 and the Ministers responsible for the suggestion should be ashamed of themselves. Therefore, I ask the Minister to consider again the imposition of a £25 charge. I suspect that it is another attack on the poorest and lowest paid workers. They will be denied the right to seek protection before an industrial tribunal. People will be deterred from taking their cases before an industrial tribunal.

As it stands at the moment, the law might allow people to be unfairly dismissed for refusing to work in what formerly were prohibited conditions. However, it is subject to the reasonableness of the case and to an assortment of qualifying criteria.

That leads to the question of poorly paid people being prepared to risk £25. New clause 2 would make dismissal for such a refusal automatically unfair, regardless of the length of time that had been worked.

The Government may say that the opposition to industrial tribunals in "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" can be used to justify the £25 charge. Even if the Minister is unable to answer tonight, I hope that he will look again at this question and, if necessary, make representations to his right hon. Friends, one of whom, the Paymaster General and Minister for Employment, is sitting next to him, He will, I hope, have heard what I have said.

According to page 36 of "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers", most of the problems encountered by employers over employment protection legislation relate to the cost and management effort required to deal with ill-founded claims to industrial tribunals, which also result in considerable public expenditure, although they may cost the applicant little or nothing. The Government do not appear to have allowed this to worry them, since they have taken Central Arbitration Committee jurisdiction away from collective agreements. By their own admission, this places greater emphasis upon industrial tribunal hearings as the main means of redress.

I believe that I have made a reasonable case for the protection of workers, many of whom are in the lowest paid industries. The protection that has been afforded to them by Parliament over a number of years is to be swept away by this legislation that masquerades under the title of Sex Discrimination. I urge the Minister to consider what I have said. I hope that he will be prepared to accept the proposition that workers should be entitled to protection. If not, I shall have to ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to support me in the Lobby and to vote for new clause 2.

Mr. Hoyle: Although a reasonable case has been put before the Minister, I am afraid that he has disappointed us. His mind seems to work in the same way as that of previous Ministers, and it resulted in a number of abstentions. The Government were nearly defeated because of the weakness of the Minister's reply and because of his lack of flexibility. I am always prepared to forgive sinners and there may be a chance for the Minister to think again.

This is a reasonable clause. It should be illegal for any worker to be dismissed for refusing to work during any of the periods when he does not need to work because of the protection afforded to him by the previous legislation. Women should not be dismissed because they refuse to work more than 48 hours a week. Indeed, nobody should have to work for more than 48 hours a week, or for more than nine hours a day. Where are we coming to if we ask anybody to work for more than nine hours a day?

However, women will have to work for 48 hours a week if this protection is removed from them. Furthermore, they will have to work before 7 am and after 8 pm, and they will also have to work for more than four and a half hours without a break. I am sure that the Minister would not want to have to work for more than four and a half hours without a break. Indeed, accountants have never been known to work for more than four and a half hours, although accountancy is a very lucrative profession. The protection that is afforded is very bad indeed, and it has to be coupled with low pay.

The Government should not worsen the working conditions of the low paid. They must be protected by legislation against unfair dismissal if they refuse to accept any worsening of their working conditions.

We do not want to hear the argument that has been advanced in previous debates that this would lead to two-tier employment and bureaucracy and that it would be very difficult to enforce. The Minister is nodding his head. His notes have been prepared for him, unfortunately, by the same civil servant who prepared the notes for his predecessor. The Minister is known to be a man of originality and to have original thoughts. I ask him not to accept the brief that was given to his predecessor by his civil servant. I ask him to look again at this question and to try to be flexible. Why should the conditions of these people be made any worse?

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) said that when the Shops Bill was discussed the Government would have been quite pleased to introduce two-tier conditions of employment for those already in employment, whose conditions would have been made worse by having to work on Sundays, and for those who were new entrants to the industry.

Some of the worst-paid people in the country already work long hours. They need to be protected against working 48 hours a week or nine hours a day. Such protection is reasonable. I hope that the Minister will think again about this.

I hope that the Minister does not say that there is bureaucratic pressure and that the legislation would be difficult to administer. We have already given the parallel with the Shops Bill so that that overcomes that argument. I also hope that he does not argue about the cost to employers and about the fact that it would mean people going to industrial tribunals. I heard him use such arguments before he became a Member of the House, but they did not ring true then and they do not ring true today. I want the Minister to look at the other side of the coin —the protection of the employee. I know that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) has a great

[Mr. Hoyle]

interest in women's affairs and I am sure that she would not want to see women's hours and conditions worsen. I hope that she will join us in the Lobby.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: I have done it before.

Mr. Hoyle: I know that the hon. Lady has done it before and that is why I know that my comments will not fall on stony ground. I know that the hon. Lady is open to conversion. There is not much hope of the Minister joining us. We are really talking about the protection of some of the lowest paid employees in some of the worst conditions.

Whatever the Minister does, I hope that he will reconsider the £25 payment which will be necessary before a person can go to an industrial tribunal. We are talking about very low-paid employees who are often the only breadwinner in a family and they could not afford £25. I am sure that for the Minister and his colleagues £25 is nothing.

Mr. Mikardo: We are not only talking about £25. A person will have to take a day off work and lose a day's pay. In some parts of the country, people may have to travel considerable distances and pay fares.

Mr. Hoyle: That is a good point. If the Minister cannot give us a decision tonight, I hope that he will at least promise that he will look at the imposition of the £25 payment.

I hope that the Minister will take on board this reasonable new clause and the new schedule, that he will say that there must be protection for those in industry against worsening conditions and that he will consider the introduction of the £25 payment for those who want to go to an industrial tribunal.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) rightly drew attention to the inconsistencies of the Government's approach in this area. They tell us that the existing legislation is a major burden on industry and yet its removal will have no effect on those at the place of work. Gerry Dowds of the Forum of Private Business commented on the Government's proposals. He is a representative of the small business sector, the sector which the Government claim is most affected by the present legislation. He said:

> "I've not met one small business man who has had one good thing to say about dismantling the employment protection. We do not want second-class employees and second-class customers".

That is the voice of the small business sector. It does not want to see the present legislative protection swept away and it does not want to face competition from the cowboy employers who will drive down conditions in the industry. That is why, even if we cannot maintain present employment protection, which is what some of my hon. Friends would want, we at least want to offer that protection to those who have already started their career and who follow their working lives on the basis of those protections.

7.15 pm

I recently visited a factory in my constituency. It was a print works which had just switched to two-shift working. Most of the women in the work force who had traditionally worked days are happy with their conditions. They said that they were concerned when the management first asked them to consider a change but, having done it, they were happy. Nobody on the Labour Benches would want to deny them their right to work for a higher income. All of that is allowable under the present employment legislation. However, there were one or two women—this was acknowledged by the women in the factory—who had had great difficulties and who had had to make extraordinary arrangements for their families. They had eventually fallen into line for the good of everybody else. Clearly there are circumstances in which individuals would be penalised by a change in employment conditions.

It is often the woman who bears the biggest burden in rearing children. Certainly, among my friends and acquaintances it is often the woman who is responsible for collecting children from school. That may be something that should change. However, that is the position today. Therefore, working conditions for many women in the area in which I live have to relate to the family practices and activities that they are used to. It is no good saying that in the best of worlds things would be different. Of course they would. However, we do not live in a world in which we can guarantee employment for all those who want it. In the Greater Manchester area, many women are the sole breadwinner and are forced into low-paid work and into conditions where working practices make life difficult for them. If we take away the present protections that legislation provides, we enforce potentially worse working conditions for those whose lifestyle cannot easily be changed. However, they will have to accommodate those conditions at the cost of the children and their family life. That is what the Opposition are trying to prevent.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) made it clear that the new schedule and clause draw heavily from what the Government proposed in order to buy off their own Back Benchers in terms of the Sunday trading legislation. The Government have already sanctioned certain things as being acceptable and workable employment proposals even though they would create a differential between existing employees and future employees. As every hon. Member knows, almost every employer up and down the country already operates a two-tier working system. Very few manufacturing industries operate the same working conditions for clerical grades as they do for shop floor grades. That is a matter for industrial history. There is no great difficulty in operating the two-tier system that we have heard is such a great disadvantage.

We were told in Committee that the differences between Sunday trading and the proposals in this Bill were fundamental because Sunday work was massively different. However, the thrust of the Government's proposals on Sunday trading was that work on a Sunday was to be treated as the norm. There are Opposition Members who think differently from that and who feel that we should build in protections. Nevertheless, we also recognise that there should be protection for those people who historically have not had to operate by working shifts and working under difficult terms of employment.

This is not a major dismantling of what the Government propose. My hon. Friends and I view it as a second-best to kicking out most of the contentious sections of the Bill. It is a modest reform which will limit the damage caused by the Bill because it does not offer even the minimum protection for people in work.

The £25 proposal will hit in particular areas such as that which I represent where the employed are paid low wages.

The proposal will restrict access to industrial tribunals and create a two-tier society which we want to avoid. People who are rich can afford to use the law but others cannot. The poor are already denied access to the courts unless they can obtain legal aid. If we impose an extra burden, poor people will be denied access to industrial tribunals, which should be open to those who need them, not just to those who can afford them.

Mr. Lee: The proposal to require a deposit of £25 to bring an industrial tribunal case is in a recent White Paper, "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers". I emphasise that it is only a proposal at this stage and it is not affected by the Bill.

I am glad to say that my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General, who is almost as broad-minded as I am, is with us this evening. He and I have taken on board all the points that have been made by the Opposition. As the Opposition have explained, these amendments will establish new rights for those employees who stand to be affected by the repeals in clauses 7 and 8 of the Bill.

I emphasise that these rights would apply to protected workers however short the period of their employment, whether or not they have reached normal retirement age and however few hours they work each week. These provisions therefore go far beyond the normal protection against unfair dismissal afforded employees by current legislation.

Furthermore, protected workers can carry their rights with them if they change employers, even if they move out of and then back into work which is subject to protected conditions.

It should also be noted that these amendments provide for commencement of the new rights at Royal Assent—not on the dates when the repeal of provisions in clauses 7 and 8 come into operation.

Effectively, the amendments seek to reinstate the provisions of the clause dealing with the protection of existing conditions which was inserted in another place and removed in Standing Committee—although they go in certain respects rather further and are accordingly even less welcome to the Government. The arguments deployed against that clause apply with even greater force in consideration of the amendments.

Fundamentally, we are opposed to the amendments because in our view the provisions are unnecessary and will certainly have grave and significant drawbacks in their effects on employers. We are not talking only about the two-tier work force as between clerical and shop floor workers, as the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) described it. Employers would have a two-tier work force: those who, in effect, retain the restrictions on hours because they have these new rights and those who do not because they have agreed to specific changes or because they are new recruits who, at the date of the Bill's Royal Assent, were not in jobs subject to the schedule's protected conditions elsewhere. This would significantly decrease an employer's flexibility of operation, increase his administrative costs and impair overall efficiency.

The amendments would effectively mean the retention for protected employees of the whole mass of complex and detailed current restrictions, none of which is particularly suited to today's conditions, and they would continue to operate for many years to come, until the last of the current generation of workers had left the labour market for good — in perhaps 50 years' time. It needs little enough imagination to guess the chaos, confusion and uncertainty for employers and employees in deciding which of the multitude of restrictions governing hours and overtime, meal breaks, starting and finishing times, shifts and night work apply to whom and exactly how.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Minister please explain why he thinks that nonsense is suggested when the Government were prepared to introduce such a proposal in the Shops Bill?

Mr. Lee: Those who work in the manufacturing industries realise that exemption orders could apply that did not apply to the shops legislation. In that we were dealing with men and women, whereas today we are talking only about women.

Mr. Mikardo: As the House knows, I am not a Christian, but many of my constituents are. Judging by my correspondence some of them are very devout, one might almost describe them as fundamentalist Christians. If a woman constituent were required as a result of the Bill to work on a Sunday and she said, "I shall not work on a Sunday because my faith does not allow it," and she was fired, should that be regarded as a fair dismissal?

Mr. Lee: I should like notice of that question. I should not like to answer it at the Dispatch Box at present.

The current legislation permits exceptions and relaxations in certain circumstances, but it would not be possible for an employer to get an exemption from these new rights. So in future he would find himself less able to cope with changes than he was before this Bill's introduction. The restrictions would have become well-nigh immutable. Surely this cannot be the direction we want to take when it is vital that the prevailing climate should be as favourable towards enterprise as we can make it?

After Royal Assent, but before implementation of the repeals, employers would have the worst of both worlds, since this clause would come into effect immediately. As we do not intend to repeal the provisions affecting women's nightworking before early 1988, this would significantly compound the difficulties of this clause for employers.

What is more, the provisions of this clause are likely to be counter-productive for those supposedly benefiting. The transferability of the rights from employer to employer may make the employment of those wishing to exercise the right much less attractive than the recruitment of entirely new blood or those willing to accept changes. Protected employees may find that the so-called protection is in fact more a liability. We have not exaggerated the problems of the two-tier work force as the Opposition have argued during the course of this and earlier debates.

The Opposition believe that employees will face difficulties once the restrictions on hours are lifted. But there are already safeguards to the existing employee whose employer capriciously changes working hours. In these circumstances, a woman working in a factory required for the first time to work new hours which are at present prohibited could under present employment protection legislation make a complaint of unfair dismissal to an industrial tribunal if dismissed for refusal to work these hours providing she had the necessary qualifying period. Similarly, she would be able to make a claim of constructive unfair dismissal if she felt forced to terminate

[Mr. Lee]

her employment because the employer sought to change her terms and conditions of employment by making her work hours which proved difficult or impossible for her. It would of course be for the industrial tribunal to judge the arguments in the case.

We cannot accept that it would be practicable or sensible to give the further and special protection provided by this clause to the 1·5 million or so currently restricted by the legislation that we are repealing. The repeals will simply put them on a par with the remaining 20 million or so employees in the work force.

To sum up, we see no need or justification for the amendments. The burdens that they would undoubtedly impose would run entirely counter to our aim of encouraging business to thrive and prosper and would ultimately undermine the interests of those whom, according to its advocates, this clause is aimed particularly to protect. Despite the fears expressed by the proponents of these amendments, there is no evidence of exploitation of the 7·5 million women working in other sectors where there are no restrictions on hours. Women, whatever their occupation, should have the same right to work hours that best suit them and their employers. There is no justification for treating one sector differently from another.

For all these reasons, I strongly press the House to reject the new clause.

7.30 pm

Mr. Evans: That was another disappointing reply to a disgraceful debate. Once again, apart from the reply by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, there has been silence from the Tory Benches, as is always the case when we discuss such issues. I have no doubt that, when we consider the Financial Services Bill next week, the Government Benches will be packed as Government Members come in here to defend and promote their financial interests in the City of London. We know where the interests of the Tory party lie. That has been proved by the fact that in this debate, once again, we had a disappointing reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary. Next week Tory Members will defend their interests in the City of London, whereas tonight they are treating the poorest paid workers in the land with complete indifference.

I welcome the fact—I am sure that people outside the House will welcome it—that the hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General and Minister for Employment have taken notice of what my hon. Friends the Members for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) have said about an employee having to pay £25 to appear before an industrial tribunal. I ask them to bear in mind the comment by my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo). A worker attending a tribunal could be faced with not only a £25 charge but the loss of a day's pay and travelling expenses. He could forfeit between half and two thirds of his weekly wage to take a case to an industrial tribunal. I hope that they will bear that in mind when they consider implementing the proposal for a £25 fee. If the Parliamentary Under-Secretary has not received considerable representations on the subject, I am certain that the Paymaster General has received a number of submissions, none of which supports the proposition to charge £25. I note with interest what has been said, and it is helpful.

I am sure that the Minister appreciates that, at the outset of the debate, I said that I accept and acknowledge the weakness that Oppositions have when introducing new clauses and, especially, new schedules. Most of the Minister's defence of his position amounted to nitpicking at the lack of the Opposition's drafting skills. The Minister has not answered the charge that my hon. Friends and I have laid against him—that, by the Government's own volition, a two-tier work force would have been created under the Shops Bill. We have pointed out that there would have been no difficulty in operating a two-tier system, because that is what the Government said when they introduced the new clause and the schedule to the Shops Bill. It has been alleged that a two-tier work force would decrease employees' efficiency. It is a pity that we did not hear more about that at that time. I suspect that the Minister will acknowledge that the Government had their back against the wall with that Bill and were therefore prepared to offer concessions all round. We have drawn one of the concessions out of that Bill and have sought to add it to this Bill. I am bound to tell the Minister that he has failed the test that we put him to tonight on that proposition.

I had hoped that the Government would have recognised that workers who are about to have changes made to their terms of employment and conditions, which will be imposed on them arbitrarily by their employers, should have some protection in law. The fact that the Government have refused to go along that line shows quite clearly that, once again, we must go into the Lobby. I urge my hon. Friends to join me in the Lobby in voting for new clause 2 and the schedule.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 174, Noes 203.

Division No. 290] **[7.33 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo	Clay, Robert
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Alton, David	Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Anderson, Donald	Corbett, Robin
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Corbyn, Jeremy
Ashdown, Paddy	Craigen, J. M.
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Crowther, Stan
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Barron, Kevin	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Beith, A. J.	Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Bell, Stuart	Deakins, Eric
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Dewar, Donald
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Dobson, Frank
Bidwell, Sydney	Dormand, Jack
Blair, Anthony	Douglas, Dick
Boyes, Roland	Dubs, Alfred
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Duffy, A. E. P.
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*	Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Eadie, Alex
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Eastham, Ken
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*	Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*	Ewing, Harry
Bruce, Malcolm	Fatchett, Derek
Buchan, Norman	Faulds, Andrew
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*	Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Campbell, Ian	Fisher, Mark
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Flannery, Martin
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Foot, Rt Hon Michael

Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Batiste, Spencer
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Churchill, W. S.
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Favell, Anthony
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Staml'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*

Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 4

EQUAL CONDITIONS REGULATIONS

'(1) In this section the relevant enactments are the provisions of the Hours of Employment (Conventions) Act 1936, the Mines and Quarries Act 1954, the Baking Hours of Work Act 1954 and the Factories Act 1961 (which are mentioned in sections 7 and 8 below and in Part III of the Schedule to this Act, and any subordinate legislation made under or by reference to those provisions.

(2) Subject to the conditions in subsection (3) below, the Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument amend any provision in the relevant enactments, or any part thereof, so as to guarantee equal conditions to women and men with such consequential or transitional amendments as seem to him appropriate.

(3) The conditions are—

(a) Before the coming into force of sections 7 and 8 of this Act, the Secretary of State shall, after consultation with the appropriate Trade Unions, the Equal Opportunities Commission and employers, issue codes of practice in relation to the relevant enactments with reference to—

(i) full consultation with the workforce before any substantial change in hours of work are introduced;

(ii) provision in relation to childcare;

(iii) provision of a safe mode of transportation for persons required to travel to work at unsocial hours;

(iv) provision wherever possible for flexible working hours or a choice of shifts, in order to minimise the disruption to employees' domestic obligations.

(b) (i) Whenever the Secretary of State proposes to issue a code of practice under this section he shall prepare and publish a draft code, shall consider any representations made to him about the draft and may modify the draft accordingly;

(ii) The Secretary of State shall lay before both Houses of Parliament a draft of any code of practice prepared by him under this section;

(iii) No order under paragraph *(b)* shall have effect until approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament;

(iv) An order bringing a code of practice into operation may contain such transitional provisions or savings as appear to the Secretary of State necessarily or expedient in connection with the code of practice thereby brought into operation;

(v) The Secretary of State may from time to time revise the whole or part of the code of practice to which this section applies and issue that revised code; and the foregoing provisions of this section shall apply (with appropriate modifications) to such a revised code as they apply to the first issue of a code. —*[Ms. Richardson.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

7.45 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following:

New clause 6—*Provision of facilities for women*—

'In subsection 35(1) of the 1975 Act, after paragraph *(c)*, there shall be inserted the following paragraph:

"*(d)* the provision of transport or other facilities or services for women are provided for the purpose of ensuring personal safety.".'.

Amendment No. 8, in clause 8, page 7, line 40, at end insert

'on a date not less than two years after the day on which this Act is passed, until which date the Secretary of State shall continue to consult with the Equal Opportunities Commission and other interested bodies concerning the future of the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954.'.

Amendment No. 12, in clause 10, page 8, line 25, after 'to' insert

'section *(Equal conditions regulations)* above and'

Amendment No. 13, in page 8 line 28, after 'appoint', insert

'which day shall not be less than 12 months after this Act comes into force,'.

Ms. Richardson: Following the Opposition's defeat on new clause 2, we move on in the hope that something will emerge from this group of clauses and amendments. I am pleased to welcome the Paymaster General to our debate, I understand that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will reply.

New clause 4 provides the House with an opportunity to limit the damage which the Government wrought upon the Bill in Committee by removing the amendments which were made in another place. Two of the amendments which so offended the Government sought, first, to provide an alternative to the blanket repeal of all-protective legislation, which would be the effect of the Bill as it stands. The amendment moved by Lord Wedderburn sought to establish a mechanism for equal protection orders governing hours of work and other working conditions in the manufacturing sector and the baking industry that are presently covered by the so-called discriminatory legislation. Secondly, the Government were offended by the amendment of Baroness Platt of Writtle, which sought to place a duty on employers to follow the code of practice governing changes in hours of work. It provided procedures for drawing up a code of practice which would provide guidance for employers seeking to make significant changes in the hours of work and working conditions of their women employees and safeguard the health, safety and well-being of the work force, especially the members of it with domestic and family responsibilities.

Both amendments received cross-party and cross-Bench support. Throughout the debate in another place, Baroness Platt, who occupies a place on the Government Benches and is the present chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission, stressed the importance of the amendment to bring the Bill into line with the EOC report entitled "Health and Safety Legislation: should we distinguish between men and women?" The document was published by the commission as far back as 1979. Baroness Platt was supported strongly by my noble Friend, Baroness Lockwood, the former chair of the commission and the person who was the chair at the time that the report was commissioned and published. There was support also from Baroness Turner, who is a commissioner.

The new clause seeks to implement some of the substance and spirit of the Lords amendments and the recommendations of the EOC report. In addition, it offers the House the opportunity to follow the example of

countries such as Norway and Sweden, where sensible and healthy restrictions have been introduced to cover hours of work and unsocial hours of work for both men and women. Another example is West Germany, where proposals for outlawing permanent night work in the baking industry have received the support of the Chancellor.

When I asked the Minister in Committee for his comments on Chancellor Kohl's support for bakers, the Minister who at that time was in charge of the Bill was able only to say that examples from other countries with detailed controls could always be found. He did not try to meet the argument that other countries have shown some sense in their approach to these matters.

Subsections (1) and (2) of the new clause give the Secretary of State power to bring forward orders made by statutory instrument which amend the provisions of the Hours of Employment (Conventions) Act 1936, the Mines and Quarries Act 1954, the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954 and the Factories Act 1961 and any subordinate legislation made under or by reference to such legislation for equal provisions for men and women.

The new clause will not obstruct the removal of any outmoded, outdated or unnecessarily restrictive legislation about which we heard so much tonight when the Minister referred to "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers". New clause 4 will remove discriminatory legislation by levelling up and extending the legislation to cover men, rather than by levelling it down across the board, as will inevitably be the case if the Bill remains unamended. Subsection (3) of the new clause, upon which subsections (1) and (2) are conditional, provides a crucial safeguard for the workers whose conditions and hours of work will be affected by the amended legislation. With the defeat of new clauses 1 and 2, the matter assumes greater importance. Subsection (3) will be welcomed by all responsible employers, and also by the Equal Opportunities Commission and the TUC, because it makes provision for a code of practice providing guidance for employers and some protection for employees who may be forced to seek a tribunal ruling on unfair dismissal. Moreover, such a code of practice, encompassing factors not obviously or normally covered by the health and safety Executive and relevant legislation, will provide a welcome model for all employers in both the public and private sectors where unsocial hours are already the norm because they provide essential services, which the Minister frequently reminded us about in Committee. At present, although they are heavily dominated by women, there is no protection.

The new clause provides for full consultation with the work force, a practice which should always be encouraged, no matter what the circumstances. Some hon. Members may not be aware that the provision in the Bill to repeal section 97 of the Factories Act 1961 removes from the Secretary of State the power to ascertain the opinions of the work force if an application for double day shift working is made by an employer. It also repeals the power of the Health and Safety inspectorate to satisfy itself that the majority of the work force consents to substantial changes in hours of work; or that suitable transport and other facilities such as refreshments are available. My hon. Friends and I believe that the right to consultation and the consideration of such matters must be reinstated. I appeal to the Paymaster General to think carefully about the need to replace some of the protection removed from the Bill during its passage.

We should remind ourselves of the results of the EOC survey, which provided the basis for its 1979 report. The report is the only evidence that is available in this area and the Government have been unable to produce any substantiated evidence, other than that put forward in another place or in Committee, that there is any reason to believe that circumstances have changed sufficiently, except for the worse, to undermine the report's findings. The EOC survey was carried out among a representative sample of 600 women within the sectors that would be affected by the changes in legislation and repeals which the Bill seeks to make. It paid particular attention to double day shift working and night work. It is true that women were in favour of removing legislation discriminating between men and women with regard to double day shift working. The survey found that 60 per cent. of the women were in agreement with that but only 40 per cent. agreed to the removal of restrictions on night work. More importantly, two thirds of the women said that they would definitely never work double day shifts or do weekend work after Saturday lunchtime. Hon. Members will surely understand this. Four fifths of the women said that they would never consider night work. That is a very high proportion.

As the report says, "quite sensibly" women were unwilling to speculate or express an attitude of either general approval or disapproval of shift work and of unsocial working hours without knowing the circumstances of the women involved. Invariably that was expressed as concern over domestic and family responsibilities, the very issue that the Government seek to dismiss as the proper concern of either Government or employers when proposals for substantial changes in working hours and other employment conditions are made. As one might expect, child care was a major concern and was regarded as a prerequisite for any consideration of shift working for women.

The new clause seeks to do nothing more than provide a mechanism whereby the House, employers, the appropriate trade unions, the EOC and, by no means last in importance, the work force concerned, especially women, can draw up, together and by consultation, fair and equal working conditions for both women and men. In adopting that approach, we should be endorsing the recommendations of the EOC, which stated that where health, safety and welfare demanded it, legislation should be applied equally to women and men; that there should be a transitional protection for women already working, but who would have to resign if significant changes in their hours of work were introduced,; that there should be a code of practice covering working hours; that legislation on rest breaks, meal breaks and public holidays should be extended to men; and that women should be brought within the legislation that at present governs only men in the baking industry. While women put their point of view in the survey, they did not do so in a totally selfish manner. The survey showed that women wanted protection to be extended to their male counterparts at work.

New clause 6 is very short and relates to the provision under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 of transport or of other facilities or services for women to ensure their personal safety. Many references have been made to transport. I do not think that the Paymaster General was in the Chamber when hon. Members raised the issue of the provision of transport for women who might have to work late at night. There was an interesting exchange between

[Ms. Richardson]

my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) and the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) about whether since deregulation transport has been better or worse.

There is now considerable evidence that women are constrained by fears about their personal safety at night. The House of Commons is a male-dominated place. Most of the males in it have wives, daughters, mothers and cousins who are female——

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): We all have mothers.

Ms. Richardson: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. I meant mothers who experience that problem. If hon. Members went home and asked their wives, their mothers and sisters — they may already have discussed it with them—whether they would like to go out at night or use public transport on their own, they would probably say no. I dare say that Conservative Members' wives and female relatives do not always have access to a car, although there may be more access than among working class women. However, women depend much more on public transport than men because fewer of them hold driving licences and fewer have access to a car, yet there is growing evidence that women do not use public transport as much as they would like, especially at night, because of the fear of harassment and assault.

8 pm

That is not an imagined threat in the mind of weak women; it is the experience of many women who have to use transport, or who should be able to do so. Strangely enough, the available statistical evidence demonstrates that most violent attacks in public places are perpetrated by men against men. The British Crime Survey and other surveys have demonstrated, however, that women are substantially more fearful for their personal safety than men. That applies at all ages.

As many as 41 per cent. of women in inner city areas feel "very unsafe" walking alone at night in their neighbourhoods. A survey on women's transport needs carried out by the Greater London council before its abolition found that 63 per cent. of the women surveyed said that they avoided going out alone after dark. In the context of the Bill and new clause 6, which would make provision in the Sex Discrimination Act for women-only transport to ensure women's personal safety, it is worth while for the House to consider for a few minutes the findings of the GLC survey because, as far as I know, it is the only one that has been conducted into women's transport needs, getting women's reactions.

The GLC transport committee, at the request of the women's committee, surveyed a representative sample of 900 women—300 more than the EOC took as a sample, so it is a fair sample. The committee found that only 37 per cent. of women feel safe travelling at night by bus, only 17 per cent. feel safe at night on the Underground and only 16 per cent. feel safe at night on British Rail. Ten per cent. of the women had suffered serious personal attacks. Over 10 per cent. had suffered from threats and harassment and 30 per cent. knew of other women who had suffered such incidents. Half the incidents occurred in the streets, 20 per cent. on trains, 10 per cent. at stations and nearly 15 per cent. at bus stops or on buses, so nearly half the incidents occurred while women were using or waiting to use public transport.

An equally worrying pattern emerged with regard to women's reluctance to report incidents. Only 40 per cent. of all the attacks had been reported. None of the Asian or Afro-Caribbean women who had been attacked reported the incident, and only half the white women did so. There was a fear not only of the attack but of being regarded as stupid — goodness knows how one feels in those circumstances. Those women did not go to the police or a member of staff at the station to report the incident.

Twenty per cent. of the white and Afro-Caribbean women agreed strongly with the statement:

"I don't go out on my own after dark."

That response rose to 40 per cent. for Asian women. Therefore, we must look carefully at the need of ethnic minority women living among us to involve themselves in the community and working life, and our obligation to provide safe transport and access for them.

Buses were estimated to be the safest mode of transport, but only if a bus conductor or conductress was on board. The whole question of one-person-operated buses is causing increasing concern for women and, indeed, elderly people, but here we are talking about working women. The Underground came lowest in the estimates of safety. I have a car and use it, but I use the Underground and buses as well from time to time. I am much more frightened to be on the Underground late at night, or to be alone on an Underground station late at night, than waiting for a bus. I do not know why. The long, dimly lit, empty corridors and platforms are daunting, perhaps to men as well as women.

A total of 82 per cent. of the women surveyed wanted alarm systems on all trains, which would provide direct contact with the guard without necessarily stopping the train. They all wanted guards on the trains. British Rail was heavily criticised for continuing to use the old single carriage trains, which were regarded as extremely hazardous. Some 72 per cent. of women thought that the removal of staff from lesser used stations and the trend towards replacing people with machines made the situation for women travelling on public transport worse. As I said, one-person-operated buses or trains, particularly the Underground, are very unpopular from the viewpoint of safety and convenience.

Recently the Government encouraged, and even forced, a fundamental shift in priorities in the public transport system and local government, which has exacerbated the difficulties and increased the dangers faced by women, especially when travelling at night. Public transport and local authorities have been forced to operate as businesses rather than essential services. Their priority is to be cost-effective, a cost-effectiveness that no longer includes consideration of user safety or assistance to passengers.

I know that the Paymaster General cannot answer this question as it is not his responsibility, but I should like to know whether in the past year or two during the preparation of the legislation that affected public transport any women passengers were consulted, or whether they were simply told afterwards what the position would be.

Therefore, it seems in the Government's mind that women's safety will remain one of the last on a long list of cost-effective measures, so we believe that the Government should take some action. It would begin to

redress the balance if the Government accepted new clause 6 and wrote into the Bill a provision allowing for women-only transport. In recent years, there have been some women-only transport initiatives, which have been developed to meet precisely the problems to which I have referred. The repeal of the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954, as contained in the Bill, and the steadily declining public transport system, together with the disappearance of routes as a result of the deregulation of buses, may lead some employers to consider providing women-only services. Such initiatives, particularly if backed and approved by the Government, would also encourage other employers, employees and trade unions operating in sectors where unsocial hours are already the norm to consider the desirability of women only transport.

New clause 6 provides the House with an opportunity to clarify the legal position with regard to such provision and to make explicit our commitment to all women whose freedom, mobility and access to all public and social activity, including paid employment, is limited and restricted by their real fear of harassment and assault in public places. We hope very much that new clause 6 will be supported by the Government and that it will be written into the Bill.

I now refer to the amendment grouped with the new clauses under consideration. I know that the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields) will speak to amendment No. 8, with which the official Opposition wholeheartedly agree. It is an excellent amendment and we shall support it. It refers to the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act. In Committee the Minister quoted a letter from the director of the Federation of Bakers, who said that no short-term effect would arise from the repeal of the baking legislation. We want to know what the long-term effects for bakers of repealing the legislation would be. The Department of Employment should do some more work on the effects of the legislation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) referred to the bakers' petition containing more than 2,000 signatures against the repeal of the legislation. It will be presented to the Minister in due course. Today the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union issued a press release protesting against the Government's action which stated that

> "Sacrificing bakery workers' health, safety and social life for political dogma is no more than legalised thuggery by the Government."

Those might be strong words but the bakers feel strongly about this issue. We share their grievance that bakers' health is being sacrificed for the production of bread.

I hope that the Minister will consider amendment No. 8 sympathetically. Amendment No. 12 is consequential on new clause 4. Amendment No. 13 seeks to ensure that the provisions come in only 12 months after the Act comes into force. At present there is no time scale. Much more time is needed to research the effects of the legislation on the work force and the effects of repealing and removing all the protective legislation.

An interesting matter came to my notice only recently. This morning I was invited to, but could not attend, a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Women's Employment at the Department of Employment, chaired by the Under-Secretary of State. On the agenda of that meeting two draft leaflets about the Sex Discrimination Bill were under consideration. The Minister was seeking the views of the advisory committee on them. I was interested and surprised to see that in the draft leaflets which will be produced later it is stated that the statutory restrictions on women's working hours will not come into force until 1988. We had not realised that. The United Kingdom's obligations under the European social charter provide the reason.

The British Government face a dilemma in that they wish to introduce legislation which will extend working hours for women as quickly as possible, but have discovered that they cannot introduce it until 1988, because as a signatory to the European social charter they must abide by its rules. It defeats me to envisage how the Government will extricate themselves from their obligations under the charter. I shall be interested to hear the Paymaster General's views on that matter.

The charter was signed in 1961 and came into force in 1965. Article 8 of the charter places an obligation on signatories to regulate the employment of women workers on night shifts in industrial employment, prohibits their employment in underground mining and as appropriate in all other work which is unsuitable for them by reason of its dangerous, unhealthy or arduous nature. That is a social goal or target and I should be interested to hear the Minister's comments on the Government's dilemma. Will the Minister withdraw this country from the charter? How will he reconcile the Government's proposals with the requirements of the charter?

8.15 pm

Our argument in amendment No. 13 is that, if that measure cannot be brought in until 1988, why not wait and bring the whole thing in 12 months after the passage of the Act, which would be at approximately the same time? By that time there might have been a general election and a Labour Government. One of the Labour party's first measures would be to reinstitute proper protective legislation for men and women on a decent social basis. I invite my hon. Friends to support these two important new clauses 4 and 6 and the amendments which are linked with them.

Mrs. Elizabeth Shields (Ryedale): The alliance will support the Labour party if there is a Division on new clause 4. It is an important proposal having regard to the risks faced by many women in town and country, such as the difficulties of finding transport to and from their places of employment at unsocial hours in urban and especially rural areas at a time when many bus services—certainly in my area — on non-profitable routes are being withdrawn. That makes it more essential to ensure that facilities are made available.

I support the views already expressed on the problems associated with this matter, especially in connection with shift work. I wholly agree with the comments on safety made by the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson). Women need more protection, especially at night. I also agree with the words in subsection (3) of new clause 4 which relate to consultation with the work force. Discussions are necessary before any substantial change in hours is introduced because of the practical implications that they have on the lives of men and women in work and on their families. A change in working hours of any substance will involve making new domestic arrangements and special arrangements for children, including those of pre-school age, and those in primary and secondary education. All hon. Members are aware of the desirability

[Mrs. Elizabeth Shields]

of one parent being at home when children return from school. Alliance Members would not wish to encourage the destruction of family life in any way through this Bill.

The practical details contained in the proposal would be a considerable advantage in the implementation of the Act since they clearly delineate the relevant areas of anxiety for those affected by its terms. If the Government are unable to accept new clauses 4 and 6, our amendment No. 8 would at least allow further discussion with the relevant bodies. Amendment No. 8 seeks to delay the repeal of the Act for two years, at least as it affects the baking industry.

When the Committee discussed this aspect there were calls for further rounds of consultation between employers, the Equal Opportunities Commission and employees to establish whether a compromise could be reached. The Government argued that there had been sufficient time to reach a consensus. There is great strength of feeling in the baking industry and the amendment provides one further chance of consultation with the Equal Opportunities Commission and other interested bodies.

Mr. Weetch: I rise to speak briefly in support of my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms Richardson), who led for the Opposition. I shall confine my remarks to new clause 4, which raises the principle of the desirability of gradualness. Some of the Bill's provisions for deregulation will no doubt cause great damage. Consequently, new clause 4 is an exercise in damage limitation.

The Government have consulted, but have drawn partial conclusions from their consultations. They have adopted a laissez faire approach instead of regulation based on experience and social concern. The Government's deregulation amounts to the big bang for industrial protection. I believe that there should be a much more gradual and cautious approach. After all, we are talking about legislation that has been enacted over a long time and it is wrong to discard it almost overnight.

The Government have been partial. The Paymaster General has several times quoted the report of the Equal Opportunities Commission. That pointed towards deregulation, but on condition that it should be accompanied by a considered code of practice. The centrepiece of new clause 4 is the issuing codes of practice. A sudden jump into the dark would have unfortunate repercussions. It would be much better to have a series of safety valves. The new clause does not seek to proscribe the Minister's right to bring about change. We state merely that change should be brought about only after careful thought, and that every step should be taken to ensure that changes do not have any disadvantageous repercussions. The new clause seeks well thought out and tested legislative change rather than a doctrinaire leap.

Subsection (1) of new clause 4 talks about the "relevant enactments" and explains precisely what they are. However, the crux of the matter is contained in subsection (2), which mentions being subject to conditions. Those conditions relate to full consultation, childcare, mode of transporation, and so on. My hon. Friend the Member for Barking has already made most of the points that I intended to raise about transportation, but a man who travels late at night on public transport or who has to hang about on a railway platform does not face the same dangers as a woman.

Indeed, I was surprised to read that on Second Reading the Paymaster General said:

> "No one has ever suggested in all the discussions that women, for some reason, are more susceptible than men to any adverse effects which might stem from night work or working long hours."—[*Official Report*, 22 May 1986; Vol. 98, c. 572.]

I suggest that those whom the Paymaster General consulted could not have thought about the issue or examined the statistics for attacks on women late at night. Indeed, they obviously did not examine the casual attitude of some members of the judiciary when the perpetrators of such attacks are brought before them.

We are talking about serious and practical matters. The new clause tries to put some of them right by instituting a framework of conditions in order to regulate and control the pace of change. The new clause represents a reasonable proposition. Indeed, I am glad that the Paymaster General is in the Chamber to hear the debate. I hope that he will consider our serious points as I, for one, will support this worthwhile new clause in the Lobby.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) for welcoming me to the debate and for echoing the words of the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson). I always enjoy appearing opposite the hon. Member for Barking and often listen to her when she speaks as Opposition spokesman on women's matters. But on this subject I do not expect to be in frequent disagreement with the hon. Members for Barking or Ipswich or, from what I know of her speeches, with the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields).

There is obviously widespread agreement in the House and in the country that we should pursue greater equality of opportunity for women in employment, and an improvement in the role of women in the world of work. It is thus surprising that we should oppose each other on a Bill whose object is to remove discriminatory provisions between the sexes and that brings us into line with the judgment of the European Court and with quite a bit of current best practice.

The position of women in work in Britain is steadily improving, although there is a good deal further to go. Far more women work in this country than ever before. More women participate in our labour market than in other Western European countries. Perhaps surprisingly some Western European countries have been cited today. Of the total adult population of working age, 65 per cent. are in work in Britain. That figure is exceeded by Denmark with 68 per cent., but we have a much better record than other Western European countries.

There has been a particularly rapid increase in the number of women in employment in recent years. I accept that the bulk of them are in part-time work, but many of them want that. However, the number of women in full-time work has also been increasing and there has been a very satisfactory increase in the number of women who are self-employed. There has been a quite dramatic increase in the number of self-employed people and one in four of them are women. More than 200,000 of them are self-employed but employ other people. Therefore, the situation is satisfactory, with the number of women in

work steadily increasing. Of course, we would like the status of women in work to improve along with the range of jobs that they do and the opportunities open to them.

Why do we disagree about new clauses 4 and 6 and the associated amendments? The hon. Member for Barking tried to head me off when it came to labouring this argument, but I believe that all the Opposition parties are defending obsolete legislation. I am reminded of our debates on the Wages Bill. I was continually astonished by the Labour party's determination to defend the old Truck Acts. The Labour party and the alliance are now defending legislative provisions, such as those contained in the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act, which are obsolete and which do not apply to the majority of those in work, or to the majority of those in the baking industry, because they seek exemption. Those great protections for women that are being defended by calls for a cautious repeal, codes of practice and the extension of the provisions to men as well as women, just do not apply to most women in work. Some 8 million are not covered by the restrictions on working hours and conditions. Only those working in factories, predominantly manufacturing, are covered. The restrictions do not cover office workers or nurses. I do not recall that anyone has previously sought to extend these outmoded restrictions to other areas of work. Therefore, I am surprised that suddenly, as we move in to repeal this after years of discussion, the issue has become a great banner and these discriminatory restrictions become a vital protection for women.

8.30 pm

I shall not bore the House by relating my experience of night work in the baking industry, which has prepared me for the hours of night work in the House of Commons. However, two thirds of those who work in the baking industry have sought exemption from the restrictions. The industry has been arranged by collective discussion and agreement. What is being defended tonight are the vestiges of near obsolete restrictions that affect women or people in the baking industry. We are repealing the restrictions, first, because they are discriminatory between the sexes, and, secondly, because the Government believe that obsolete regulations have an inhibiting effect on the employment of women and on the freedom of employers to manage their industries, such as in the baking industry. That has a tendency to reduce employment opportunities and the number of jobs available. That is the basis of our deregulatory approach.

I am fearful when I hear the hon. Member for Barking say that one of the priorities of a Labour Government will be to introduce a huge slab of legislation with new restrictions on hours and conditions, covering both men and women. I respect her intention. I know that, with her political opinions, she genuinely thinks that that is the sort of action that would improve working conditions and opportunities for women. She is mistaken. If a Labour Government were ever elected and sought to introduce complicated and burdensome legislation, it would reduce the amount of employment in the economy. If it is directed especially towards women, it would certainly adversely affect women's employment.

New clause 4 returns to an issue canvassed in another place. It seeks to resurrect parts of amendments that were first proposed in another place and removed in Committee. The new clause proposes the introduction of a code of practice and, over and above that, not to repeal the night work restrictions but to extend them to cover men and women rather than only a minority of women. As we said in Committee, the Government see no merit in either of those proposals.

We do not think that repeal requires further safeguards because it is based on 10 years of discussion, going back to the EOC report mentioned by the hon. Member for Ipswich. I remind the House that the EOC's overall conclusion, on which it based its recommendations in the 1979 report, was that there was no case for retaining discriminatory provisions and that the legislation should be removed, except that where health and safety so demanded it should be replaced to apply equally to men and women. However, the Health and Safety Commission, which was consulted, both at the time and subsequently, never advanced the view that health and safety considerations showed a need to retain either the restrictions on women's hours in factories or the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954.

My general reply to all hon. Members who spoke about health and welfare being put at risk is that there is quite simply no conclusive evidence that long hours or night work have adverse effects on health for either men or women that would justify retaining rather than repealing the legislation. Indeed, the 1954 Act was not introduced for health and safety considerations.

I shall continue to oppose the requirement of the new clause that there should be codes of practice. The details outlined in the new clause to be included in codes of practice are matters that we think should be left as they are now. For the vast majority of employees, there is the usual process of discussion between what we hope are reasonable employers, employees and their representatives. These matters should be left to free collective arrangements. Indeed, suitable codes of practice already exist to cover matters where they might be thought necessary.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Why is the Minister always convinced that legislation is framed for reasonable employers? Surely we are discussing the unreasonable employers. What absolute assurance is there that existing codes of practice are anywhere near realistic? Women are not covered, but do not object because they are frightened of losing their already low-paid jobs.

Mr. Clarke: In the small number of cases involving unreasonable employers, the status of the codes of practice and their effect on such employers is difficult to assess. It is the very nature of such codes that they are consulted by reasonable people and give guidance to those engaged in negotiations. I am not sure that the hon. Member for Barking explained what difference she thought new codes would make for the sort of cases referred to by the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody).

I remind the House that the Health and Safety Commission is empowered to issue codes of practice to provide practical guidance to employers on their general duties towards the health, welfare and safety of their employees. Throughout our debates we have been at pains to emphasise that the protections afforded by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 will continue to apply to all those affected by the repeals. Indeed, under section 6 of the Employment Protection Act 1975 ACAS is empowered to issue codes of practice containing practical guidance for the purpose of promoting the improvement

[Mr. Clarke]

of industrial relations. The Secretary of State for Employment has similar power under section 3 of the Employment Act 1980.

Perhaps Opposition Members would look at paragraphs 51 to 70 of the 1972 industrial relations code of practice, which continues to be in force, which emphasise the need to make any changes in working arrangements in full consultation with the work force. Guidance on the provision of child care is given by the EOC's existing code of practice on the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of sex or marriage and the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment. That code also contains words of wisdom that employers can usefully bear in mind when considering such matters as the provision, wherever possible, of flexible working hours or a choice of shifts. Therefore, the new clause that the Opposition propose does not take the code any further forward than the present law, and is unnecessary.

New clause 6 deals with a serious matter — the particular problem of women using public transport — and seeks to amend the 1975 Act. The hon. Member for Ipswich supported the hon. Member for Barking in pressing for something to be done on this matter. The hon. Lady produced an interesting description and analysis of a survey on the problems that women undoubtedly face —especially in our larger cities when travelling at night, when they may face possible harassment or other difficulties.

New clause 6 aims at the possibility that, for example, the special provision—transport for women—is thought to be illegal. Until I read new clause 6, I thought that that was a novel idea. I am aware that various boroughs are experimenting with special transport for women. If this were a transport debate, no doubt I would argue about whether that was necessarily the right way to go in making transport safe for women. It is not necessarily the case that men should be barred from the vehicles in which they travel. Leaving that point on one side, I am not aware that anyone has tried to take up the question whether that is unlawful because it is sexually discriminatory.

As I understand it, new clause 6 is designed to ensure that, in constituencies such as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan), who tells me that such transport exists there, the risk of prosecution is avoided. That is best considered in another context, not in the context of this legislation. I am not satisfied that the provision is necessary.

The Equal Opportunities Commission is obliged under section 53 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to keep the working of the Act and the Equal Pay Act 1970 under review and to submit proposals for amending them to the Secretary of State. The Equal Opportunities Commission is reviewing the Acts and last week issued a consultative document inviting comments on a number of issues which it examines in the document. The EOC will take the comments into account when it prepares its proposals for submission to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Home Department and for Employment. I trust that the EOC will pay attention to what has been said in this debate. A more suitable time to address that matter might be when we consider possibly better vehicles for reforming the 1975 Act, the results of the survey and consultation and the EOC's proposals.

Amendment No. 8 seeks to retain the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954 for a minimum period of two years following Royal Assent. I cannot add a great deal to that. In my opening remarks I made it clear that the time had come for the legislation to go altogether. I cannot see what will emerge in the course of two years to change that proposition. The key point is that today some two thirds of the industry work hours are governed by collective agreements which gain exemption under the Act. The majority in the industry have voluntarily bailed out under this legislation. Baking, which has always provided a great deal of night work, will continue to do so. The baking industry is now ready to be put on a par with other industries in resolving matters for itself.

The same arguments apply to amendment No. 13 which proposes to delay the repeals of the hours of work controls for at least a year. I should like to explain a point raised by the hon. Member for Barking concerning how we will bring into operation the repeals of the hours of work controls. Clauses 7 and 8 and part III of the schedule will be brought into operation by a commencement order under clause 10(3). There is power to bring different provisions into force at different times.

As the hon. Member for Barking noted, our intention is to introduce the various repeals as soon as possible following Royal Assent, subject to the position under the European social charter. There will be some delays because, as usual, we are mindful of our legal obligations. Under article 8(4)(a) of the European social charter, the United Kingdom has undertaken to regulate the position of women on night work in industrial employment. But it is open to the United Kingdom to denounce article 8(4)(a), the next date for denunciation being February 1988, with notice required by 26 August 1987. Until such time as the article may be denounced the Government will adhere to the requirements of the European social charter by retaining the Hours of Employment (Conventions) Act 1936. That ensures compliance with the charter because it prohibits women from working at night in defiance of a period of 11 consecutive hours, including the hours between 10 pm and 5 am. There will be a deluge of paperwork seeking exemption from that Act until such time as it can finally be repealed.

We intend to withdraw from that part of the European social charter for the same reasons that we intend to carry the Bill and to repeal these two pieces of legislation. They are obsolete, out of date and have no relevance to modern working conditions. They do not apply to the majority of women or of baking workers. The time has come to bring the law up to date by carrying the Bill into effect as it stands.

8.45 pm

Ms. Richardson: I shall not keep the House more than a few minutes. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Thank you for nothing.

As the Paymaster General said, we have often faced each other, during his various jobs, across the Dispatch Box. I expected better of him. I am not being patronising in saying that. He painted a rosy picture of the lives that women lead. He talked about women doing much better, saying that they now have jobs, and so on. He said, in passing, that he wanted to improve the status of women. He failed to get down to the fact that the overwhelming majority of women are in low-paid, part-time, low-status jobs. There is an increasing number of such women as a

result of the Government's actions in the past seven years. Of course more women are in part-time jobs—they need the money. The Labour party is in the business of ensuring that a proper range of decent jobs with decent conditions are available to them so that they can look upon their work life with dignity, not one that they have to lead simply because they need the money. Our approach is entirely different. I am sure that we cannot have a meeting of minds on it.

The Paymaster General said that the Government want to sweep away the protective legislation because it does not apply any more to many people. We believe that it still applies to those exploited by exploitive employers. There are many of them around. Of course there have been exemptions but they have usually been negotiated between the unions and decent employers. That is okay, but we want to look after the residual number of women who will be exploited if this protective legislation is swept away. We need this legislation.

I said that a Labour Government would reintroduce protective legislation. Of course we shall not introduce exactly the same legislation as we had before. We shall look, in the light of the mess that the Government have left us, at what measures must be introduced to protect women and men from rack employers who are making their lives a misery in many respects.

The Paymaster General said that the matters in new clause 6 were best discussed elsewhere. That was yet another example of the fact that problems that face women, such as transport difficulties, are being thrown to some other Department simply because they happen to concern transport. The safety of women is a serious matter. I am sorry that the Paymaster General did not take it more seriously and did not see our attempt to set the safety of women in the context of this legislation.

We want to call a Division on new clause 4. I hope that all hon. Members will join me. We believe that the Government are outdated in their approach to women. It is time that this country had a Government who understand what women really want.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 169, Noes 218.

Division No. 291] **[8.48 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Mark Fisher.

NOES

Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric

Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Robert
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Anthony
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 1

Private Households and Small Undertakings and Partnerships

9 pm

Ms. Richardson: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 10, leave out subsection (2).

Amendment No. 1 seeks to delete subsection (2). We seek to remove the whole subsection, which deals with the exemption of employment in private households with regard to

"the degree of physical or social contact"

and "the knowledge of" intimate details and so on.

We had a long debate about that matter in Committee, and I am sorry that the present Minister was not there. However, I am sure that he will have read our interesting debate. Exemption of private household employment is brought within the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 by clause 1(1) of the Bill. Section 7 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 already provides for exemption where

"the job needs to be held by a man to preserve decency or privacy."

Clause 1(2) of the Bill is redundant and the Government have failed to produce any arguments in its support which would not already be covered by section 7 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. Lord Young's example, which was repeated by the Minister's predecessor in our deliberations in Committee, referred to the washing and ironing of underclothes and bedmaking, even if the employer is absent from the house at the time, and is unacceptable as a genuine occupational qualification for exemption from the Act. The former Minister's example of employing a babysitter previously unknown to the employer can surely be dealt with through rigorous scrutiny of references and is not a matter of the sex of the applicant. The way in which the Government have sought to bring the Sex Discrimination Act in regard to private households into line with other legislation is ludicrous.

Moreover, the type of services which babysitters and companions to elderly people would be expected to perform are satisfactorily covered by section 7(2) *(b)*(i) and (ii) and section 7(2)*(e)* of the Sex Discrimination Act and by clause 1(1) of this Bill. I apologise to hon. Members for mentioning so many subsections of measures with which they may not be as familiar as those of us who served on the Committee, but the Minister will understand and I am anxious not to spend too much time on this.

The introduction of the word "social", on which the Government are insisting, introduces a completely new category into the Sex Discrimination Act with regard to exemptions of the Act.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Does the hon. Lady recall that this amendment would have been passed in Committee with my support and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) had it not been for the regrettable absence of one of her colleagues?

Ms. Richardson: With great respect, it is not like the hon. Lady to make such a cheap point.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: It is not. It is very important.

Ms. Richardson: It is an important point.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Clause 19.

Ms. Richardson: If the hon. Lady will allow me to speak, the hon. Member concerned had an urgent appointment outside. It is perfectly well known that from time to time in Committee hon. Members must be absent. It was unfortunate and we regret it but these things happen. It is no good the hon. Lady trying to take credit for the one and only time when she voted with us. If she voted with us more often, perhaps we would win more often.

Anyway, the word "social", if it is introduced into the Bill, will bring another loophole into an Act which has already proved to be too widely drawn in relation to the standards of the equal treatment directive of the EEC. The Government are in danger of merely complying with one ruling in order not to be found in non-compliance in future.

There was some merit in the Bill and we supported it when it was first introduced. The first two clauses represent the initial reason for the Bill's introduction. However, our support for the Bill has withered because of the other provisions which have been introduced. Our support for the matter of private households has withered because the Government do not seem to understand, or deliberately misunderstand, the intention of the equal treatment directive.

The Government have introduced the Bill in such a ridiculous form that it will have no value. I ask the Minister for the last time to reconsider and remove subsection (2). The amendment seeks to remove that subsection.

Mr. Lee: I have listened to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) this evening and I have read the record of the earlier discussions on this clause in Committee. I am somewhat exasperated by the attitude of Opposition Members to this clause. Until now, private households have been completely exempt from the employment provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and there is no evidence of widespread abuse. I thought that all of us here — and in Europe — were agreed that respect for private life is paramount. Yet consider the effect of the amendment. All employment in a private household would be open to both sexes unless it was subject to one of the exemptions currently listed in section 7(2) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. I accept that the hon. Member for Barking acknowledged that. Physical contact would be no reason for seeking an employee of a particular sex unless it involved decency or privacy; social contact would be no reason at all.

I apologise here for giving examples. However, what may be the feelings of an old lady who would be compelled to consider men as well as women when choosing a personal companion? Or consider another old lady, who, perhaps, has been proud to lead an independent life until stricken by the frailties of old age. According to the Opposition, not only must she now swallow her pride and admit to the person who cleans and washes for her that she now needs help—that must be hard enough for her—she must suffer the double indignity of admitting that equally to a man or a woman, knowing that such a person will inevitably learn about her problems. I am not talking about bank statements, to which reference was made in the earlier stages of the Bill. I am not talking about healthy, middle-aged people with a contemporary outlook. I am talking about physical problems like incontinence. I am talking about old people, possibly old fashioned people but nevertheless people who have a right to have their personal feelings respected in the privacy of their homes.

I find it surprising and perhaps incredible that Opposition Members seem prepared to go back to their constituents and tell them that they must ignore the sex of people performing these intimate tasks within their homes. In Committee, we referred to laundries, yet talk of laundries or pre-dinner drinks is an irrelevance, and I hope and believe that that can only be the result of misunderstanding. We are not prepared to allow the invasion of privacy that the amendments seek. I hope that on reflection the hon. Member for Barking will withdraw the amendment.

Ms. Richardson: I will not press the amendment to a Division because, in view of what has happened earlier this evening, it would be defeated. However, I remind the Minister that the EEC is unhappy about the matter and does not believe that the provision complies with the equal treatment directive.

The Minister exaggerates the problems which might face elderly people. We all understand the problems which face elderly people and we want to see that they are comfortable—I use the word "comfortable" deliberately — with the people in the house with them. The introduction of the word "social" will add endless complications which will mean that the genuine purpose of the clause will not be fulfilled. I know that my words are falling on deaf ears so I will not press the amendment. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 6

COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS AND RULES OF UNDERTAKINGS

Mrs. Shields: I beg to move, amendment No. 4, in page 6, line 36 at end insert—

'(7B) Disputes under this section shall be referred for decision as appropriate to:

(a) the Central Arbitration Committee; or

(b) industrial tribunals; or

(c) the employment appeal tribunal, empowered to act as a court at first instance.'.

I understand that the Government plan to abolish the Central Arbitration Committee, which deals only with cases of direct discrimination. Our amendment seeks to give the CAC much wider powers to enable it to arbitrate effectively when collective agreements break down. If the

[Mrs. Shields]

Government choose to abolish the CAC, there will be nowhere for women to seek arbitration other than the industrial tribunals, which provide inadequate facilities to deal with such problems. An example is the case of the some 2,000 people who work in canteens in the National Coal Board, who are presently taking their dispute to the industrial tribunals. As yet, only about 30 or 40 cases have been heard, making this both an expensive and time-consuming operation.

While it is unlikely that every case would need to be heard, it would be preferable for one body, such as the CAC, to address such cases collectively. There are also some 1,000 cases waiting to go before the industrial tribunal on work of equal value. Again, the CAC can deal with these cases more effectively.

In addition to the doubt about the ability of the industrial tribunals to cope adequately with such cases, the chairmen of the tribunals rarely have specialised knowledge about sex discrimination. We would prefer such chairmen to receive training so that they are equipped to deal with such case. At present, the CAC rarely sees cases of discrimination because, under its present powers, it is unable to arbitrate in cases of more subtle and indirect discrimination, and can do so only in cases of direct discrimination. This amendment seeks to give the CAC the wider powers and authority needed to address the far more numerous cases of indirect discrimination.

If the Government are determined to abolish the CAC, they must greatly increase the powers of the employment appeal tribunal so that it can be enabled to deal with cases of collective discrimination. We seek a system in which industrial tribunals may continue to deal with individual cases, but the CAC may have increased powers to address itself to the break-down of collective discrimination. The CAC has already had experience, over a period of several years, of dealing with collective agreements, and rather than expanding the employment appeal tribunal, it would be preferable for the CAC to have its powers enhanced.

Mr. Dixon: We support this amendment, which is basically in line with the Labour Party's amendment No. 11, which was unfortunately not selected. Clause 6 takes a significant step by repealing section 3 of the Equal Pay Act 1970. This means that without the amendment there will be no provision for any formal enforcement machinery. My hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) referred to this in Committee and said that, although we did not table amendments in Committee, we would raise the matter on Report, as we are now doing.

The Government's argument is that the provisions of clause 6 void discriminatory terms in collective agreements, and thus render the Central Arbitration Committee unnecessary because it cannot amend a term that is void. However, the Government have left no mechanism to enforce such agreements. Therefore, there is no authority to which an agreement that may be thought to contain a discriminatory term may be referred, and which can duly declare it void. It may also prove necessary to amend rather than to void an agreement to avoid uncertainty and confusion for both management and employees.

9.15 pm

The CAC is a specialised body with considerable expertise and it assists in the task of arbitration and law enforcement. It would therefore be more appropriate to extend its powers so that it could amend directly and indirectly discriminatory agreements and pay structures rather than to curtail those powers as this clause seeks to do.

Part of the amendment deals with industrial tribunals. A minimum programme of reform should be introduced to set up specialist tribunals to deal with sex and race discrimination only. Specialised training should be available for members of tribunals and that training should show them how to apply the legislation and how to administer the proceedings so that they can be as clear and informal as they are intended to be. Tribunals should also have powers to recommend the reinstatement of those who have lost their jobs and power to recommend compensation which markedly reflects the real financial losses of the claimant. They should also have powers to recommend a comprehensive course of action to eliminate the problems which led to the case.

The only proposal by the Government is to recommend the imposition of a £25 deposit on all applicants. Many of my hon. Friends spoke about that earlier. My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) spoke about the loss of earnings by a person who has to appear before a tribunal and also about applicants who have to pay transport charges. A tribunal does not always hear a case in the area where a person lives or works and such a person has to find a certain amount of money for travel.

The Minister has not accepted that it is a traumatic experience for a person to appear before a tribunal. Perhaps many hon. Members do not fully understand that such people are ordinary low-paid workers. To them an appearance at a tribunal is like standing before a court. It has a traumatic effect on them. The amendments should be accepted. Tribunals should be overhauled and our recommendations should be accepted by the Minister. We support the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields) and propose to vote in favour of it.

Mr. Mikardo: I shall address myself briefly to a point that was made by the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs Shields) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) — the operation and the competence of industrial tribunals. Over the years I have attended a good many tribunals, sometimes in cases involving members of my union and sometimes in cases involving constituents. Not surprisingly, tribunals vary a good deal in quality. Some of them are good but some of them seem to be lacking in competence and in an understanding of what they are doing.

One of the problems addressed by the hon. Member for Ryedale and by my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow is that the chairmen of tribunals receive no training about what they are supposed to do. They are especially lacking in a consciousness of sex discrimination problems and, as we have heard, the problems confronting industrial tribunals are now much more the problems of women than they have been in the past.

The criteria by which members of tribunals are selected seem to be absolutely wrong. As far as I know, the last examination of the operation of tribunals and of their chairmen was made in 1983 by a group of lawyers. The

first thing they looked at was the form which had to be filled up by an aspirant chairman of a tribunal. In that form a person who sought to become a chairman had to give his qualifications. I do not know whether the form is still in use, three years later. Perhaps it has been changed. The Minister may tell us.

If it has not been changed, it is a very strange form. It does not ask the applicant to say whether he has any knowledge of industrial relations, or any experience in industrial relations. It does not ask him to say whether he has any knowledge of industrial law, or any experience in industrial law. It does not ask him to list his professional qualifications. However, it asks him to give a list of the military medals and honours he has received. If, therefore, one wants to be the chairman of an industrial tribunal, the principal criterion is that one should get oneself a row of gongs. Then it does not matter if one does not know about other matters.

This group of lawyers said that they had found that many chairmen have no experience of or even an interest in industrial relations. They quoted two newly appointed industrial tribunal chairmen, one of whom confessed that he had spent 30 years in divorce and property law and that he knew nothing about industrial relations law. He said, "I shall have to bone up on it." The other freely admitted and, indeed, seemed to be proud of the fact that in his whole life he had never met a trade union official.

We have referred to the problems faced by women who appear before industrial tribunals. The hon. Member for Ryedale mentioned sensitivity to sex discrimination matters in industrial tribunals. Only 7 per cent. of the chairmen of industrial tribunals are women. We are dealing with a sex discrimination Bill. One cannot have more sex discrimination than that. Is the Minister able to tell me that there are 13 men who are qualified to chair industrial tribunals for every woman who is qualified to chair an industrial tribunal? I am sure that he will not tell me that. If he did, nobody would believe him.

There is much weight in what has been said by the hon. Member for Ryedale and by my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow. The Government should bone up on the qualifications that are required properly to run industrial tribunals and they should examine the ways in which their operations ought to be improved, because they are susceptible to a great deal of improvement.

Mr. Lee: I know that during earlier stages of this Bill there have been many interesting discussions about the need for the CAC to have responsibility for settling disputes which might arise where agreements are unlawfully discriminatory. Opposition Members, both in proposing and supporting this amendment, have repeated some of the arguments previously advanced.

The amendment we are considering of course goes further. It would apparently give power to consider agreements—I almost said to "police" agreements—not only to the CAC but also to industrial tribunals and the Employment Appeal Tribunal.

The proposed amendment is so wide-ranging that it is imprecise—I must say defective. It does not say who can, or cannot, refer a dispute for a decision. It does not set any time limit on such referral and it does not say how it will be known which body is "appropriate", nor who will decide appeals against such decisions. It does not say what will happen if one party refers a dispute to the CAC while the other, simultaneously, has referred it to the EAT—all this of course at possibly the same time as an individual employee has applied to a tribunal for a decision on her or his individual position. I do not, however, want to labour the technical defects in the amendment, since I consider there are major reasons why it should be rejected.

The procedure which the amendment seeks to introduce is unnecessary. I do not want to weary hon. Members by repeating arguments already well argued at earlier stages, but I fear I must do so in some measure.

Opposition Members are concerned about cases where one side or the other refuses to renegotiate an agreement. They have, as on earlier occasions, painted a sorry picture of industrial relations in this country, where rights of individuals are ignored and legislation blatantly disregarded. It is surely more likely that such a sad state of affairs should arise through ignorance or accident rather than by design, and I shall later describe the avenues through which help and advice can be obtained. But in what seems to me the unlikely event of either or both parties to an agreement refusing to change a term they know to be discriminatory, they will be faced, as my hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) emphasised during ealier discussions, with the right of individuals to complain to a tribunal if they feel they are suffering discrimination.

Opposition Members have raised objections to this line of defence, but do they really wish to denigrate this fundamental principle of employment law, the right of individuals to seek personal redress and financial compensation where they have suffered because of a breach of legislation? People have had this right under sex discrimination legislation since 1975 and we do not therefore envisage a great increase in industrial tribunal complaints as a result of clause 6. But the fact remains that an intransigent employer is likely to be faced with complaints leading to compensation and almost certainly to costs being awarded against the firm for its cynical disregard of the law. An intransigent trades union could also be faced with tribunal proceedings for knowingly aiding an unlawful act.

The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields), the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) and expecially the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) referred to the training of tribunal chairmen. I will study the points that have been made, especially the knowledgeable contribution from the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar. All industrial tribunal chairmen have legal qualifications and, in addition, it is planned that special seminars should take place on discrimination cases. Nevertheless, I will consider whether we are going as far as is appropriate in the circumstances, given the comments that have been made.

It seems to me that it would be a very unusual employer who would accept such costs and not insist on renegotiation of the discriminatory terms. Moreover, I am sure that the Equal Opportunities Commission would want to use its powers of persuasion or, failing that, its powers to conduct formal investigations to ensure that the situation was remedied.

Opposition Members have emphasised the difficulties parties will face in arriving at non-discriminatory terms. I think that they under-estimate the abilities and practical expertise of both employers and trade unions. However, if help is needed it is freely available from the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service and the Equal Opportunities Commission. If the employer and the union

[Mr. Lee]

still cannot agree on the change, they can ask ACAS to appoint an independent arbitrator or, by mutual agreement, refer the matter to the Central Arbitration Committee. Nothing in this Bill prevents the CAC from continuing to provide its services where both parties are content for the agreement to be referred to it.

I hope that I have finally persuaded Opposition Members that the powers their many amendnents have sought to revive are unnecessary, unwieldy and undesirable. I hope, too, that they will agree to withdraw the amendment; otherwise, I must ask hon. Members to reject it.

Mrs. Shields: I am glad to know that there will be some sort of training for the chairmen of industrial tribunals and that the tribunals will be looked at even though learned members sit on them. The main aspect of the amendment is that it enshrines an important principle—the right of individuals who feel that they have been discriminated against to receive effective arbitration.

As I am not happy with the Government's response to the amendment, I intend to press it to a vote.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 162, Noes 214.

Division No. 292] **[9.28 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Richard Livsey and
Mr. James Wallace.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Anthony
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*

Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Waddle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Francis Maude and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 7

REMOVAL OF RESTRICTIONS ON WORKING HOURS AND CONDITIONS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Clwyd: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 6, line 46, at end insert 'except section 125(1)*(b)*'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 6, in page 7, line 9, at end insert 'except section 86*(c)*'.

Mrs. Clwyd: The amendments exclude the repeal of the sections of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and the Factories Act 1961, which specify that women shall not be employed for more than four and a half hours without an interval of at least half an hour for a meal or a rest. I cannot believe that the Government intend to persist with their petty and mean proposals. I cannot believe that any reasonable person would consider it unreasonable for someone to have a break of half an hour at the end of four and a half hours of work.

I have observed Conservative Members who have been in the Chamber this evening and only a few of them have managed to stay in their places for more than one hour without leaving for a break. I would hardly say that sitting on the Government Benches has meant very much effort for them. The people that I am talking about, however, put a great deal of effort into their work and reasonably expect to have a break after working for such a period.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) talked earlier this evening about research carried out by Labour Research into 92 firms, from which it was found that a substantial number of firms did not have any organised break for their workers. If the sections of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and the Factories Act 1961 to which the amendments relate are repealed, I suspect that many more unscrupulous employers will expect their employees to continue to work unreasonable periods without a proper rest.

We have had gratuitous advice from Ministers on eating healthily. Surely it is important from the point of view of someone's health and welfare that he should have reasonable time allotted to him to take a rest break or a meal break at the end of a period of work. I cannot believe that the Minister will not agree that the amendments should be supported.

I had direct experience of an unscrupulous employer when I worked during a school holiday. Ministers are fond of talking about occasions when they worked in the baking industry, and perhaps they would like to hear about the time when I worked during a school holiday at Chester zoo. I was employed in a buttery, scraping butter extremely thinly on pieces of bread. I was also engaged in interminably cutting slices of ice cream because the school holiday was in the middle of a heat wave. After a week of working without a break from 9 o'clock until 5 o'clock in the afternoon, I asked the manageress of the department when we could expect a break. She said, "If you don't like it, leave."

9.45 pm

That was quite a long time ago, but obviously because of the present economic circumstances millions of people, for fear of losing their job, will not protest about poor working conditions. It is well documented that the health of those in the lower economic earning groups is worse than that of people in other economic earning groups. Surely it is important, for the health and welfare of those people, perhaps more than others because they are less able to protect themselves, that we in the House of Commons should ensure that there is protection for them. Civilised terms and conditions of employment should be laid down for all employees—not only women but men.

[Mrs. Clwyd]

It is hypocritical for the Government to suggest that to carry out their commitment — I put a question mark over the word "commitment" — to promote equal opportunities in employment between men and women and to remove unnecessary and outdated legislation, none of which has been proved tonight to be outdated or unnecessary, the removal of burdens on employers and of restrictions in respect of work, rest and meal breaks is essential. What utter nonsense. The Government are trying to give some unscrupulous employers a licence to exploit their employees. Apparently, there will be no consultation with the people on the shop floor. Their protection rights are being thrown away. Employers will persuade workers on changes, and we know all about employers and their methods of persuasion.

Surely Parliament's job is to protect hours and conditions of work, or is this yet another example of the Government eroding rights that have been fiercely fought for by trade unions for over a century? I found it particularly ironic to listen to the Minister suggesting that the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act was trivial legislation. Workers fought for over 100 years to get it on the statute book. It was a previous more enlightened Conservative Government who eventually supported it, yet the present Government are expecting us to believe that there is no longer any point in that protection.

Compared with those in every other Western industrialised country, workers in this country are still having to fight fiercely for their welfare and rights. Tonight the Government are putting yet another nail in the coffin of the efforts that have been made over the years by people who have fought for those workers and their rights. We should be ashamed that it took more than 100 years to get the legislation on the statute book when in other countries such as Finland, Norway, Denmark and West Germany such legislation existed early in this century.

The Government say that things will be made more favourable for employers. They occasionally toss in a comment about how nice it will be for the workers. They are not even pretending that tonight because women will not be able to avoid the exploitation that will be enabled if the legislation is passed unamended. Their collective bargaining strengths are likely to be weak, when families are dependent on their income. Too little consideration has been given to the knock-on effect of the repeals on families.

It is unclear what effect the removal of restrictions on women's hours will have on arrangements for the whole work force in respect of meals, rest breaks and rest days. Arguably men as well as women have benefited from the so-called restrictive legislation in the past, in that employers who have been obliged to accept statutory restrictions for women have found it simplest to allow them for men too, although men have no statutory right to meal breaks or rest days.

We should like this legislation to be extended to men. If the Government do not support our amendments, it will be a step back into the dark ages and will show Britain to be far behind other European countries in welfare rights and the protection of workers.

Mr. Lee: I say with tongue in cheek that I am pleased that the Opposition have accepted, albeit reluctantly, that it is no longer necessary to retain statutory restrictions on the total hours women may work either each day or during a week. That will enable women to participate in overtime working if they wish and to be generally more flexible on overtime if that is what they and their employers want.

I am genuinely puzzled as to why the Opposition do not extend the same logic to the restrictions governing spells of work and rest intervals. The Government are not saying that women ought to be forced to work much longer spells against their wills. In very few circumstances would it be sensible for the employer to ask them to work longer spells and for the women to agree to that. I mention the example of Chester zoo used by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd).

Why should women not be capable of arranging their rest breaks and their total hours without the clumsy intervention of the law? The reasoning seems especially strange given that many women do not rely on statutory intervention to regulate meal and rest intervals in other sectors of the economy apart from mines, quarries and factories.

When Lord Wedderburn introduced similar amendments in the other place, he asked what was wrong with legislation in relation to spells of work. The answer is that we simply do not believe it to be necessary. Such matters are more effectively organised by individual or collective agreement when the circumstances and needs of the employees and employer can be taken into account. There is no justification for such restrictions remaining only for women working in mines, quarries and factories. Such restrictions are discriminatory and, where women must take compulsory meal breaks for which they are not paid, they can be disadvantageous.

The available evidence on health and safety is inconclusive. Dr. Harrington said in a summary of his review that fatigue has an objective concept, and was of dubious long-term significance to health. He also said that fatigue leading to increased errors and diminished performance could be offset by improved motivation and the appropriate use of work breaks. That is not to say that the breaks need to be inflexibly laid down by statute. Operational demands often require more adaptable arrangements than the existing legal provisions allow for. Furthermore, the better conditions prevail in our factories compared to the era when the legislation was first introduced, and that may, as the Equal Opportunities Commission noted in paragraph 381 of its 1979 report, obviate the need for formal meal breaks. Operatives may be content to stay at or near their work stations for longer periods if this meets the needs of the process.

The argument has been put that just because statutory rest intervals are not appropriate elsewhere it does not mean that they are inappropriate for mines, quarries and factories. But equally no convincing argument has been made as to why mines, quarries and factories should be a special case. Why should discriminatory restrictions remain only for women in those sectors? We are convinced that it is totally anachronistic and anomalous for these narrow restrictions to remain. Accordingly, I strongly urge that the amendment should be withdrawn.

Mrs. Clwyd: The Minister's response does not surprise me. He mentioned Dr. Harrington and was selective in the quotes that he took from Dr. Harrington's report. He did not mention that Dr. Harrington recognised evidence linking gastric and duodenal ulcers with shift work. He

believed that digestive disorders were one and a half to two times more severe in shift workers, and that their ulcer rate was twice that of day workers. He said:

"There is reason to believe that nightshift work may well affect the digestive system."

The programme outlined by the Minister, which does not even allow for a statutory break, will no doubt lead to even more digestive problems. How can he expect us to believe that he is serious about health when he makes such ludicrous suggestions?

The Minister mentioned the Health and Safety Executive. Despite all the protestations of Conservative Members about the role that the executive will play, the truth is that under this Government the Health and Safety Executive has had its powers reduced every year since 1979. The Health and Safety inspectorate has also been reduced under this Government. Nowadays, some factories are not even visited once in 10 years. How can the Minister expect us to take his protestations seriously?

It is ludicrous to suggest that women will have some sort of collective bargaining power, because many of them are not in trade unions and have no bargaining muscle. In 1986, I would have expected the House to recognise the need to protect both male and female workers. Instead, the legislation is being repealed, and that will take us back 15 years.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 9

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENT, REPEALS AND SAVING

Mr. Lee: I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 8, line 16, leave out 'sections 4(1) and' and insert 'section'.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 10.

Mr. Lee: These are simple, technical amendments. They remove from the Bill the reference to section 4(1) of the Equal Pay Act. The whole of section 4 of the Equal Pay Act was repealed on 25 September 1986 by the Wages Act. Therefore, to retain the reference to section 4(1) in the Bill would serve no purpose and would be meaningless.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 10, in page 8, line 17, leave out 'they refer' and insert 'it refers'.—*[Mr. Lee.]*

Bill to be read the Third time tomorrow.

PUBLIC TRUSTEE AND ADMINISTRATION OF FUNDS BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 69 (Second Reading Committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Committee of the whole House.

Committee tomorrow.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Family Law Bill *[Lords]* and the Parliamentary Constituencies Bill *[Lords]*, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

PETITION

Salmon (Illegal Fishing)

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I beg to present a petition that was begun and promoted by the Welsh Salmon and Trout Angling Association. It is supported by clubs and anglers from Llandysul to London, from Bath to Bangor, from Merthyr to Manchester and from Dyfed to Dunoon. More than 18,600 signatures have been collected.

The petitioners applaud the introduction of the Salmon Bill but fear that, unless further measures are taken to control illegal fishing, salmon stocks in Welsh rivers will continue to decline.

The petition states:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that . . . the Standing Advisory Committee . . . be directed to examine and recommend . . . the necessity or otherwise of providing for the individual identification of salmon as an aid to combating illegal fishing.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Housing Defects (Cannock and Burntwood)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

10 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): This is the first time I have had the privilege of raising an Adjournment debate. It is a pleasure to do so tonight. Perhaps the House will understand the defects in a particular house, Broadcasting house, but, as Broadcasting house is not in my constituency, I have no doubt that you, Mr. Speaker, would rule me out of order were I to make further references to it.

I am grateful for the opportunity to voice the concerns of an important group of constituents who have lived for the past three or four years under the cloud of ownership of defective homes. This debate concerns properties in the Cannock and Burntwood area which have been subject to defect. I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle), who is renowned for his knowledge of housing matters and who also has constituents living within the Cannock Chase district council area in Rugeley who are affected by this problem. Nearly all the constituents I am talking about are beneficiaries of the Government's excellent right-to-buy policy. They are former tenants who have exercised their right to purchase their own homes. It is greatly to the Government's credit that, when it was realised that pre-cast reinforced concrete homes, which these people had purchased, were inherently defective, they acted swiftly to provide a remedy.

The essence of the problem for most of them was not that their homes were falling down but that one of the principal benefits of home ownership — the ability to mortgage one's home or to sell it and buy another—was at a stroke denied them as their properties became blighted. I believe that the Government therefore must be given credit for taking action in 1984 to bring legislation to the statute book to provide some remedy.

Much of the credit for implementing the Housing Defects Act 1984 and devising and revising the scheme which the Act brought into being must go to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who held the post of Under-Secretary of State with considerable distinction.

I approve entirely of the licensing concept which was designed to provide owners of reinstated homes with that peace of mind that they currently do not have. It was inevitable that the speed with which PRC Homes Ltd.— set up by the National House Building Council and by the Government — could move would be slower than everyone would have wished and certainly slower than the affected owners and the hon. Members who represent those owners would have wished.

I believe that many of the original problems have been ironed out. After some prompting by Ministers, who themselves have been prompted by right hon. and hon. Members, PRC Homes is now implementing a much quicker appraisal process to ensure that schemes are examined as quickly as possible. There are in my constituency four categories of pre-cast reinforced concrete houses: Cornish units, Wates homes, Smith houses and Reema hollow panels. The last category has only recently been discovered, but the rest have caused anxiety and distress lasting many years.

I should like to emphasise the considerable anxiety caused to these people — not because their homes are falling down, but because many of them have invested a great deal of their own money in these properties and have brought them up to a very acceptable standard. Some of them are really beautiful homes, and there is nothing wrong with them, although in some cases signs of defects are emerging. For many owners the homes are adequate and they want to live in them.

The problem is that the owners are effectively trapped in those homes. One of the problems of a council house tenant is that he does not have the facility of moving as readily as a home-owner. The anxiety of not being able to enjoy the benefits of home ownership has caused great distress. It is not unreasonable that people should look to the Government, who implemented the Act, to do all in their power to accelerate the process of appraisal of the schemes submitted to PRC Homes, to ensure that there are realistic schemes available so that people can either continue to enjoy the homes in which they live or choose to move. For many of the people affected, the delay and the anxiety that that causes lead them to feel that they want only one option, which is repurchasing—effectively they want out.

I shall encapsulate the problems for each category of home. First, the Cornish units are more readily capable of repair, and that work is proceeding apace. However, Cannock Chase district council has acquired 10 houses on the ground of personal hardship and a further 40 are being acquired for which the cost of reinstatement, together with the cost of repair for the shale floors — which is not eligible for grant — exceed the value of the properties. Why are the shale foundations not eligible for assistance? Without the work being undertaken on the defective panels, the foundations would be adequate. I ask my hon. Friend seriously to consider including that essential repair work in the list of repairs eligible for grant under the scheme.

The second category is Wates homes, of which about 47 are in private ownership. After a long wait, there is now a real prospect of implementing a viable repair scheme. I understand that one of the leading consultants, Michael Dyson Associates, is hoping to undertake a pilot project in Tamworth with the assistance of Tarmac Construction. In the meantime, the owners are enduring a lengthy wait.

Further, despite the welcome increase in the maximum grant availability announced in August — an increase from £14,000 to £20,000—a problem arises because the quoted cost of repairs has also risen. In February owners were quoted £13,500 for repair, but that has risen in stages to between £17,000 and £19,000. The owners find that rise inexplicable. Indeed, such a figure is likely to make the value of the properties less than the cost of repair. The inevitable conclusion being drawn is that as soon as the Government raise the grant the builders will suddenly find that the cost of repairs has also risen. I cannot tell my hon. Friend where to find the solution. He has responded to pressure in the House to raise the maximum grant, but contractors have magically increased the cost of repairs to coincide with the grant. I hope that more people will come into the market, but my hon. Friend must realise that only a limited number are prepared to operate in it, despite the

enormous attractions that there will be to builders and developers who undertake such work in the private and public sectors.

The Wates homes in my constituency were all owned by the National Coal Board, now British Coal. It is disposing of the properties as quickly as possible, and they are being bought at defective value by people who are sub-dividing them and renting them out. The tenants often do not provide the type of atmosphere which home owners on the estates would like. Home owners may want to reinstate their homes, but find that the former NCB property next door is no longer eligible for grant and that the new owners are interested only in packing in as many tenants as possible. As a result, the standard of the area is declining. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to say something about British Coal's future policy in that respect.

The problems concerning Smith homes are intractable. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd), who is in her place, the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) and my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) have fought valiantly for the interests of this group of people. I have about 14 such owner-occupiers in my constituency. They are fed up to the back teeth with having to wait for an approved scheme. I understand that a south Wales company may have a suitable scheme. The likely cost is £24,000, however, which means that repurchase is the only option. As the scheme involves the virtual demolition of the property—it leaves the roof—and as we are a long way from achieving an approved scheme of reinstatement, which could itself exclude many detached properties, I should have thought that the solution was to give all owners the option of repurchase. The 14 properties in my constituency are detached.

Miss Betty Boothroyd (West Bromwich, West): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He told me earlier that he would be happy if I intervened at this point. He said that many people in Smith houses would be happy if resources were made available to local authorities so that there could be repurchase. Would he press the Government on this matter? He knows that the resources are available. If they were made available to local authorities, they might repurchase Smith houses.

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Lady pre-empts my speech, but I am grateful to her.

To allow my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) to speak, I shall say nothing about Reema homes, but just invite my hon. Friend the Minister to comment on them. They are less of a problem than others.

I fully understand why the Government allocated administration of the scheme to local authorities. They undoubtedly have the necessary organisation and often owned the properties. Indeed, they were often responsible for building the defective properties, so it is no hardship for them to carry the can now. The Cornish units and Wates homes in Cannock were owned by the National Coal Board, and I understand Cannock Chase district council's slight resentment at picking up the cost of reinstating or repurchasing those homes.

It is true that the Government allocated £814,000 in the 1986-87 housing improvement allocation for Cannock Chase district council specifically to deal with its obligations under the Housing Defects Act 1984. The council is grateful for that, but its problem is that this is a demand-led area of the budget. It is a fairly reasonable Labour authority and is not like some that have been mentioned in the House. It seeks an assurance that if it is to meet its obligations under the Act—it cannot tell when they will be foisted upon it—it will not be subject to an attack by the district auditor.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene quickly. As he rightly said, we share the same local authority. Earlier he said that a number of people in his constituency and mine, which is adjacent, were encouraged by the Housing Act 1980 to exercise their right to buy. They did so and now find that they have an asset in which they are trapped. The properties are effectively blighted, not because the houses are inherently defective, but because they are PRC homes. They are inevitably tarred with the same brush as Airey homes—I was associated with a similar Adjournment debate in 1982—and the owners cannot sell them.

When my hon. Friend the Minister replies, will he consider the possibility of imposing on local authorities the duty to relieve people who find themselves trapped in homes which they cannot sell? Will he direct the attention of local authorities, such as the Cannock Chase district council, to cases such as that of my constituents, Mr. and Mrs. D. H. Knowles of 14 Larch Road, on the Springfield estate in Rugeley? They bought, but now cannot sell and are suffering considerable hardship because they cannot buy the property into which they wish to move. Their home, although not inherently defective, is blighted. They find themselves trapped. The Cannock Chase district council, benevolent though it is and moderate though it is in Labour party terms, finds itself unable, because my constituents have exercised the right to buy, to extend the arm of compassion in cases of hardship. When my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the excellently presented Adjournment debate of my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), will he consider this one basic defect of definition in the Housing Defects Act?

Mr. Howarth: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend.

People who need to move face a problem and Cannock Chase district council is being slow in coming forward, partly because one of our Ministers asked it to behave in that way. Now we must ensure that the council can meet the obligations without incurring wild expenditure. I suggest that we should perhaps allow capital receipts to be released for this one specific budget area and that one alone.

10.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): Perhaps I could begin on two personal notes. First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) on a success which he has achieved outside the House. I am sure that it will have been welcomed by all hon. Members. Secondly, I thank my hon. Friend for the warm tribute which he paid to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) who was previously Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment and whose work we all recognise as being of a high quality. Many of us have good cause to thank him for what he has done for us in many ways.

[Mr. Richard Tracey]

I certainly wish to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood for giving us this opportunity to discuss, albeit briefly, this important legislation. The interest in this matter has been shown by the interventions of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) and the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd) who, unfortunately, is no longer present. We are all grateful for the hon. Lady's intervention.

We agree that this was an important piece of legislation, and my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) and I first knew it as the Housing Defects Act 1984. It has now been consolidated into part XVI of the Housing Act 1985, but the substance of the Act remains unaltered by the consolidation.

My hon. Friend has, quite understandably, identified some problems with the operation of the Act. I should like to look briefly at the history of this measure because it is important to remind ourselves of why we put it on the statute book and, indeed, of the progress we are now making, nationally, with its implementation.

The story really began in 1983 when our Building Research Establishment discovered serious, and quite unexpected, problems with Airey houses. The BRE then discovered that all prefabricated reinforced concrete houses designed before 1960 faced the same type of defect. These properties therefore became unmortgageable and the owners, who had bought in good faith and with no knowledge of inherent defects, were left in a very difficult position. The Government could simply have rested on the old "caveat emptor" principle but we did not. We recognised that the Government had a responsibility to owners who had bought in good faith from the public sector and now found themselves in an impossible position.

So the Government introduced first the "Voluntary Airey Scheme" — an extension of the repairs grant system to Airey houses—and then, when the full extent of the problem became clear, the Housing Defects Act 1984. As my hon. Friend knows, this entitles eligible owners of designated properties either to a 90 per cent. local authority grant to reinstate the property, or 100 per cent. in financial hardship cases, or, if repair is not possible or cost effective, to repurchase at 95 per cent. of defect-free value. Owners can also apply for repurchase on hardship grounds. The authority has to decide the form of assistance—whether grant or repurchase—in each case.

That Act received all party support in the House. It is a generous measure which has given security to thousands of home owners who would otherwise be in desperate straits. It is important to remember this when we look at some of the difficulties—which I do not deny exist. I stress that the owners will get assistance, within the 10-year period laid down in the designations. That fact in itself is an enormous step forward for them, and we must not lose sight of it. The Government did the right thing in passing this measure and now we must all do all we can to help it work smoothly.

A further big step forward is the progress that we are now making on approved repair methods. When the Act came into operation on 1 December 1984 there were none. Now, thanks especially to the builders and designers and, of course, to the National House Building Council and its subsidiary PRC Homes Ltd., there are 21, covering seven of the designated PRC types — Airey, Cornish unit, Unity, Wates, Woolaway, Orlit and Parkinson. Some 31 more schemes are in the pipeline, including one for Reema and one for the Smith houses type, which the Government designated earlier this year. These approved methods cover two thirds of all designated houses in private ownership—and progress is continuing. My hon. Friend will also recall that we have just made, on 25 September, adjustments to the grant expenditure limits for those types, like Wates, which have been shown to cost more to repair than the original across-the-board figure of £14,000. I know that my hon. Friend is concerned that builders should not "bid up" to the new limits, and we are monitoring the position carefully. Obviously, competition on repair methods will help.

This demonstrates that the Government are committed to making the Act work—and it is now getting under way. Up to 31 March 1986, there had been over 2,000 repurchases, and only 200 or so grants. For the current year local authorities estimate that they will be able to give well over 2,000 grants, so a lot more repairs are now getting under way. In other words, what we all wanted to see—Government, local authorities and owners—repairs rather than repurchase, is beginning to happen, and we can rightly be pleased at that. I fully accept that we must not be complacent, especially about the position of those authorities, and their owners, who face particular pressures.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): In my constituency, there are over 300 of these properties, and I am sure that my hon. Friend will be encouraged to know that the local authority has commenced the repurchase of properties of those who can prove that they are in financial difficulties.

Mr. Tracey: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention, and I congratulate the local authority.

I know that resources are an issue that concerns my hon. Friend, and indeed other hon. Members. The first point on which we can all agree is that the precise pattern of expenditure under the Act is not easy to predict. Owners have 10 years in which to seek assistance; and, even if large numbers apply, the cases, quite understandably, do not necessarily crystallise for quite some time. That is why my Department encourages authorities to talk with their owners to try to reach a good understanding on a likely timetable. Owners' needs, especially in hardship cases, the existence of repair methods—and possible new ones—and overall resource availability all come into this. With good will all round, sensible programmes are attainable, and beneficial both to the authority and the owners.

Of course, certain authorities face particularly heavy obligations. We do all that we can, within the housing investment programme system, to allocate resources sensibly, reflecting those needs and others. We have been flexible beyond that. Last year, certain authorities came to us and said that they simply could not cope within existing allocations. We announced, in circular 9/85, that we would provide extra resources to authorities definitely in that position. We made available an extra £37 million. In the event, for the reasons that I have described, only some £5 million was taken up. For the current year we took £30 million out of the normal generalised needs index and distributed it directly to the regional level to reflect the problems of particularly hard-hit authorities. The West

Midlands received £2 million on that basis — plus the money distributed in the normal way through HIP, where we also revised the GNI indicators, to focus better on HDA obligations. We are continuing to monitor the position—the present HIP round of meetings has given my Department's regional offices a valuable update. We shall continue to do all we can.

My hon. Friend made other specific points. We have received and studied his recent letters. First is the National Coal Board estate. I understand the concerns felt by many hon. Gentlemen about this. Local authorities are responsible under the Act for providing assistance on privately owned properties. I know that this has caused concern because authorities often had no previous involvement in those estates. But a local authority has responsibility for all the residents in its area. It is not unreasonable, therefore, for the authority to be responsible for administering the housing defects scheme in the same spirit as it handles the normal improvement and repairs grants.

The Government have a part to play. That is why the Exchequer makes an increased financial contribution in these cases — 100 per cent. of the difference between price paid and defective value, rather than the usual 75 per cent. The rest of the cost will of course attract housing subsidy, in the normal way, if the authority is still eligible for that.

As my hon. Friend has said, there are some difficulties for owners of Cornish unit properties situated on shale foundations. The shale can cost £2,000 to £3,000 to repair and is not normally eligible for grant under the housing defects legislation. This is because it is a defect quite separate from the designated one of inadequate protection of the steel reinforcement in the concrete panels. I know that certain authorities have considered giving improvement grants towards these costs. Obviously, it will be for each authority to make up its mind about giving such grants for this work. There is an alternative, if the owner's circumstances warrant it, of 100 per cent. grant assistance towards eligible works under the housing defects legislation. That could go some way towards evening up the position.

Because of the brief nature of the debate and the excellent contributions from my hon. Friends, time is limited. I hope that what I have said has been helpful. I am prepared to reply further by way of letter to any points that I have not answered. On the matter of resources mentioned by my hon. Friend——

The Question having been proposed at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 23 October 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

New Writ (Knowsley North)

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland): I beg to move, That Mr. Speaker do issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the county constituency of Knowsley, North in the room of Robert Kilroy-Silk, Esquire, who since his election for the said county constituency hath accepted the office of steward or bailiff of Her Majesty's Manor of Northstead in the county of York.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Object.

Mr. Speaker: Objection taken. The motion stands over to the commencement of public business.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

COUNTY OF SOUTH GLAMORGAN (TAFF CROSSING) BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time.

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*

Order for further consideration read.
To be further considered upon Thursday 30 October.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration read.
To be considered upon Thursday 30 October.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We shouted "Object", but you did not seem to hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is a blocking motion on the Order Paper. I do not need objections.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 30 October.

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Tuesday 28 October.

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 30 October.

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 2) BILL *[LORDS]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 2) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend further proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first time and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That, no petitions against the Bill having been presented within the time limited within the present Session, no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the committee;

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.— *[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed upon Monday 27 October.

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [22 October],

That the Promoters of the City of London (Various Powers) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and shall be ordered to be read the third time;

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.— *[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed upon Monday 27 October.

RIVER HUMBER (BURCOM OUTFALL) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [22 October],

That the Promoters of the River Humber (Burcom Outfall) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend further proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill

Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That, no petitions against the Bill having been presented within the time limited within the present Session, no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the committee;

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed upon Monday 27 October.

Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [21 October],

That the Promoters of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session.

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table with the New Clause as added on Consideration of the Bill as amended.

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed upon Tuesday 28 October at Seven o'clock.

British Railways (Stansted) Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [21 October],

That the Promoters of the British Railways (Stansted) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed upon Tuesday 28 October at Seven o'clock.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope that my comments will be helpful. In my Order Paper the motion relating to the Bexley London Borough Council Bill refers to the Second Reading of the Plymouth City Council Bill. Is that correct?

Mr. Speaker: It is a printing error.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

1. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the progress of the Anglo-Irish Agreement during the summer Adjournment.

2. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the operation to date of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

5. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was discussed at the latest meeting held under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): During the parliamentary recess we have had one special meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference, and one regular meeting. I have placed in the Library the statements issued after each meeting. We are making progress with the better co-ordination of security co-operation, and on a range of items falling within the ambit of the conference. At the last meeting particular items included human rights, equality of opportunity in employment, economic and transport issues and the international fund.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are large numbers of people on this side of the water, including in this sovereign Parliament, who wish the Anglo-Irish Agreement well and who do not regard themselves as puppets of the Americans, stooges or brainwashed collaborators in trying to proceed along the road of inter-communal reconciliation.

Mr. King: I am grateful for the comments of my hon. Friend. I believe that the continuing evidence of the operation of the conference shows that there is scope for closer co-operation and that there are benefits to be gained

from the objectives of the agreement, such as the reassurance of the majority community, and the reassurance of the minority, community of their rights within the Province. I make that absolutely clear. That has always been my position. That is our objective, and I believe that it is an objective that all people of good will should share.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not time that we saw some real economic improvements in Northern Ireland? Perhaps the Secretary of State will recognise the abysmal economic situation. Is the Secretary of State aware that one of the latest victims of the sectarian murders was Mr. Raymond Mooney, a young man who left behind four children? He was an active member of my union, and he was slaughtered as he came down the hall of the church where he was an active social and welfare worker. Is that not yet another illustration of the sectarian murders being carried out by gangs on both sides? Is the Secretary of State aware that on Saturday there is a trade union conference in Belfast to deal with all forms of intimidation and sectarianism? Does he wish that conference well?

Mr. King: I answer the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question with an unequivocal yes. I certainly strongly applaud the initiative of the trade unions in seeking to give a lead against sectarian intimidation and violence, from whichever quarter it may come. I hope that the whole House will join me in deploring any incidents of sectarian violence, of which, sadly, there have been far too many in recent months, and also any speeches that may tend to incite what is obviously a serious and charged situation and which all too easily can result in sectarian outrages from both sides of the community.

On the economic front, obviously such acts are a crime against the whole community in the Province if they in any way discourage employment. However, there is encouraging news of new investments in the Province, including an anouncement last week by a Japanese company of inward investment to set up a new operation. It is the second Japanese investment in the Province. That is coupled with other substantial investments in existing plants. That is an encouraging side of the picture that is not always so widely reported.

Mr. Nellist: With only three weeks to go to the anniversary of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, is not the reality of the summer months that the backlash against that agreement still continues to claim lives and that the sectarian tensions continue and do not diminsh? Is it not far more hopeful that 4,000 Department of Health and Social Security workers went on strike a few weeks ago —a united strike of Catholic and Protestant workers against intimidation — and that on Saturday the Northern Ireland committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions is organising a conference to unite workers? Are they not far more hopeful signs than the Anglo-Irish Agreement that workers can be united in the North against all sectarian and paramilitary groups operating in the area?

Mr. King: I applaud the way in which workers, including those in the DHSS, have refused to be intimidated by paramilitary groups and have stood against intimidation from whichever extreme it might come. The Anglo-Irish Agreement is based on exactly the twin pillars I referred to: to reassure the majority of the community of the security of their position based on the principle of consent, and to reassure the minority of their absolute entitlement to equality of treatment in Northern Ireland. It is that basis which offers the best hope for the people to come together against sectarian hatreds and terrorist violence which seek to divide the communities.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Does my right hon. Friend not understand that many of us feel that the sectarian murders and the intimidation, about which two Opposition Members have spoken, are the consequence of the Anglo-Irish Agreement? As my right hon. Friend has spoken, as Irish Ministers have spoken, of benefits to follow, how long will we have to wait for those benefits?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend knows better than anybody the history of violence in Ireland. The suggestion that sectarian killings have started since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement ignores the fact that these have tragically defaced the face of Ireland for far too long. It does not do my hon. Friend credit, in view of the respect that I have for him and for his knowledge, for example, of the security situation, for him to suggest that there can be an overnight or instant improvement. He knows, and his knowledge makes it unavoidable for him to recognise this, that it will take time to get improvements in co-operation and trust between the security forces in the North and the South if we are to get that genuine improvement in security.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: What does the Secretary of State regard as the prospect for the European convention against terrorism, the ratification of which was one of the promises that accompanied the making of the agreement?

Mr. King: A debate is taking place in the Dail, the outcome of which will be significant in terms of the further progress of that ratification. I very much hope that it will go forward shortly and that we get it established. The Taoiseach and the Irish Government have made clear their commitment to do just that.

Mr. Stanbrook: Do the Government accept that the Anglo-Irish Agreement will automatically lapse on the election of a new Government in Ireland unless that Government positively accept the agreement?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend is absolutely plumb wrong. I do not know from where he gets that idea, but the agreement stands, and it is binding on successive Irish Governments, as it is binding on successive British Governments, until and unless such time as, after review, any changes might be made. My hon. Friend may have better lawyers than I have, but my advice is the opposite to the view that he appears to hold.

Mr. Mallon: I am reluctant to draw conclusions from the unfortunate deaths of people in Northern Ireland, but I feel it necessary, in the light of the previous question, to ask the Secretary of State to confirm that there have been 56 fatalities as a result of paramilitary activities in the year subsequent to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, compared to 216 in the year subsequent to the signing of the Sunningdale agreement. Will he further confirm that of the 37 people who were not members of the security forces or the Provisional IRA who were killed in that period, the majority were killed by Loyalist paramilitary groupings and that their deaths had no border connection whatsoever?

Mr. King: I can confirm those figures. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that they are tragically high and that the House will share that view. The reality is, sadly, that the number of deaths in Northern Ireland can often be almost an accident on the margin. In other words, some incidents that could be serious and lead to a serious loss of life can sometimes be prevented. By itself, that is not necessarily the sole indicator of the level of violence.

I take a serious view of, and do not underrate, the problem. I accept that the level of violence is higher than it was last year, but I recognise that this is part of the determined efforts by the two parts of the community deliberately to seek to exploit the situation. I am under no illusion but that the IRA is deliberately enhancing its campaign of violence because it fears the agreement and is seeking to excite Loyalist opposition, and the Loyalist extremists are themselves guilty of a number of serious crimes.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a growing sense of despair and frustration among many ordinary and decent Unionists at the intransigence of their elected representatives? Will he clearly warn those people who are toying with the prospect of putting the bully boys on to the streets of Belfast on the anniversary of the Hillsborough agreement that they will be worthy only of the contempt of the people whom they claim to represent?

Mr. King: I share the real concern felt about some of the methods of opposition exercised by some people in their hostility to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I have made clear my support and belief in the Union. I believe that the Union is made more secure by the recognition of the principle of consent, that the Union cannot be affected against the wishes of a majority in Northern Ireland, and that that is accepted in the Republic as well as in the United Kingdom. My worry about the tactics being employed by some is that the threat to the Union will come more from the misguided antics of some who call themselves Loyalists than from any possible implied threat from the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Meadowcroft: What evidence does the Secretary of State have that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is gaining greater acceptance among the people of Northern Ireland?

Mr. King: I recognise that the agreement has not obviously commanded acceptance or enthusiasm among the majority community. However, the minority community recognises the determined effort which is being made, which was part of the purpose of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to ensure that their rights and entitlements are recognised and appreciated and that there is a proper opportunity for their views to be heard. That is understood and appreciated. I accept that there is a need for a much better understanding with the Unionist community about the merits and advantages which can flow for it out of the agreement. The present difficulty is that we cannot seek to examine the fears and concerns of people who are not prepared to talk and who are not—with one exception—even prepared to debate the issues in this sovereign Chamber of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archer: With reference to the right hon. Gentleman's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), does he agree that the best way to fulfil the expectations of those who welcomed the agreement because they thought it would provide redress for some of their problems, and to allay the fears of those who see the agreement as sinister, would be to demonstrate that the agreement is intended to make practical contributions to bread and butter issues? People have to eat, whatever their sectarian affiliations. Should not sensible ideas for economic co-operation now be appearing?

Mr. King: I am certainly anxious to see how, in a number of areas, we can develop such matters. For example, the hon. Gentleman will note that I referred to economic and transport issues. Transport costs is an issue which is common to the whole of the island of Ireland in terms of being competitive in world markets. There must be an efficient transport system across the Irish sea. Developments in this and other areas are being closely examined at present. We are considering both sea and air links.

USA (Extradition Treaty)

3. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress in the United States of America resulting from his discussions there concerning extradition of Irish Republican Army suspects wanted by the police in the United Kingdom.

Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Nicholas Scott): On 17 July the United States Senate approved the United States-United Kingdom supplementary extradition treaty by an overwhelming majority. This is an important step forward in our mutual fight against the evils of terrorism. Orders to enable the supplementary treaty to be ratified will shortly be brought before the House.

Mr. Adley: Does my hon. Friend agree that this is a matter for congratulation for the Administrations on both sides of the Atlantic? Is this success not epitomised by the extradition to this country of William Quinn? Can my hon. Friend confirm that this is the first time that a terrorist suspect has been extradited to this country? Will my hon. Friend please make sure that good care is taken of the documentation and administration so that the police work on both sides of the Atlantic is not frustrated?

Mr. Scott: I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that he sought in the last part of his question. I am sure that the House will welcome the vote in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and in the full Senate, where the treaty attracted widespread and bipartisan support. The House should recognise that the passage of the supplementary treaty demonstrates the value of the very closest bilateral and multilateral co-operation in the fight against terrorism. I welcome the fact that that is going beyond the transatlantic concept. Wider co-operation will improve everyone's chances of defeating terrorism in the long run.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend welcome the co-operation of the Dutch authorities in their moves towards the extradition of MacFarland and Kelly, the two prisoners who excaped from the Maze prison?

Mr. Scott: The whole House will welcome the decision of the Dutch courts. The judgment is complex and we are studying it very carefully. Co-operation with the Dutch authorities in this matter has been excellent, and they have made a considerable contribution towards improving international co-operation against terrorism.

Security

4. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on security in Northern Ireland.

9. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation within the Province.

Mr. Tom King: Since I last answered questions in the House on 3 July, 16 civilians and nine members of the security forces have died in incidents arising from the security situation. But for the courage and dedication of members of the security forces, and the public-spirited actions of a number of civilians, these tragic totals would have been even greater.

The unstinting efforts of the security forces continue to achieve results. So far this year 521 people have been charged with serious offences and 170 weapons, 15,700 rounds of ammunition, and 3,400 lb of explosives have been recovered.

Mr. Proctor: As co-chairman of the Anglo-Irish Conference, will my right hon. Friend say whether there is any validity in Dr. FitzGerald's claim that evidence to have been given against alleged terrorists by Angela Whorisky was withdrawn by the Director of Public Prosecutions because of representations that Dr. FitzGerald had made in the Anglo-Irish Conference? Will he confirm that Angela Whorisky did not herself withdraw any evidence and that the Irish Republic has now been given the right to interfere in the judicial proceedings of Northern Ireland?

Mr. King: In response to my hon. Friend's last point, of course not. Certainly no Irish Minister or the Taoiseach would dream of claiming any such thing. Any individual case is a matter for the Law Officers and the prosecuting authorities. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has issued a statement in this connection.

Mr. McNamara: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the figures that his Department gave me about increases in violence arising in the 11 months after the signing of the Anglo-Irish accord compared with the figures for violence in the 12 months before the Anglo-Irish accord show that, apart from injuries, there has been no real significant increase and that there has been a marked decrease in the number of shootings and bombings? Therefore, in spite of the hysteria from the extreme Provisionals and the extreme Unionists, one is able to say that there has been no real material worsening of the security position as a result of the accord and that there has been a marked improvement in respect of the finding of bombs, caches and so on.

Mr. King: As is well known, the figure for killings is about the same this year as it was for the whole of last year, but, against that, it is very much lower than some years ago. I take no comfort from that, because I know that the whole House will share my view that the figures are far too high. The hon. Gentleman is right about the success of the security forces. The House may be aware of the recovery of some very dangerous weapons indeed only in recent days. There has also been success in recovering a certain amount of explosives and weapons.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the big increase in violence since the Anglo-Irish Agreement has been in the number of sectarian assassinations by Loyalist paramilitaries? On the general security situation, what information is he willing to share with us about links between elected Loyalist politicians who are represented in this House and those paramilitary organisations? For example, at the Bingham funeral of a man who was buried with full UVF paraphernalia on his coffin, members of the Democratic Unionist party had called at his house and openly shown support for that kind of paramilitary activity. When will the right hon. Gentleman denounce that as even handedly as he denounces Sinn Fein politicians?

Mr. King: I have done that on a number of occasions. The hon. Lady is fair and she will know that on previous occasions I have deplored the fact that there are any hon. Members in this House who have any association whatsoever with paramilitary activities. I have made that absolutely clear. The House will be aware that there have been a number of serious incidents, including a number of serious paramilitary incidents and incitement to sectarian violence. Although there has been such an increase, there is no question but that the IRA views the Anglo-Irish Agreement as a great threat to its activities. The co-operation of the British and Irish Governments in this connection is a threat to the IRA. There is no doubt that it is seeking to escalate violence and to destroy the agreement. Some people try to oppose the agreement because they do not understand what it means. The IRA is seeking to oppose the agreement because it understands all too well what it means.

Marches

7. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the policing of marches in the Province during the summer months.

Mr. Scott: I am sure the whole House will recognise that the Royal Ulster Constabulary's skilful and highly professional handling of the very large number of marches during what was undoubtedly a tense period in the Province proved very successful. I am sure the House would wish to congratulate it on its efforts, which, coupled with the restraint and good sense of the overwhelming majority of the community, ensured that almost all parades passed off without serious incident.

Mr. Bruinvels: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his new position. Although I recognise that there is a need for a large number of these marches, I am sure my hon. Friend would agree that there has been a tremendous strain on the police forces throughout the summer. They have not been helped by the "Troops out of Northern Ireland" group campaigning in this country, and Sinn Fein councillors, both in Northern Ireland and in some areas of Britain, doing their best to undermine what is happening.

Does my hon. Friend agree that the police need everyone's support? There should be far better co-operation over the arrangements for future marches. The number of marches should be limited to ensure that the Province is adequately policed throughout the summer and in other months.

Mr. Scott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. I agree very much with the thrust of his

questions. We ought to bear in mind that rather more than 2,000 parades took place in Northern Ireland during the marching season, and that only 70 resulted in any sort of disorder. I very much agree that the need to police these parades, especially when there is a threat of violence, diverts police resources from their main task of maintaining law and order and their continuing battle against terrorism. I urge everyone to co-operate as fully as possible with the police in these matters.

Mr. Duffy: Does the Minister agree that the job of policing such sensitively and provocatively routed marches into Catholic areas as took place in Portadown in July would be eased if the RUC's responsible approach to the parade had been matched by that of the organisers? Some of the Unionist Members who normally sit on the Bench to my left, notably the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) publicly endorsed at that time a well-known troublemaker, Mr. Seawright, who believes that all Catholics should be incinerated, even though the RUC felt obliged to ban him from that parade.

Mr. Scott: It is incumbent upon everyone in Northern Ireland involved in these types of parades to co-operate fully with the police. I hope that we can move towards a situation in Northern Ireland where it is accepted that people do not march in areas where they are not welcome. That is a principle we should seek to estabiish. It would also be helpful to the police if those who organise Republican marches in Northern Ireland would give proper notice of them and co-operate with the police.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

8. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had with representatives of policial parties in Northen Ireland concerning the form and progress of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I and my hon. Friend the Minister of State have met the leaders of the Social Democratic and Labour party and the Alliance party for that purpose on a number of occasions. As I have repeatedly said, we should like to have discussions with representatives of Unionist parties too, but unfortunately they have not yet felt able to do so.

Mr. Maclennan: In answer to an earlier question the Secretary of State spoke of progress on human rights being made under the agreement with the Irish Government. Has he thought it right to put forward the proposals of the Official Unionists that there should be a Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland, or the proposal of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights that the European convention on human rights should be incorporated into the law of the land to give a remedy in our courts?

Mr. King: We have made it clear that we see real difficulties about a Bill of Rights, because inevitably it would involve the whole of the United Kingdom, with all the problems that that might entail, and the connected issues, which have often been debated. At the most recent conference we said that it might be helpful to have a joint declaration on human righs, which might be an affirmation by both Governments. The matter is being studied at present.

Mr. Gow: Has my right hon. Friend seen the text of the speech made by Mr. Charles Haughey at Bodenstown on the 12th of this month, in which he said that in the 12 months since the Anglo-Irish Agreement had been signed the position of Nationalists in the North had seriously worsened? In the discussions to which my right hon. Friend has just referred, have any representations of the sort made by Mr. Charles Haughey been made by the SDLP and other parties in the North?

Mr. King: No, Sir. I have seen Mr. Charles Haughey's comments as well as the comments of many Nationalists, who clearly do not share that view.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that no self-respecting Member of this House would accept a situation in which the representation of the rights and interests of a section of his constituents is vested by international treaty in a foreign power?

Mr. King: That is simply not true, if I may say so to the right hon. Gentleman, whom I would have expected to be more accurate in the matter. To imply that those rights and interests are vested without the opportunity to put forward views, something which in no way deprives others of the opportunity to put forward views — as if the rights had been permanently transferred — is total distortion and an incorrect interpretation of that agreement.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Can my right hon. Friend say whether, in the event of a change of Government in the Republic, the Anglo-Irish Agreement could be renegotiated and, if so, whether in that process all the political parties in the North could be included in the negotiation?

Mr. King: The agreement itself provides for the opportunity for review, which would be after three years, or earlier at the request of either party. Obviously any review would be conducted between Governments, but, as I have made clear, I would envisage the opportunity to be there for anybody who wished to do so to put forward any views that he liked. That opportunity exists now, and I am sorry that the Unionist party has not felt able to take advantage of it.

Security

10. **Mr. McNamara** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will next be meeting the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary to discuss security matters.

Mr. Tom King: I have regular meetings with the Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding in Northern Ireland to discuss policy issues of common concern in the security field. It is not my practice to give details of the timing of those meetings.

Mr. McNamara: Can the Secretary of State inform the House whether at those meetings he discussed with the Chief Constable the orders given to special branches of the RUC about a shoot-to-kill policy in border areas, orders given to members of the RUC to lie at public trials, orders given to members of the RUC to make incursions into the territory of the Republic of Ireland, or the decision of the Chief Constable to refuse to give Mr. Stalker either the tape or transcript of the tape of what took place in the shootings in that barn? Will the right hon. Gentleman bear

in mind that even though criminal actions may be brought against individuals on that matter, it does not exonerate the Government from coming to the House and giving a full, frank statement of all that occurred when those matters are outwith particular circumstances in Northern Ireland but concern the rule of law in the whole kingdom?

Mr. King: The hon. Member asks me about meetings with the Chief Constable. There is a specific question on the Order Paper relating to the Sampson-Stalker report, which will be dealt with shortly.

Mr. McQuarrie: When my right hon. Friend meets the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, will he take the opportunity to look at the files on security in past years with a view to gaining information for the future with particular reference to the comments that have been attributed to the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) in respect of the assassination of Airey Neave and the right hon. Gentleman's comment that outside forces were perhaps responsible for that assassination?

Mr. King: The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) will have to answer for his own statements. All I would say is that I know that this is not the first time that he has sought to advance this particular conspiracy theory.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When the Secretary of State next meets the Chief Constable, will he update him on the work that is being done both in his Department and in the Home Department relating to the availability of kidnap insurance? Inquiries are taking place, but what has happened during the parliamentary recess? We were told that some initiative would be taken this year. Where are we in the debate?

Mr. King: As the hon. Gentleman knows, this is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and I should be grateful if he would address his question to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Archer: Will the right hon. Gentleman, with his usual fairness, agree that the Opposition have been at pains throughout the Stalker episode not to overdramatise it? But has there not been an accumulation in responsible newspapers of allegations which, if they are true, cannot be condoned by the authorities of a civilised country and which, if they are false, ought to be laid to rest? In view of the call from the National Council for Civil Liberties and Amnesty International for a full inquiry, is it not clear that to ignore the situation will not make it go away? Until the poison is removed, must it not continue to fester?

Mr. King: In view of the seriousness of the point that has been raised, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the House will forgive me if I give perhaps a rather fuller reply to the question of the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

I am informed that the first part of the report of the inquiry that was begun by Mr. Stalker and completed by Mr. Sampson was submitted by the latter to the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary yesterday. The Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland has also received a copy. I understand that this part of the report covers the incident on 24 November 1982 in which Mr. Michael Tighe was shot dead. Also, I understand that Mr. Sampson hopes to submit as soon as possible a second part, which will address the associated issues connected with all the cases that are under investigation. As is the usual practice with police reports covering criminal investigations, it will not be published. On the basis of Mr. Sampson's report, along with any comments from the Chief Constable, the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland will decide what directions to give as to criminal proceedings.

The Attorney-General has requested the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland to inform him fully with regard to the facts reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions and to consult the Attorney-General before any directions are given. An additional section of Mr. Sampson's report will deal with matters concerning the management of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

I propose to make a statement to the House on these aspects at the earliest opportunity. It will, however, be understood that I have no role in the conduct of criminal proceedings, nor would it be appropriate for any comments to be made upon the individual investigations involved until all such proceedings are completed.

Mr. Mallon: Will the Secretary of State confirm that when the three incidents took place, which are now known as the shoot-to-kill incidents that were investigated by Mr. Stalker and Mr. Sampson, the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland was absent from Northern Ireland during two of those incidents, although the situation was very tense, and that during all three incidents the head of the CID in Northern Ireland was absent from Northern Ireland? Will the Secretary of State inform the House of where the ultimate responsibility lies when something goes terribly wrong in a police service that is under a cloud of conspiracy such as this?

Mr. King: The House will know, as I sought to make clear in my earlier reply, that I cannot comment on the criminal or disciplinary aspects of this inquiry. I have made it clear to the House that the first section of Mr. Sampson's report was delivered yesterday to the Chief Constable, with a copy to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland. That is the first step. I have also made clear the action that I will seek to take to keep the House informed on these matters of public interest.

Community Groups

11. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current status of funding of community groups previously funded by the Belfast city council; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Action by a Government-appointed commissioner on 8 October released city council funds to community groups in Belfast for the rest of the current financial year. I regret that this action became necessary as a result of the non-co-operative attitude of a majority of the Unionist councillors on Belfast city council.

Mr. Flannery: Is it not a fact that there are about 40 of those voluntary community groups and that the Government knew in advance that the Unionists would refuse to service people because of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and that people are losing their jobs in those groups? Is it not a fact also that the Government knew well in advance that the money had run out, yet they were tardy in giving money to those groups? May we have an assurance that that will not occur again?

Dr. Mawhinney: No, I could not accept that. The responsibility for funding such groups remains with the Belfast city council. Therefore, the Government could not act until it became clear, after the end of September, that the council was not going to act. I can confirm that the action of the Commission on Housing has involved authorising running costs for 41 groups involving grants totalling £395,815.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Neil Thorne** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. Following Questions in the House I shall be going to sign the book of condolence opened for President Machel of Mozambique.

Mr. Thorne: Will my right hon. Friend find time to reaffirm her Government's commitment to abhorring violence in Northern Ireland and to condemn the action of three local authorities in London which have entertained Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, this week—Haringey on Monday, Lambeth on Tuesday and Hackney last night, all of which, needless to say, are Labour-controlled local authorities?

The Prime Minister: We utterly condemn violence in Northern Ireland and do everything we can do to eradicate it. I join my hon. Friend in completely deploring invitations to any organisation which supports or perpetrates violence and therefore gives a platform to those who advocate violence. We think that that is completely wrong, and I agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Kinnock: I firmly associate myself with the view that the Prime Minister expressed concerning violence in pursuit of all ends, including political ends, and say that those who have the immense dishonesty to fight with a ballot box in one hand and a rifle in the other have no place in democratic politics.

While this month's balance of payments statistics show some welcome improvement on last month's disastrous figures, they still reveal that we have been in deficit this year for the first time since we started to receive oil money, and they further record manufacturing trade figures that are the worst in all history. Does the Prime Minister really think that she can combat that grave position by raising interest rates, raising industrial costs and increasing home payments, since that appears to be the only economic policy she has?

The Prime Minister: Certainly the balance of trade figures published today are better than those for last month. The right hon. Gentleman will have noticed that exports have risen, which is good. One of the problems of securing a good balance of payments, especially on current account, is that of keeping unit costs down. The biggest aggravating factor for unit costs is unit wage costs, which, in this country, are rising faster than elsewhere. That is a matter to which I hope the right hon. Gentleman and the trade unions will give their attention and not seek to get more out in wages than is put in in productivity.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister announcing her intention to establish some form of incomes control policy, contrary to everything that she has ever said, or will she concentrate on the basic causes of our loss of 27 per cent. in competitiveness over the past seven years, which have been the restrictions on demand and the massive costs that she has imposed on industry by a permanent policy of high interest rates?

The Prime Minister: How does the right hon. Gentleman explain the first part of his question when he then says that there are restrictions on demand? There are greatly increased imports because there are no restrictions on imports.

Q2. **Mr. Amess** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Amess: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the rate support grant settlement is such that those local authorities which manage their affairs prudently will be able to keep any rate increases low? Will she also join me in welcoming the fact that the Labour party has just lost control of Basildon district council because of the resignation of Labour councillors concerned about imprudent spending and the political posturing of local authorities such as Brent, Haringey, Hackney and Lambeth?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, this year's rate support grant settlement is generous and he will be well aware that the Local Authority Audit Commission has given examples of ways of making local authorities much more efficient. I congratulate Basildon on what has happened and I am sure that it will be beneficial to all ratepayers.

Mr. Steel: Is the Prime Minister aware that the Government's own report — *[Interruption]* — to the regional development commissioner of the European Commission stated clearly that the prospects for reducing unemployment were "frighteningly bleak"? In view of that, how can she continue to announce cuts in railway, local authority and housing expenditure in the very areas of the country which the report ackowledges need extra help?

The Prime Minister: With regard to the figures in the European regional development fund application, the unemployment totals on which the report is based are taken from the 1986 public expenditure White Paper. They are assumptions, not forecasts or predictions, and they follow the same practice as that adopted by the Labour Government. Figures for the individual regions assume that the existing regional pattern of unemployment continues. As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, the Government's record on infrastructure expenditure is far better than that of the Government whom he supported.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Will the Prime Minister explain the Government's monetary policy? The City of London does not understand it, financial commentators do not understand it and now even the Governor of the Bank of England does not seem to understand it. Will she explain it?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman will give me longer than I have at Question Time, I will do so

gladly. I do not think that other people are as ignorant as he seems to think. The monetary policy is to keep downward pressure on inflation. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that inflation is far lower than any level that his Government ever managed to achieve.

Q3. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. McCurley: Following my right hon. Friend's successful visit to Barrow and Furness in September, where she laid down the keel for the new submarine for Trident, can she reaffirm the Government's commitment to a nuclear defence policy with Trident as its base? Would she care to comment on the fact that no amount of games down on the farm with Roget's Thesaurus can remedy a weak and discredited alliance policy?

The Prime Minister: I reaffirm our independent nuclear deterrent policy and that Trident will come into operation. The first submarine is now being built at Vickers yard in Barrow and Furness. I agree with my hon. Friend about the policies of certain other parties. I do not believe that the British people will take seriously a political party which, on a subject as important as the British deterrent, claims that it is committed to maintaining it, but cannot agree on how to do so.

Mr. Chris Smith: Can the Prime Minister tell us, in relation to her earlier answer on the regional report to the EEC, what precisely is the difference between an assumption and a forecast or prediction?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the public expenditure surveys he will see that we never make forecasts for successive years. We do the best that we can with the immediately following year and then, in the years after that, the present figure automatically continues. That has been the practice and it was first announced in 1978 by the Government whom the hon. Member supported.

Mr. Cormack: Will my right hon. friend seek an opportunity, today if possible, to see the remarkably moving and accurate film "Cry Hungary" which the BBC screened last night? Is this not an appropriate moment to remind people throughout the free world that no country under the domination of the Soviet Union has had the opportunity to opt even for neutrality?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. We should all recall that, I believe, 30 years ago today, the Soviet tanks rolled in and crushed the attempts of the Hungarian people to gain for themselves some greater freedom. I hope that we shall remember it vividly, be grateful for our liberty and be determined to defend it, as this Government are.

Q4. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wareing: The right hon. Lady will appreciate that one of the factors causing a deficit in our balance of payments is Britain's loss in trade in terms of shipping. In 1979, when the right hon. Lady became Prime Minister, we had 1,200 vessels, and now we are down to about 600. At that time we had 80,000 seafaring jobs and now we are down to 40,000. Will the right hon. Lady now tell us what she and her Government will do about that?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware that one of the problems with shipbuilding the world over is that every country has given shipbuilding so many subsidies—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shipping."] I will come on to shipping. There have been so many subsidies that there are now two years' supplies of ships swinging on the buoys. With regard to shipping, one of the problems is that the National Union of Seamen has priced itself out of the market—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Gentlemen always react in the same way to the truth. The NUS has priced itself out of employment. Consequently, the work has gone elsewhere, and that is a tragedy, I agree. The remedy lies in its hands.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend share my concern for my constituent, Miss Maureen McGoldrick, and the children in her care in a Brent school? The governors of the school have found her totally innocent of accusations of racism, as has the High Court, yet Brent Labour council insists on persecuting her, to the great detriment of her school, the children and their parents.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his point effectively. I believe I am right in saying that an appeal has been entered and, therefore, I am circumscribed in what I can say.

Q8. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago and have given several times since.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Prime Minister recall that when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science she made a series of speeches in favour of nursery education? For almost 10 years after that nursery education in Britain was steadily expanded. It now appears that the Government have abandoned all plans to improve Britain's nursery education. What steps will she take to discuss with Ministers with responsibility for education ways in which we can try to achieve the same sort of nursery provision as the French?

The Prime Minister: I am so pleased that the hon. Gentleman managed to get his question in. I am very keen on nursery education. Since January 1979 the proportion of three and four-year-olds at school has increased from 37 to 43 per cent. in January 1986.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Has my right hon. Friend seen the Labour party's new booklet about public investment? It is on sale at some newsagents, but, not surprisingly, it has failed to make the bestseller list——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister can only reply to questions for which she has responsibility.

Mr. Wardle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Labour party—*[Interruption.]*—is as bereft of sound financial policies in 1986 as it was in 1976?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Is the Prime Minister aware that our merchant fleet has shrunk because, unlike the British

Government, which is indifferent, our competitors assist their merchant navies? If the right hon. Lady is not aware of the consequences for trade and industry, will she at least bear in mind what will happen to the defence of this country if our Merchant Navy is not given assistance?

The Prime Minister: Obviously we are considering that very carefully, but the main problem is that the National Union of Seamen has demanded salaries and restrictive practices that have priced its members out of British shipping. That is very damaging for our shipping.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, which arises out of questions.

Mr. Speaker: I will hear it after the private notice question.

NATO Ministers (Meeting)

3.32 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the NATO Ministers' meeting held at Gleneagles.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): At the NATO nuclear planning group meeting at Gleneagles on 21 and 22 October, NATO Defence Ministers had wide-ranging discussions on arms control and defence matters.

The Ministers extended their warm appreciation to the President of the United States on his conduct of the talks at Reykjavik and fully endorsed his bold attempt to seek far-reaching arms control agreements with the Soviet Union. They expressed their continued support for the efforts of the United States and the United Kingdom to maintain the effectiveness and credibility of their nuclear deterrent capabilities.

The Ministers remain deeply concerned about continuing Soviet efforts to upgrade and expand their military capabilities across the board. They noted with particular concern Soviet efforts involving the full range of strategic forces, shorter and longer range intermediate nuclear forces, and short-range nuclear forces, including artillery. They also noted with concern the major Soviet effort in continuing improvements in strategic and tactical anti-missile systems.

The Ministers reviewed a number of issues and nuclear-related programmes and reconfirmed our policy and planning related to NATO's nuclear forces. They agreed that both the force structure itself and the conceptual planning underpinning it are essential components for maintaining a credible deterrent posture.

A copy of the official communiqué of the Gleneagles meeting has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Davies: I thank the Minister for his reply. However, we think it very remiss of the Secretary of State not to answer, or come to the House to explain the consequences of a very important meeting. Moreover, the Minister did not volunteer a statement. We had to drag a statement out of Ministers by means of a private notice question.

Will the Minister answer three questions? First, on intermediate missiles, will he confirm that the Government still fully support the zero option? It was, I believe, agreed by NATO five years ago at Gleneagles and means that, provided that the Russians remove all their SS20s from Europe, NATO will remove all cruise and Pershing 2 missiles. Will the Minister assure the House that there will be no back sliding on the zero option or an attempt to link it with short-range missiles in central Europe?

Secondly, will the Minister tell us whether the Government fully support the offer made by President Reagan at Reykjavik to eliminate all strategic nuclear weapons within 10 years? As the Government apparently had a say in the negotiating brief for Reykjavik, I take it that they fully support that offer.

Thirdly, on the SDI and the anti-ballistic missile treaty, will the Minister tell us which interpretation the Government support? Do they say that only laboratory research is allowable under the treaty or do they believe that the testing of laser beams and shooting down rockets with rockets in the atmosphere is allowed under the treaty?

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State much regrets that he is not able to make the statement in person, but he has a long-standing official commitment in Barrow in Furness—*[Interruption.]* On this side of the House we welcome ministerial attention in Barrow in Furness.

As for not volunteering a statement, the right hon. Member of Llanelli (Mr. Davies) will know that it has been normal practice over a considerable period to place copies of official communiqués in the Library.

I can certainly confirm that it is the Government's position that we should seek the INF zero option or equal numbers above zero, subject, of course, to effective verification procedures and the necessary agreement on collateral constraints on the shorter-range systems.

On the right hon. Gentleman's second question about the elimination of strategic nuclear weapons, the Government's position is as we have always stated it. There is obviously a direct relationship between major reductions in strategic nuclear forces and conventional forces and it is essential that the two are seen together.

On the right hon. Gentleman's point about the ABM, treaty, he will be aware that we are not a party to that treaty, but the Government's position is that there should be conformity with the ABM treaty.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Was it not formerly the position of the Soviet Union that an agreement on intermediate range nuclear forces in Europe could be made without its being linked to an agreement on the SDI? Has the Soviet Union changed that position? If so, is not that rather regrettable?

Mr. Stanley: It was our understanding that the Soviet Union had agreed to make an INF agreement free standing, but it appears to have gone back on that position at Reykjavik. We very much regret that fact and believe that we should strive to make a free-standing INF agreement.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): As Europe has every reason to be concerned about Soviet conventional superiority and about battlefield nuclear weapons, why do the Government not point out to President Reagan that it would be far better if the SDI were kept in a laboratory, especially as the Soviets are so concerned about SDI that they would be prepared to pay a much higher price to stop it and might be persuaded to include in that price the very reductions that are essential to Europe's security?

Mr. Stanley: I am sure that the hon. Member knows that the SDI is only a research programme and that it follows on the heels of a very extensive and long-standing research programme by the Soviet Union into ABM systems.

Mr. Reg Prentice (Daventry): May I press my right hon. Friend to say a little more about the zero option and suggest that at least in parallel with that option there should be a search for mutual reductions in shorter-range nuclear weapons and conventional weapons? Otherwise, there will seem to many of us to be much validity in the doubts attributed to General Rogers that we may become more vulnerable if intermediate weapons are removed without other reductions.

Mr. Stanley: I assure my right hon. Friend that, as I said in answer to a previous question, we are fully apprised of that point. It has been a long-standing element of the

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NATO position that agreement on long-range INF systems must be coupled with collateral constraints on shorter-range systems.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): May I draw the Minister's attention to a report in today's issue of *The Guardian* which says that his right hon. Friend said that if an INF deal could be achieved that would be fine? There is no mention of any linkages to the SS21s, SS22s, SS23s, or Scud or even short battlefield systems. The Minister has heard the anxiety expressed by his right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) and he murmured a qualification to my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies).

It is important that the House receives clarification about how conditional is the Secretary of State's position on the zero option. Is it really a zero option or are there further qualifications?

Mr. Stanley: I do not think I can add to what I have already said. It has been a long-standing position of the West that we should try to go for the zero option, but at the time when the zero option was made it was made clear that if it was not possible to negotiate zero-zero on both sides, it would be better to have equal numbers on both sides and reduce the large number of SS20 deployments which face the West.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would have been extremely unwise for President Reagan to give in on SDI, especially since the Russians have been making enormous progress in outer space with their longstay platforms and in the light of the point that he has made that the Russians are known to have carried out significant research in SDI?

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend's point is entirely valid. The American SDI research programme has to be seen in relation to the extensive and long-standing programme that has been conducted by the Soviet Union. If the American Administration had not persevered with the SDI research programme I doubt very much whether we would have under way the most comprehensive and radical arms control negotiations that have taken place for many years.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): Torpedoed by SDI.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Could we return to the important but unanswered third question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies)? Does the Minister's phrase "in conformity with the ABM treaty" mean that it is simply the interpretation of the Government's laboratory testing or, as my right hon. Friend says, is it laser rocket with laser rocket? Which is it? The Government surely have a view on that.

Mr. Stanley: The Government were not and are not a party to the ABM treaty and for that reason the detailed matter of interpretation is not a matter for this Administration. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh".] My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it clear that we attach great importance to the maintenance of the ABM treaty.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the United States SDI programme is a trump card in the hands of the West and that even the threat that the United States will overtake the Soviet SDI programme has brought the Soviets to the negotiating table for the first time in decades to talk seriously about disarmament? Does my right hon. Friend not also feel that President Reagan played that card correctly at Reykjavik by not yielding to the first offers from the Soviet Union and that the Soviets are likely to be back again with far more far-reaching and effective offers?

Mr. Stanley: I agree with the broad thrust of my hon. Friend's remarks. If the United States simply abandons this research programme it would set the arms control process back rather than take it forward.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Did the Ministers have before them the paper on general political guidelines and did they accept that paper? If they did, does that make it clear that decisions taken inside NATO, including those about disarmament and the acceptability of disarmament proposals, lie completely within the scope of the elected political leaders of NATO and not within the scope of the chiefs of staff?

Mr. Stanley: Yes, I can certainly give the hon. Gentleman the confirmation that he seeks. The updating of the general political guidelines has not meant any reduction whatever in political control.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Since the cruise missile programme remains an essential element of NATO defence, was there any discussion at the wide-ranging Gleneagles talks about the security of these missile sites? Secondly, does my right hon. Friend agree that the security of those sites is so important that responsibility for it should be a national rather than a local matter?

Mr. Stanley: I can certainly tell my hon. Friend that the security of nuclear weapons is regularly considered within NATO and is also considered by the Nuclear Planning Group. I appreciate my hon. Friend's anxiety about responsibility for that security and the local financial burden. I know that those are matters that he has pursued with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who has sought to make an equitable arrangement to ensure that local ratepayers do not face a particular burden as a result of the arrangement at Molesworth.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private notice question, and therefore an extension of Question Time. I shall take one more question from each side.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Does the Minister concede that one of the thrusts put by the United States for SDI was the fact that the Soviets were allegedly breaching the ABM treaty relating to radar equipment and so on? Therefore, the United States had an interpretation of that treaty.

Do the Government now accept that as it was wrong for the Soviets to breach the treaty, it would be more than equally wrong for the United States to do so by testing weapons in space? In view of the sympathy that some Opposition Members have expressed on our relationship with the French, will the right hon. Gentleman indicate whether the French are now willing to join the integrated command structure of NATO?

Mr. Stanley: I can certainly confirm that we would not wish the treaty to be breached. We are very much aware of the concern expressed by the United States about the Soviet violations.

On the hon. Gentleman's opening point, I must put it to him that the impetus behind the SDI stemmed not so much from concern about Soviet violations, but very much from an understanding of the scale, length and implications of a very long-standing intense Soviet research programme into trying to create a possible anti-ballistic missile system breakout.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Was the impact of the unilateral nuclear proposals of the Labour party on NATO strategy discussed?

Mr. Stanley: I do not believe that such party political matters were discussed in that forum. However, as my hon. Friend is well aware, there is very widespread concern in many NATO countries about the serious way in which the official policies of the Opposition would undermine NATO.

Business of the House

3.47 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 27 OCTOBER — Until seven o'clock Opposition Day (18th Allotted Day, 2nd part). There will be a debate on a motion on regional policy in the names of the leaders of the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru.

Motions relating to the statements of changes in immigration rules (Cmnd. 9914 and House of Commons Paper No. 584).

TUESDAY 28 OCTOBER — Until seven o'clock, motion on the Deacons (Ordination of Women) Measure.

Motion on the British Railways Board (Increase of Compensation) Order.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 29 OCTOBER — There will be a debate on Westland plc on a motion for the Adjournment of the House. Details of relevant documents will be given in the *Official Report*.

Afterwards, there will be a debate on EC document 4554/79 relating to commercial agents. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 30 OCTOBER AND FRIDAY 31 OCTOBER — Consideration of any Lords amendments which may be received to the Financial Services Bill.

MONDAY 3 NOVEMBER — Consideration of any Lords amendments which may be received to the Housing and Planning Bill.

[Relevant documents debate on 29 October: Third report from the Defence Committee 1985-86 — "The Defence Implications of the Future of Westland plc" — House of Commons Paper No. 518, published on Thursday 24 July; fourth report from the Defence Committee 1985-86 — "Westland plc: The Government's Decision Making" — House of Commons paper No. 519, published on Thursday 24 July; Government response to the third and fourth reports from the Defence Committee Session 1985-86, HC 518 and 519, Cmnd. 9916, published on Monday 13 October.

Debate on Wednesday 29 October; European Document 4554/79, "Self employed commercial agents"; reports of European Legislation Committee HC 10-xx (1978-79) para. 10, HC 21-xxv (1985-86) para. 1.]

Mr. Kinnock: Next Monday the House will have the opportunity to debate the changes in immigration rules, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) rightly described as humiliating for visitors and shaming for this country's reputation. The wholly inadequate time that the Government have allocated to debate these serious matters has impelled us to allocate Opposition time as a matter of duty. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that in that debate it will be in order for hon. Members to raise the matter of representation to the Home Secretary on individual cases?

Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that a full statement is made to the House about the Government's assessment of the outcome of the superpowers meeting in

[Mr. Kinnock]

Reykjavik and its subsequent ramifications for international arms reduction and control? A statement on the summit was made in the House of Lords on 15 October. However, we have still not heard anything directly or formally on the matter in the House of Commons. I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman would be willing to repair that deficiency.

The rise in interest rates, which has been followed by rises in mortgage rates, is obviously bad news for people and businesses in this country. Is there to be a statement to the House on the matter or is the Chancellor too afraid to face the House with the consequence of his own policies?

Mr. Biffen: The Chancellor will be making an autumn statement and the matters could arise on that.

Mr. Kinnock: It may be deep winter by then, John.

Mr. Biffen: I must not be tempted, especially this soon after our return, to make any incautious comment.

We might look at the Reykjavik meeting through the usual channels. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will appreciate that it was a meeting of the greatest significance and also one of some fading memory.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the right hon. Gentleman for the co-operation that has been afforded over time for the debate next Monday on immigration rules. It is my judgment, clearly subject to that of the Chair, that it should be perfectly possibly to deal with the issue of Members' representations.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is my right hon. Friend suggesting that he wants to fit a second order in on Tuesday afternoon before 7 o'clock after the Deacons (Ordination of Women) Measure? If so, I think that he should take some soundings, because he is likely to find that order more controversial than he might have thought.

Mr. Biffen: Yes, and I gather that the Church militant might become controversial. The normal interpretation of the opaque language used on these occasions is that the motion on the British Railways Board (Increase of Compensation) Order is likely to arise at 10 o'clock.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Following the publication of the Department of Trade and Industry's regional development programme, does the Leader of the House agree that it is time that there was a series of debates looking at the problems of those regions, especially the economic black spots? Given that there is high crime, high unemployment and bad housing in the county of Merseyside, does he not agree that an early debate on the problems there is required?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate that there will be much interest in Merseyside over the next two or three weeks, even more than traditionally. The hon. Gentleman will understand that we will be discussing regional policy in the Scottish and Welsh context on Monday, which those concerned would say was a national situation, and I am sure that the House will want to turn to the wider issues. There really is no available Government time before the prorogation.

Sir Gerard Vaughan (Reading, East): Will my right hon. Friend consider providing time for a short debate on the problem of AIDS?

Mr. Biffen: Clearly, my hon. Friend raises a matter of growing concern and I am sure that there will be anxiety that the matter should be debated. There is no possibility of it being debated before prorogation, but perhaps it is something we can come back to in the next Session.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Will the Leader of the House allow us to have an early debate on the importance of the memorandum of understanding governing the transfer of the results of industrial research from Britain to the United States under the strategic defence initiative? Is he aware that I have in my possession a letter signed by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to a leading British company which, if it is true —I hope that the Leader of the House will say today whether it is true—suggests that the Government are soliciting British companies to transfer the results of their secret long-term research to the Americans? That amounts to industrial espionage, industrial sabotage, and, indeed, industrial treachery.

Mr. Biffen: Since this Administration have been accused of industrial sabotage, espionage and treachery, clearly it is a matter that deeply exercises the hon. Gentleman. The best way that I can help, in the first instance, is to have the matter referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): My right hon. friend will be aware that the consultation paper on family courts issued earlier this year has provoked debate among a wide variety of organisations and individuals. Before the Government consider their response to the consultation paper, would it not be appropriate for the House to have an opportunity to discuss it?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of the point, and my hon. Friend will recollect that it is not the first time that he has pressed this view on me. I am sympathetic to his argument, but there is no time before prorogation.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House arrange an early debate on the important question of the involvement of the Government, and their interference, with the broadcasting authorities? Will he ensure that if we have such a debate he will mention the matter to the chairmen of the Tory party, both past and present, so that they can explain their role in the recent events surrounding the BBC in particular, and in other matters, including the "Panorama" case?

Perhaps the Leader of the House could also persuade the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) to come to the debate and explain what role he played in dealing with Abdul Shamji, when he said that he had not been to a meeting when it was apparent that he had? Perhaps he can explain to the House just how much he, as chairman of the Tory Small Business Bureau, played in providing Shamji with sufficient moneys, in the great fiddle at the expense of Johnson Matthey bank and subsequently the taxpayer. Perhaps the Prime Minister can explain her friendship with Abdul Shamji, and so can all the other Tories who assisted him to fiddle the taxpayer right after the Johnson Matthey bank fiasco. As a result of all that, perhaps the Tory party will pay that money back.

Mr. Biffen: I am so glad that the long recess has done nothing to alter the hon. Gentleman's character.

Mr. Skinner: Answer the question.

Mr. Biffen: It is a serious question and the answer is that there is no time for a debate next week. If there were, these wild allegations would be even less convincing the longer that they proceeded.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the Stroud area there has been for a long time the strange and distressing existence of——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): A Member of Parliament.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: —meningitis. I am going on for a long time longer too. This disease causes a great deal of distress and anxiety, especially to mothers of small children, and we do not know much about it. Will my right hon. Friend ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services whether anything more than is being done can be done to counteract this great anxiety?

Mr. Biffen: I am aware of the points that have been raised by my hon. Friend; they have been given considerable national publicity. I can well understand the deep concern in his constituency about this matter. I shall take up the matter with my right hon. Friend, as has been requested.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Will it be possible, on Monday 3 November, in the debate on the Lords amendments to the Housing and Planning Bill, to debate the Government's slow but consistent erosion of positive planning? Will we be able to debate the Government's use of special development orders, for instance, to enable a scrap shredder to be sited in my constituency next to residential properties, thereby causing nuisance, dust and noise, without the consent of the local authority because planning approval was not needed? Will we be able to debate the Government's use of special development orders to enable sites to be investigated for the disposal of nuclear waste by the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive, without the local authority or residents being consulted? Will we be able to debate why the Government, using special development orders, have picked four sites in safe Tory areas where Tory middle-class protesters are now campaigning, and why the Government have not sent in the riot squad as they would have done if these people had been printers or striking miners on a picket line?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman will be the first to appreciate that what we debate on the Housing and Planning Bill is entirely within the judgment of the Chair, but I am sure that he will display a great ingenuity in the face of that challenge.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): In view of the importance of disarmament and defence, will my right hon. Friend consider having a debate on the subject so that all parties can state their views in this House before we rise?

Mr. Biffen: Much as I underline the importance of the topic which my hon. Friend mentions, I must say that we have a full legislative programme before prorogation and there is little time left for anything else.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Does the Leader of the House accept that the proposal which has been made by a number of hon. Members that the House should be advised by an office of technology assessment is primarily a question for the House? It would be most unfortunate if the Prime Minister were to try to kill this proposal before the House had reached a view on the matter.

Mr. Biffen: I will certainly bear the hon. Gentleman's points in mind.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): As my right hon. Friend will know that it is the practice for the Leader of the Opposition to say which of the prayers in his name he wishes the Government to find time for among the available days for that purpose, can he tell us whether the Leader of the Opposition has asked for either of the prayers in his name referring to the cereals levy to be debated before they run out of praying time, the deadline for which is Tuesday next week? If the Leader of the Opposition has not done that, will my right hon. Friend give time for praying against the order on the rates of levy and the parent order before time runs out next Tuesday? If not, will my right hon. Friend allow a debate to annul outside the praying time later in the coming week?

Mr. Biffen: As a fellow agricultural Member, I take note of the important point which my hon. Friend has raised. However, I think that the answer is no but I will have to check that. I will be in touch with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Can the Leader of the House confirm that the debate on visas on Monday will take place between 7 pm and 11.30 pm? Can he confirm that a Foreign Office Minister will participate in that debate? Finally, can he tell us the nature of the motion upon which the debate will take place?

Mr. Biffen: The motion will appear and the hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity of seeing it in good time. It is my understanding that the debate will run from 7 pm to 11.30 pm

Mr. Madden: Will there be a Foreign Office Minister?

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Several weeks ago Mr. Roy Gibson, the director of the newly created National Space Centre, presented the Government with the centre's view on a space plan for the United Kingdom. Will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House ensure that his hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology comes to the House with a statement about the Government's decision? Even better, will my right hon. Friend allow a debate on such crucial issues as the future of the horizontal take-off and landing system, the future of a European manned space programme and European participation in the American space station programme?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of my hon. Friend's point and I will communicate his views about the desirability of a statement to my hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology.

Mr. Thomas Torney (Bradford, South): On the points raised earlier about the prayer against the co-responsibility levy for cereals, is the Leader of the House aware that that matter seriously affects the poultry industry and can cause considerable unemployment? From the Opposition Benches, I appeal to the Leader of the House to find time to debate the issue before prorogation.

Mr. Biffen: I believe that there is more chicken in north Shropshire than in Bradford, so I immediately accept the

[Mr. Biffen]

seriousness with which the point is addressed. I have said that I will look into the matter, but I am not able to go beyond that.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Will my right hon. Friend be able to find time before the Session ends for a debate on Select Committees whose claims have increased, are increasing and, in my view, ought to be diminished?

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says. He will appreciate that if he is successful in catching your eye, Mr. Speaker, he will be able to make many of his points on Wednesday.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Has the Leader of the House noticed early-day motion No. 1174?

[That this House congratulates England's hockey team for their excellent performances in the World Cup and also Australia, who won it and regrets that in the otherwise excellent television coverage at no time was the fact mentioned that the revenue and other services were provided by the London Borough of Brent which deserves more credit for the good things it achieves.]

Early-day motion No. 1174 covers a narrow point and I obviously cannot ask the Leader of the House for time to debate the matter because of prorogation. However, may I seek the right hon. Gentleman's advice?

I am trying to give credit to the London borough of Brent for the good things that it does because I have to sit on the Opposition Benches—as the Leader of the House knows — and listen to the right hon. Gentleman's colleagues attacking my borough over many issues time and time again. There is never any question of my being able to bring to the House's attention the good things which Brent does—for example, the world hockey cup final, which, thanks to the London borough of Brent, was very successful. Can the Leader of the House advise me how I can redress the uneven balance of Back-Bench questioning about important matters which affect my borough if I cannot have a debate before prorogation?

Mr. Biffen: There is something rather touching about the hon. Gentleman, with all his years of experience in the House, asking me for advice. I must be modest in respect of that invitation. He represents the virtues of the Labour Brent past. We are now seeing the horrors of the Labour Brent future.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an early debate on the nuclear industry? Is he aware of the grave concern in Cumbria that 50,000 jobs could be lost because the main Opposition parties are pledged to destroy our nuclear industry in Sellafield and Barrow in Furness?

Mr. Biffen: I think that there would be much advantage in the House having an early opportunity to debate these matters and for the anti-nuclear policies of the Liberal and Social Democratic parties and of the Labour party to be fully assessed. However, that cannot happen this side of prorogation.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): In view of the inadequate and misleading answer given by the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on the question of the British merchant fleet, will the Leader of the House arrange a debate as soon as possible based upon the report of the European Economic Community which takes account of the great dangers which face the British maritime industry on such questions as flags of convenience?

Mr. Biffen: I totally reject the strictures of the hon. Gentleman upon my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. However, I agree that the British merchant fleet is a very important topic. There is no prospect of a debate on that topic this side of prorogation, but I am certain that it will feature in our discussions in the new Session.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As some hon. Members are now rising who have not previously risen, I shall try to call them. However, I ask for brief questions, as we have a very heavy day before us.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that during the recess there have been two serious squats in my constituency, one on a school playing field and the other on land in a residential area? The squats have caused grave nuisance, inconvenience and harm to my innocent constituents who have been unable to find easy and quick legal redress. In the circumstances, can my right hon. Friend give us any hope that the Home Secretary will come to the House and make a statement about further legislation in this area to protect my innocent constituents?

Mr. Biffen: I will certainly pass the point raised by my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I realise that it is of considerable moment to my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The Leader of the House referred to the fact that there is more chicken in Shropshire than in Bradford. I must tell him that there is more duck in Shropshire and I hope that he will not duck this question. If it can be shown to the Leader of the House that senior members of the Government have attempted to influence witnesses in any court case, would he consider that that was a most serious matter demanding the resignation of those hon. Members and an early statement from the Attorney-General?

Mr. Biffen: I would regard that as a most serious matter. I think that the integrity of the charge would be enhanced if it were repeated outside the Chamber.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that one of the nation's greatest assets is our inventiveness and innovation. He will thus understand the considerable dismay in certain sections of British industry and commerce at the suggestion in yesterday's *Daily Telegraph* that the Government might be considering dropping the Copyright Bill from the Queen's Speech. Would my right hon. Friend impress upon others that the Copyright Bill is an essential and much-needed piece of legislation which should certainly be included in the Queen's Speech and that time should be found for it in next Session's business?

Mr. Biffen: I am aware of what my hon. Friend says, but I am sure he will realise—particularly at this time—that convention requires a delicacy on my part in respect of these matters and that therefore I can say nothing.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Leader of the House aware of the enormous amount of

administrative confusion and inefficiency in London local government that has arisen since the abolition of the GLC? Is he also aware that it is almost impossible for hon. Members to get any information from the London Residuary Body which is charged with many of the previous functions of the GLC? When can the House expect to receive the annual report of the London Residuary Body, and can the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that we will be able to debate that report on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Biffen: I shall look into the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised about the report and I shall be in touch with him.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Department of Transport's proposal to complete the Winchester section of the M3 will cause a massive environmental blight to that listed city by entering an area of outstanding natural beauty, severing sites of special scientific interest and destroying two scheduled ancient monuments? Is he also aware that the two national custodians of the sites — the Countryside Commission and the Inspectorate of Scheduled Ancient Monuments —did not even participate in the recent public inquiry? Does he agree that of course there is a need for an urgent completion of the M3 motorway but not at any cost, particularly to the very special environment of the ancient and listed city of Winchester? This has reached almost scandalous proportions. Can we have a full debate rather than just an Adjournment debate on this subject?

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Very good. Very good.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has obviously attracted support.

Mr. Faulds: I am glad some of you care.

Mr. Biffen: I understand the point that my hon. Friend argues, which must be of the greatest importance in his constituency. Clearly, there is no prospect of it featuring in a debate between now and prorogation, but I very much hope that he will have his opportunities in the new Session of Parliament.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Does my right hon. Friend anticipate an early opportunity next week to discuss the unwelcome presence in this country of 10 Sinn Fein councillors, two of whom have been to Leicester? Does he accept that this has caused great concern to many people? As we are debating visas next week, does not he agree that Sinn Fein councillors should never be allowed into this country, that they are advocating violence against this country and that the Labour party through its Labour Committee on Ireland and its "Troops Out of Ireland" campaign is doing nothing to give confidence to the Chief Constable and all those in Northern Ireland who care about the security and future of this country?

Mr. Biffen: I am sad that Leicester should be a magnet of all these difficulties, but my hon. Friend raises something that gives rise to real public concern. That is the relationship that exists between some of our conventional politicians and Sinn Fein whose operation in the Republic, Northern Ireland and mainland Britain gives rise to deep concern. I do not believe that there are any explicit circumstances under which my hon. Friend can raise this matter next week, but none the less I have great faith that he will find a way of making sure that it receives public attention.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will have noted with distress the ignorant way in which the management of Sealink Ltd sacked several hundred of my constituents at 24 hours notice in spite of consistent assurances over the preceeding months and years that it would do nothing of the kind. As the Government actually sold Sealink to someone who is clearly not qualified to operate a venture of this kind, will my right hon. Friend try to provide some Government time so that we may have a debate on the matter?

Mr. Biffen: I much regret that there is simply no Government time available before prorogation. I suggest that my hon. Friend might like to try his own initiative to obtain an Adjournment debate.

BBC (Court Case)

4.14 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the need for an inquiry into evidence of interference with witnesses in the case of Hamilton and Howarth *v.* the BBC."

You will, Mr. Speaker, recall that in reply to my point of order on Tuesday you said that allegations of interference with witnesses were "pure speculation". I must draw your attention to a letter addressed to "Mr. Selwyn Gummer", the then chairman of the Conservative party, dated 24 November 1984, from the National Young Conservatives. The writer states:

"Loyalty to both the party and to you has prevented me from making public comment on your objections to the Panorama programme . . . However if the activities of certain individuals in Conservative Central Office interfere with legal proceedings against the National Young Conservatives, I cannot remain silent."

He also says:

"On the 22 February the Central Office Legal Officer"—

I have now discovered that it is a man called Mr. David Mitchell—

"contacted a member of the Conservative delegation which had visited Berlin and suggested to him that the account he had given was incorrect and conflicted with the evidence given by other delegation members with whom he had spoken. He claimed to have arranged for these other individuals to put their *adjusted* version"—

adjusted version—

"of events to you in writing. When the delegation member in question refused to change his version it was suggested he speak to no one about the incident and that he lie low . . . The second instance relates to the leaking of information to a certain Sunday newspaper by an individual in Conservative Central Office Press Department. I would have been oblivious to this had not the reporter contacted me for confirmation."

He added:

"In conclusion may I say I find these activities deplorable and would ask you to instigate an investigation immediately."

I have been given this letter by a person who is close to the internal workings of Conservative Central Office. I am informed that a tape recording between Mr. David Mitchell and a witness might be available to me. This is an important matter because the activities of Mr. David Mitchell, who is head of the legal office at Conservative party headquarters, placed him in contravention of the law. It is a common law misdemeanour to obstruct, prevent, pervert or defeat the course of justice.

In the case of Shaw v. Shaw in 1861 and the cases of Bromilow v. Phillips in 1891, and Regina v. Greenberg in 1919, it was decided that it is a contempt to endeavour improperly to influence a person who is a potential witness in a pending case with the intention of affecting that person's evidence; that the fact that the attempt may be unsuccessful is immaterial, the only question being whether the act complained of is calculated to interfere with the due administration of justice.

There are a number of cases relating to the manufacture of false evidence and the inducing of persons to give false evidence. They include the cases of Vreones, Grimes, Andrews and Panayiotou. In the case of Regina v. Kellett, Lord Justice Stephenson said:

"Once legal proceedings have set the course of justice in motion, it is important that it should be allowed to flow unobstructed and undiverted, and that perjury should be exposed and truth ascertained only by examination and cross-examination of witnesses in open court and justice should be administered in the way which is ordinarily pursued"——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must now bring his remarks to a close. He has had three minutes.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: These matters are important. A debate is needed, with the Attorney-General answering demands for an inquiry. Debate is urgently needed as the BBC, for reasons other than the pursuit of justice, and under pressure from Conservative Members of Parliament and the current chairman of the Conservative party, has chosen to ignore the contravention of the law and settled out of court at considerable cost to the licence fee payer. Had the public been aware of this crude attempt by central office to squeeze witnesses——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the need for an inquiry into evidence of interference with witnesses in the case of Hamilton and Howarth v. the BBC."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter he has raised to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Norman Tebbit): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should say——

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Tell us about the moral majority.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Tebbit: I should say, Mr. Speaker, that the allegations made by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours)—not to the police but under the cloak of privilege—will be answered immediately by me, outside, without the benefit of cover of privilege.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This cannot be a continuation of the application. It must be a point of order that I can answer.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot have hon. Members scurrying across the Chamber like this, Mr. Skinner.

Mr. Skinner: In view of what the chairman of the Tory party has just had to say, may I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that, with regard to the letter from the Young Conservatives, many of us——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has absolutely nothing to do with me.

Mr. Skinner: You did not stop the chairman leaving the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to raise an issue which has absolutely nothing to do with me. If he raises a point of order with which I can deal, I will endeavour to answer it.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, I will.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will give the hon. Gentleman one last chance.

Mr. Skinner: In view of what the chairman of the Tory party said, both before the application and since, I believe it would be sensible, Mr. Speaker, if you were to arrange for the responsible persons involved with the arm twisting of the broadcasting authorities to come before the appropriate Committee of the House of Commons so that we can ascertain exactly to what extent the two recent chairmen of the Tory party were involved.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Even that is not a matter for me. It is a matter for the Select Committee concerned.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are in a position of some ambivalence created by the strange role of the chairman of the Conservative party. Here we have, at the head of the Conservative central office, a Cabinet Minister whose sole responsibility seems to be to administer that office. That Minister has used his position to come to the Dispatch Box, not to rebut what has been said but to state that he intends to rebut it somewhere else. That is of importance to the House.

The second point of importance to the House is based on what my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) says has been a calculated attempt by Conservative central office — led by a Conservative Minister — to pervert the course of justice. On today's Order Paper there is a motion, with several amendments, signed by over 100 Conservative Members, demanding the resignation of individuals at the BBC. It is an important matter when the position of the House is used in this way.

The third element which makes this matter especially relevant to the House is the fact that two of our Members have received substantial sums of money, from public funds, which may be as a result—if my hon. Friend the Member for Workington is correct — of a calculated attempt by central office to pervert the course of justice by suppressing information. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the Conservative chairman in his Cabinet role should come to this House and make a statement.—[AN HON. MEMBER: "He has."] He has not. He has stated his intention to make a statement outside.

In view of the severity of the allegations which have been made by my hon. Friend, I suggest that the Attorney-General should consider referring the whole matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions and report to the House on his action.

Mr. Speaker: None of that is a matter for me. I am not responsible for any appointments that may be made in the Cabinet or to the Conservative party. [HON. MEMBERS: "Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker."] Order. I cannot see any conceivable way of answering points of order on this matter.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This allegation is based on whether hon. Members may use the protection of the House to make statements. I have never sought to use that protection but I have never sought to deny any Member of the House who has sought to use it the protection of privilege accorded by this House. Over the years I have been here, Mr. Speaker, the occupants of the Chair have always condemned the kind of conduct that has been displayed by the chairman of the Tory party.

Mr. Speaker: Any Member who makes a Standing Order No. 10 application raises a matter which, unless it is granted for debate, is not answered. If a Front-Bench Member seeks to speak, I have no knowledge of what he will say and he is within his rights to speak.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Ewing: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The point I was making did not concern what the right hon. Gentleman said but his conduct in stamping out of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not a matter for me.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is for you to judge, because you have just declined an application under Standing Order No. 10 because you did not consider that the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) contained sufficient evidence for you to grant that application——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me stop the hon. Gentleman there. It did not meet the criteria of the Standing Order. The hon. Gentleman need only look up the Standing Order to know what they are.

Mr. Banks: I understand that point, Mr. Speaker, but Members have only just received copies of this letter. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is two years old."] It was sent by Philip Pedley to the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), and it makes serious allegations. Points have been raised in the House and surely the place for those points to be answered is in this House and not outside.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely one of the criteria which are used by you to determine whether a Standing Order No. 10 application should be accepted is whether the matter is urgent. It is obvious from the date of this letter that it has been in circulation for over two years.

Mr. Speaker: I have not seen the letter.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a simple matter. Am I right in remembering that, a few months ago, Mr. Speaker, you gave a ruling from the Chair regarding Front-Bench Government spokesmen coming to the Dispatch Box to make a statement under the guise of a bogus point of order which precluded Members of the House from questioning that person on the statement? That is especially relevant now, when the chairman of the Conservative party immediately walked out having made his point of order. This is a genuine point of order, Mr. Speaker, and you ought to deplore a bogus point of order and an exit from this House which was done purely to make sure that Labour Members could not question the chairman of the Tory party on the points that he made.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Whether a Member walks out or not is entirely a matter for him. I think the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) might well recollect that he has made such a decision himself.

New Writ (Knowsley, North)

Proceedings resumed on the Question,

That Mr. Speaker do issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the county constituency of Knowsley, North, in the room of Robert Kilroy-Silk Esquire, who since his election for the said county constituency hath accepted the office of steward or bailiff of Her Majesty's Manor of Northstead in the county of York. —*[Mr. Foster.]*

4.29 pm

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) *rose*——

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is within your recollection that when the Labour Chief Whip moved the writ immediately after prayers the leader of the Liberal party was not in his place. The objection was raised by the so-called Chief Whip—which, Mr. Speaker, you may think is a contradiction in terms—of the Liberal party. If the Chief Whip was able to pluck up the courage to raise the objection, why has he not the guts to move the motion himself?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me. Mr. Steel.

Mr. Steel: Let me answer that point at the beginning of my speech. The object of raising an objection, as the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), as a senior Member of the House, should know, is so that a debate may take place now and questions may be asked now about the moving of the writ.

The point that I seek to raise is simply this. The Opposition Chief Whip yesterday gave his usual courteous notice, through the usual channels, that he intended today to move the writ for the by-election. I acquit him of any blame for what has happened since. However, the House should be aware that this morning the Knowsley, North Labour party sought an injunction in the courts to prevent the imposition on the constituency of a candidate from outside.

In the House, we must take account of the views of the electors in that constituency, starting from the point that they did not ask for the by-election. It has been caused by the desire of our former colleague, Mr. Kilroy-Silk, to go to the pastures that you described, Mr. Speaker, in place of his previous occupation. The electors are landed with a by-election that they did not want, and they are now being landed with a candidate whom they say they do not want. I know of no precedent for a by-election writ to be moved in the House before it is known who the candidate will be for the party—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman is fortunate enough he may catch my eye, but he will not do it that way.

Mr. Steel: It is a legitimate matter of public interest that the candidate should be known and that the decision of the courts should be made before the writ is moved. Therefore, I ask whether the leader of the Labour party will agree that until the court's decision is made the writ should not be moved.

One other reason is that it is a little unfair to the alliance candidate—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]—and, indeed, to the Conservative candidate, if there is one, that they should begin their campaign without knowing who they are fighting against.

For all those reasons, I suggest that we should await the decision of the courts on this matter of extreme public interest.

4.32 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): One of the least attractive features of the Liberal party is the sanctimonious self-righteousness with which its leader usually addresses the House. Today, when he did not even have the courtesy to you, Mr. Speaker, to be here when the Opposition Chief Whip moved the writ for the by-election, he dressed up in the guise of public interest the truth that the Liberal party is not ready for the by-election.

One month ago today the Liberal party, meeting in annual assembly in the Congress theatre, Eastbourne, in my constituency, rejected the defence policy advocated by its leader. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), who has just addressed the House, with characteristic courage, failed to address the Liberal party on the key issue of defence. He was then summoned——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is that relevant to the issue of my warrant?

Mr. Gow: With great respect, Mr. Speaker, we must listen to the real reasons why the leader of the Liberal party addressed the House in the way that he did.

You will remember, Mr. Speaker—you follow these matters closely—that the leader of the Liberal party was summoned from Eastbourne to London by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). At considerable danger and distress to my constituents, disturbing the elderly voters, the very people whom the Liberal party claims to champion, the right hon. Gentleman travelled by helicopter. It arrived in London, and he waited upon the right hon. Member for Devonport. I was not present, and nor were you, Mr. Speaker, when the doctor received the leader of the Liberal party. [HON. MEMBERS: "The patient."] It is a sign of the new-grown courage of the leader of the Liberal party that he has been able to make a speech in this place in the absence of the doctor.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must not stray—*[Interruption.]* Order. It may well be that they met, but did they discuss the warrant?

Mr. Gow: You will remember, Mr. Speaker, the date upon which the Liberal party debated defence. It was Tuesday 23 September 1986. You remember it well, Mr. Speaker, and you have raised the issue, and I believe that you were right to raise it. Did the doctor and the right hon. Gentleman discuss the Knowsley by-election? The attention of the House was directed to the matter not by me, but by Mr. Speaker himself.

Mr. Speaker: I must not be brought into those matters. I say to the whole House that we are only discussing the motion that I read out at the beginning of the debate. We must stick to it.

Mr. Gow: But, Sir, it was you who raised, and, in my view, wisely, the issue about the right hon. Gentleman from the borders and the right hon. Gentleman who represents, for the time being, the Devonport constituency, who is not in his place: what did they discuss at that meeting? It was, of course, in part the shambles of the defence policy of the Liberal party. Of course, the leader

of the Liberal party was rebuked by the doctor. That goes without saying. But they also discussed — and you rightly hinted at this, Mr. Speaker—the Knowsley by-election. It was agreed that until there was a suitable defence policy, which you may think is one of the supreme issues of our time, Mr. Speaker, until a policy was patched up, cobbled together, dressed up, fashioned between the right hon. Gentleman and the doctor, it would be unwise to give any encouragement to have the Knowsley by-election. The Liberal party, not for the first time, dressed up its words and deeds as if Liberals were the purest people in the land. That is why we have to expose today the sheer humbug of the Liberal party.

The leader of the Liberal party does not care about the well-being of the people of Knowsley. He cares about one thing only, and that is the presumed electoral advantage of the Liberals. When a Member of the House, particularly a right hon. Member, dresses up as truth that which is manifestly untrue it is right that the House of Commons should have an opportunity of debating the matter.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): In the hon. Gentleman's peroration, are we likely to expect any detail about the 50 per cent. and higher unemployment in parts of Knowsley? Are we likely to expect any details from the hon. Gentleman of the housing conditions, the poverty and low wages in that area, or are we to be subjected, in the next 10 minutes, as for the past five minutes, to the worst form of public school stupidity that epitomises this place?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not be tempted to raise any of those issues. The issue before the House is whether or not this warrant should be issued.

Mr. Gow: That is indeed the issue before the House, Mr. Speaker, and I say to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), who shares a visual similarity with Mr. Leslie Huckfield, that he need have no fear. In the opening few moments of my speech, I referred to the Liberal party. Mr. Speaker, have no fear. I turn now to the views of the Labour party and to the reasons why the Opposition Chief Whip, in the absence of the leader of the Liberal party, moved the writ immediately after prayers. Even the leader of the Liberal party was quite correct when he said that it is necessary to move the writ for this by-election because there is no longer a Member of Parliament for Knowsley, North. But there was a Member of Parliament for Knowsley, North and, by one of those accidents of events, I happen to have with me extracts from the excellent book that he has just written. You, Mr. Speaker, have, I am sure, read the book.

Mr. Speaker: No, I have not.

Mr. Gow: In that case, there are one or two extracts that I should like to read from it. The reasons for the by-election are set out with commendable clarity by our former colleague, Mr. Kilroy-Silk. He has some observations to make about his colleagues. One of the extraordinary features of the Opposition is that they preach the universal brotherhood of man but that they hate and abuse one another even more than they hate and abuse us. If any right hon. or hon. Member believes that I overstate the case, here is an example which I wish to read to the House.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): What has this got to do with the issue of the writ?

Hon. Members: A great deal!

Mr. Gow: I am trying to explain why there is to be a by-election.

Mr. Speaker: We know that there is to be a by-election. The hon. Gentleman must concentrate upon whether I should issue my warrant in respect of it.

Mr. Gow: In that case, Mr. Speaker, I shall shorten my speech to this extent. I intend to give only one illustration of the brotherly love that permeates not only the Opposition but the Labour party throughout the country:

"The conference floor erupted. And that bastard Eric Heffer, the prima donna to outdo all prima donnas, got up and lumbered off the platform and out of the hall."

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is an old parliamentary hand and knows that he must not use language of that kind. That is an unparliamentary word, even by attribution, and I ask him to withdraw it in respect of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer).

Mr. Gow: I think it is in order, is it not, Mr. Speaker, to point——

Mr. Speaker: No. It is clearly set out in "Erskine May" that unparliamentary words may not be used about another hon. Member, even by attribution.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Gow: Of course I withdraw, and of course I make it clear that that is not how I should describe the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman if he wishes to disagree with me, but I say to my right hon. and hon. Friends that if the hon. Member for Walton were sitting on this side of the House, I should describe him as my hon. Friend.

It has to be conceded that the Opposition Chief Whip moved the writ for the by-election. We on this side of the House well understand the reluctance of the Opposition Front Bench to see the return to this place of Mr. Leslie Huckfield. Although I have been in this place for only a very short time, I think it would be true to say that Mr. Huckfield was not the most popular Member of this place. I find myself, therefore, in respectful agreement with the decision yesterday of the National Executive Committee, although it was not, I believe, secured in a spirit of the greatest fraternity. I well understand the view of the National Executive Committee. However, the grounds on which the NEC is trying to prevent Mr. Leslie Huckfield from becoming the candidate for Knowsley, North are breathtaking. The disqualification——

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: What is it?

Mr. Nellist: I distinctly remember that during the miners' strike when court cases were being heard outside this building you, Mr. Speaker, made rulings as to what matters could or could not be raised. Today there is an action in the High Court concerning the remarks about which the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) is speaking. You ought to be aware of that fact when the hon. Gentleman makes those remarks.

Mr. Speaker: I am aware of the fact that an action is pending, but in respect of this matter I think that I should exercise my discretion and allow the debate to go forward.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It relates to the timetable, upon which the Chief Whip of the Labour party might be able to assist us. People are at the High Court in the Strand at the moment; according to the tapes, they are seeking to appear before the Lord Chief Justice. I wonder, therefore, whether the Opposition Chief Whip would accept that the motion should be withdrawn for today until the outcome of this highly relevant court case is made clear.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The debate is already proceeding, but since the matter has been raised I think that I should give this ruling on it. The motion that is before the House is an important matter of privilege affecting the composition of this House, and in my view the House should not be prevented, by proceedings elsewhere, from debating or deciding it. Accordingly, I propose to exercise my discretion and to allow the motion to proceed.

Mr. Gow: I was reminding the House about the decision of the National Executive Committee of the Labour party, of which the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is a distinguished member. [HON. MEMBERS: "He is not here. Where is he?"] The reason that was given as to why Mr. Leslie Huckfield was unsuitable as a candidate for the Labour party was that he had broken an undertaking. Since when has it been an obstacle to being a candidate for the parliamentary Labour party that one has broken an undertaking? That is a completely novel proposition for the Opposition.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): It is a basic requirement.

Mr. Gow: Indeed; my hon. Friend says that it is almost a precondition.

Mr. Leslie Huckfield, whom I would not describe as my hon. Friend, even if he were sitting on this side of the House, apparently has been deprived by the comrades in Knowsley of the right to be chosen because he broke an undertaking. To whom did he give the undertaking? It was not given to you, Mr. Speaker. As far as I know, it was not given to the right hon. Gentleman who leads the Opposition. It was certainly not given to the doctor who is not present. I did not like the way in which the Labour party, which sometimes claims to be the champion of a certain amount of modest dishonesty within its ranks, sought to impose its wishes and to inhibit the free choice of the comrades who control the party in Knowsley. I would have given the comrades in Knowsley their head.

If I had been a member of the National Executive Committee of the Labour party, which I readily concede that I might, I would have voted with the hon. Member for Bolsover. The reason that I would have done so is this. It is not that I like Mr. Huckfield; I have made it clear that I do not. However, it is wrong that the central part of a democratic party should seek to dictate to a local part of that party. Provided, as is mercifully the case in every one of the Government's constituencies, that our associations are properly constituted, it is up to our local association to choose the candidate. It is a procedure which my right hon. and hon. Friends do not fear. We do not fear it because we have not had massive infiltration of the kind that the Labour party has suffered.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My hon. Friend may be aware that Mr. Leslie Huckfield is also a member of the European Parliament. Does he consider it possible that one of the motives for the events that he has described is that the Labour party fears that, if Mr. Huckfield were selected as a candidate in Knowsley, North, and if by some misadventure he were elected to this House, either he would be carrying a double mandate or he would be forced to resign from the European Parliament, thus giving rise to another unwanted by-election for the European Parliament?

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend must not lead me astray. I remind him that I was one of a small band on this side of the House and of a much larger band on the other side of the House that was and remains opposed to direct elections to the European Assembly.

It may have occurred to you, Mr. Speaker, that the drama facing the Labour party, and now apparently facing the electorate of Knowsley, North, is that if we had not had direct elections the issue of the so-called undertaking would never have arisen. It was an undertaking, so we are told, that so long as Mr. Huckfield was a Member of the European Assembly he would not seek election to this place.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether it is possible for you to reconsider your decision under Standing Order No. 10? Would it not be better for us to discuss the serious issue of the Tory party interfering with witnesses than to listen to this rubbish?

Mr. Speaker: That is a completely different issue. I remind the hon. Member, who has been speaking for about 20 minutes, that we have a heavy day in front of us and that other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate.

Mr. Gow: I defer to your wishes, Mr. Speaker. The anticipation with which I shall listen to the remainder of the debate will be matched only by the eagerness with which I await the return of a Conservative Member for Knowsley, North.

4.54 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I am intrigued by what the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) said about me. I must tell him that if he sat on this side of the House I would call him an honourable Friend. Whether I would actually believe that is a different matter altogether. I understand that, in the House of Commons, it is usually the case that people on one's own side of the House are one's enemies — whatever party one is in — and that people on the other side of the House are usually one's personal friends, if not one's political friends. That is how it goes. I do not intend to say anything about the book to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I should, however, point out that there are other books available which hon. Members might like to read. I would hope that there are more serious books on politics than the one referred to.

The debate is about the moving of a writ. Whenever a writ is moved, whenever a writ is accepted and whenever a by-election takes place, the House and the country should bear in mind the terrible problems of the people in the area concerned. The constituency of Knowsley, North is next to my constituency. The area has one of the highest levels of unemployment in this country. Over 50 per cent. of the people on some housing estates are unemployed. As in many other parts of Merseyside, there is a growing drugs problem. Young people are out of work. Many of

them came down here some time ago to meet the Prime Minister to urge the creation of employment. They are still out of work.

Those are the problems that must be faced when an election takes place. The only party that has any idea of how to deal with the problems is the Labour party. We are not afraid of an election, because I am convinced that the people of Knowsley, North will vote for the Labour party on the next occasion, as they have consistently voted for it over the years.

If I disagree with certain aspects of what has happened, it is with the rights of the constituency Labour party. That is the only issue with which I disagree. I cannot remember, over a long time, any candidate in my party being appointed over the head of the constituency Labour party. I have a feeling that if I were a delegate on that general management committee Mr. Huckfield might not have received my vote, but that is not the issue. There may well be some argument about whether the national executive has a right to say who should or should not be a candidate because he is a Member of the European Parliament, but there cannot be an argument about the right of any constituency Labour party to decide who the candidate should be. That is the only point that I make about that.

I cannot understand why the Liberal party has raised this matter, because yesterday the *Liverpool Daily Post* stated:

"Steel tells Labour: Hurry up or else."

It went on to say:

"David Steel is to present an ultimatum to Neil Kinnock: move the writ in the Knowsley, North by-election or the Liberals will do it for you."

Our Front Bench, for good or ill, has moved the writ and now the Liberals say "Hold it up." That is typical of the Liberal party, and my dad would have had words to say about it, but I will not repeat them in the House. In essence, the Liberal party never quite knows where it is going or what it is involved in. I expected it today to produce all sorts of horrific stories that are supposed to be going on and I have evidence to answer all those horrific stories, but we have not reached that point.

There should be second thoughts about the matter and we should allow the local Labour party, democratically and through the party's constitution, to decide who the candidate should be. But whenever the election takes place, the Labour party will win it, because it is the only party that will deal with the problems of Knowsley, North.

5.1 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): The motion before us relates to the issuing of a writ and it is entirely in that context that I wish to make my remarks. The question is whether Knowsley, North shall elect a Member of Parliament to this House during the next three weeks.

I am not concerned with whether that election will give rise to the possibility of a Labour Member, a Conservative Member or a Liberal Member being elected, although I would like a Conservative Member to be elected. I am concerned in this debate, which is given precedence over the Orders of the Day, only with the serious subject of whether or not the constituency should be represented by a Member of Parliament a certain number of days after moving the writ.

I support the Opposition Chief Whip in moving the writ and I want to detail some of the problems facing Knowsley, North. I cannot hope to match the rhetoric and excellent style of the previous speeches and I shall not attempt to do so. It has been suggested to me that if I cannot match the skill of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) in making his case, I should not speak, but there are serious points that I wish to make. I always wonder what might happen in any constituency were an hon. Member to vacate his seat and leave his constituents dependent on the House of Commons moving a writ. I contemplate that in regard to my constituency from time to time.

In the post-war years, much of Liverpool's poorer population was resettled in council housing developments on the edge of the Merseyside conurbation. I am sure that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) will agree that the most notorious is Kirkby. It is not a new town but a series of vast council house estates which were created in the 1950s. In 1951 its population was 3,000 and in 1961 it was 52,000. Kirkby has had a dramatic effect on the politics of north-east Liverpool which is bounded by Knowsley, North. Indeed, Kirkby is now part of the Knowsley, North constituency which once formed part of the Huyton constituency represented by Lord Wilson. Kirkby played a major role in lifting his majority from 854 in 1950 to more than 19,000 in 1964.

In February 1974 Kirkby was moved into the relatively rural area of Ormskirk, which was formerly a safe Tory seat, but which was won by the former Member, Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk. It now forms the basis of the Knowsley, North constituency and, divorced from the Conservative part of west Lancashire, is undoubtedly one of Labour's safest seats.

As the hon. Member for Walton said, Kirkby has many problems and deprivations which breed vandalism and violence. It suffers from appalling unemployment and housing blight. Tower blocks built only a decade ago, such as Tower Hill, have already had to be demolished. Small wonder that "Z Cars", the BBC TV crime series in the 1960s and early 1970s, was set there. It has a great scarcity of leisure services to offer its population.

I understand why Liberal Members are taking such interest in whether or not the writ is moved because until now they have been the only effective opposition to the Labour party there, although that has always been the case with local elections. The rest of Knowsley, North consists of Cantril Farm—a 1960s peripheral development which is just outside the Liverpool city boundary — and of Prescot — an industrial company town which is dominated by the huge British Insulated Callendar Cables plant.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman will tell us the purpose of his speech? Is it so that the Conservative candidate, when selected, can find his way to Kirkby and will know something about the conditions there? All of this is old hat for most of us in the area. We know what Kirkby is and how it has suffered under the Tory Government. I wonder why the Prime Minister is not present to answer the hon. Gentleman's allegations.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) is in order in what he is saying, but I must say to the whole House that it is clear from the Order Paper that we have a busy day ahead of us. The only

[Mr. Speaker]

issue before us is whether or not I issue my warrant in respect of this particular by-election. I hope that we can concentrate on that.

Mr. Brown: I am making a serious speech and my only motive is that I am extremely concerned about a constituency which does not have a Member of Parliament because its Member has resigned. It must rely on a writ being moved in order to be represented. I have some serious points which are pertinent and relate to the precedence that this matter of privilege is given in the order of business.

In reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), there may well be many hon. Members in and around the area that he represents who know the area well, but other hon. Members who do not have the privilege of knowing Liverpool's problems are bing invited either to vote in favour of or against moving the writ. It is precisely because of the problems which the hon. Gentleman criticises me for raising that I feel required to bring them to the attention of the House so that the House may decide by a large majority, if the matter is pressed to a Division, that the writ shall be moved. In that way, the problems of which we may be unaware, but of which the hon. Gentleman is so well aware, can be drawn to the attention of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. In this debate the hon. Gentleman cannot deal with the issues that may arise during the course of a by-election. The only issue before us now is the timing of this by-election.

Mr. Brown: By describing the constituency as I have done, one will surely arrive at the conclusion that, after so many years of being absorbed in large constituencies, it is only right that Kirkby should form the core of a seat which is smaller than average. No other town can need effective representation more desperately than Kirkby, which means that the town needs a Member of Parliament to be elected at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The hon. Gentleman is not correct to say that Knowsley, North is unique in being without a Member. Will the hon. Gentleman assist in moving a writ for Welwyn Hatfield?

Mr. Brown: I am not aware that there is a vacancy anywhere apart from Knowsley, North. My only reason for speaking to the House now is to show why I support moving the writ for Knowsley, North. Therefore, I cannot refer to any other parliamentary constituency.

When a constituency has such problems it needs a Member of Parliament in the House. Knowsley, North is denied a Member because of the decision, for understandable reasons, of the previous Member not to remain in the House. Regardless of the party political debates which may be going on elsewhere, in the High Court and within individual political parties relating to the selection of a candidate, the people of Knowsley, North need a Member of Parliament, of some kind, to represent their interests. Until they have a Member to do so, the problems which I have touched upon will have no chance of effective representation in the House.

The moving of this writ has also provided an opportunity to raise a number of important issues. This will be the first by-election since the nation saw, on its television screens during the summer, the problems of nuclear waste. This issue has become part of a national campaign by all parties. Knowsley, North is the first constituency to have a by-election since this issue became of national importance, not just of local importance to constituencies such as my own, and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). The people of Knowsley have an opportunity to show the House what they think of important national issues, and not just those issues local to Liverpool. They would want to have a Member of Parliament elected at the earliest possible opportunity if they faced issues similar to those faced by my constituents. If the writ were to be passed by the House, that Member would, in response to the issue of nuclear waste being raised during the course of the election campaign, be able to draw it to the attention of the House.

A by-election now is important for the people of Knowsley because the issues which concern them are national as well as local issues. They are concerned about the future of nuclear power, and about what happens to the nuclear waste which is generated by their local hospitals. They are anxious to ensure that the decisions which the Government take will meet with the electorate's approval. They will be the first group of people in the country to be able to express their views on the nuclear industry since the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive was given the authority to test drill for nuclear waste dumps. The decision on whether to have an early by-election is crucial because the nuclear industry will be a major feature, not only of by-election campaigns, but also of the next general election campaign.

The problem of nuclear waste does not just touch those of us who have the misfortune to live in areas selected for nuclear waste disposal testing. It affects other constituencies in the country and it is, therefore, important that the electorate of Knowsley, North should have the opportunity to decide whether they shall have a Member of Parliament who will take a close interest in it. It could be thought that this issue will not concern the people of Knowsley because they are some way from sites for the disposal of nuclear waste. It is a matter of concern to them, however, because if Knowsley, North were selected to have a nuclear waste dump, and if there were no Member of Parliament, as is the case at the moment, the people of Knowsley would feel very hard done by.

There should be a by-election in that constituency because it has many problems which are unrepresented in the House at present. If we were to disapprove the motion to move the writ, as the Liberals invite us to do, those problems would remain unrepresented for even longer, and the constituency has been unrepresented for long enough already. It is time that the constituency had a Member of Parliament to take an interest, not only in the problems that affect it directly, but also in problems relating to the rest of the country. This applies especially to nuclear waste. I hope that the people of Knowsley, North will elect a Member on such grounds.

5.17 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I promise not to detain the House for long. This afternoon's debate touches the important question of constitutional propriety. Given the events of the last 24 hours and the High Court action, the timing of this by-election should be considered. The former Member for Knowsley, North

Mr. Kilroy-Silk announced his intention to resign his seat in August. He sat on his resignation for two months and did not resign until October.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) has argued that we should proceed with this by-election as quickly as possible. It should not have been necessary at all. The Liberal party did not call it. It was not forced by the resignation of a Liberal Member. The by-election has been caused because, by his own admission, a Member of this House was hounded out of his position in his constituency. Before calling the by-election, we should reflect for 24 hours, as my right hon. Friend suggested, on the decision of the High Court. We should reflect because the same thing will happen to another Labour Member as happened to the previous one who had the endorsement of the leadership of the Labour party and the national executive.

It cannot be fair to the ordinary people who live in the Knowsley constituency that they should be subjected to such internecine warfare that a Member of the House cannot concentrate on the issues that he should but rather ends up having to fight a rearguard action against his own members. If Knowsley Labour party does not believe that the candidate put forward by the national executive should be chosen, why should the electors of the borough of Knowsley?

Mr. Peter Lilley (St. Albans): Has the change of heart over the past 24 hours by the Leader of the Liberal party about the timing of the election anything to do with the publication of an opinion poll showing a slump in the Liberal's fortunes?

Mr. Alton: If the hon. Gentleman looks more closely at that opinion poll he will see that my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party remains the most popular of the political leaders. But opinion polls are sometimes misleading. More important are the votes which are put in the box. There was a by-election in Knowsley, North, in Prescot, seven or eight weeks ago in the summer. The alliance polled 64 per cent. of the vote and the Conservative party polled 5 per cent.

We have no fears of fighting this by-election. Our fear is that great constitutional questions of propriety and the rights of Members are at stake. We are concerned about the poor pickets outside the Labour party headquarters in Knowsley, North whose views have been ignored in the past 24 hours and those women who chained themselves as sufragettes in Walworth road. Like the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who is not in his seat but who was one of those who voted last night that the constituency Labour party in Knowsley should have had the right to decide who the candidate would be, we are concerned about the rights of Members.

For those reasons, we should have liked the Labour Chief Whip to rise to the occasion and agree to reflect and ponder on this important question for 24 hours. We are sad that he did not do so and we shall have to bear that in mind when we decide whether to vote. In the absence of any rational thought on the part of the Labour party's Front Bench, we shall have no choice but to go along with other hon. Members and ensure that the vote takes place in Knowsley, North and that an alliance candidate is elected.

5.22 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): As the Member of Parliament representing the constituency adjacent to Knowsley, North and the cessor of two-thirds of my constituency to the former Member of Parliament, Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk, I know something about the situation.

I respectfully agree with the comments of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), but for entirely different reasons. A constituency party's decision on its candidate is being overruled by the national executive despite the democratic choice of the members of that constituency party and that is a matter of great importance to the House.

We must also look at the shady motivations of the Labour party's Chief Whip in moving the writ at this stage. It is not to advance the election of a Member of Parliament to Knowsley, North; it is to cover up the true nature of the Labour party in Liverpool and in Knowsley and the north-west, not in any interest of democracy that we in the House would look to.

The position is simple. The true Knowsley, North Labour party is down the road in the Strand trying to obtain a writ from a High Court judge to prevent Mr. Huckfield from being disqualified as the candidate for Knowsley, North.

The House should bear in mind one of the comments of Mr. Kilroy-Silk in his book which relates to my seat in west Lancashire. You may be aware, Mr. Speaker, of one reason why the Labour party's Chief Whip is moving the writ. Mr. Kilroy-Silk was approached, as he said in his book, by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry), who I do not think is in his place.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside) *rose*——

Mr. Hind: He approached him as the chairman of the Merseyside group of Members of Parliament and he told Mr. Kilroy-Silk that they would offer him a deal. The deal was that if he would stand down in Knowsley, North they would offer him the Labour nomination for Parliament for west Lancashire to fight against me.

Mr. Parry *rose*——

Mr. Hind: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman when I have finished. It is notable that no writs have been flying about from the hon. Member for Riverside.

That offer was made following a meeting of what was called the broad Left in Liverpool. We all know what the broad Left in Liverpool means. It means Militant as much as anything. They had decided that Mr. Tony Mulhearn was to be the candidate. We all know that he is one of the eight that the Labour party has recently expelled because he was a member of Militant — only eight, not the thousands that we know are members of the Labour party in the north-west.

The importance of that for my part of the world is that that meeting in Lancashire must have contained representatives of the Labour party in west Lancashire to be able to sew up such a deal. That means that a lot of those members who have now elected, believe it or not, the chairman of the west Lancashire Labour party as their candidate in the next election—he was chairman at the time that that meeting took place — must have known something about it as well.

Mr. Gow: As the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) is in his place, and since, mercifully, my hon.

[Mr. Gow]

Friend has the relevant extract from this excellent book, will he remind the House of what happened in the alcove between the hon. Member for Riverside and our former friend?

Mr. Hind: It will be my pleasure. The hon. Member for Riverside is alleged to have said:

"'I've been asked to have a word with you as chairman of the group.' He coughed. He meant the Merseyside Group of Labour MPs — which did not meet very often and the identity of whose chairman was unknown even to some members of the Group. He seemed hesitant. I was impatient to vote and leave for home."

"'I've a . . . ' He looked round again. 'I've been asked to offer you a deal.' I listened, first with incredulity, then amazement, and finally with a mixture of anxiety and anger.

What the 'deal' amounted to was that I should reconcile myself to the 'fact' that I would not be reselected for my Knowsley North seat but be replaced by the Militant supporter and president of Liverpool Labour Party, Tony Mulhearn. That, he said, had already been 'decided'."

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman proceeds with these interesting extracts, I should remind him that all that took place in the past and we are talking about what happens next.

Mr. Hind: I only raise these matters because they are relevant for you to consider, Mr. Speaker, in relation to this by-election and the interests of the voters of Knowsley, North.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk goes on:

"I could have the candidature for the neighbouring, but Tory-held, West Lancashire constituency."

That is my seat.

"If however, I refused to accept 'reality' and caused a public row, I would find myself blacklisted in West Lancashire and elsewhere, as well as Knowsley, North."

That is very relevant. The true Labour party is not being represented by the decision of the Labour party executive.

Mr. Parry: The Gentleman has quoted extensively from the so-called book of Mr. Kilroy-Silk. But the statements in that book are a complete distortion of what happened. At the request of many trade unionists, including my own union, the Transport and General Workers Union, and members of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers who had been sacked and who had lost their jobs in Kirkby, I spoke to Mr. Kilroy-Silk. He had not raised one finger to save the jobs of those thousands of workers. I asked Mr. Kilroy-Silk, if he was democratically deselected—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an intervention. The hon. Gentleman must be brief.

Mr. Parry: It is common knowledge in the Labour party that if the 1983 general election had not occurred when it did Mr. Kilroy-Silk would not have been selected because of his lack of effort on behalf of the people of Kirkby. There had been speculation that he was going to resign or stand as an independent Labour candidate against a selected member, so I put it to him that he should not split the Labour vote and should not resign or stand as an independent member. There was no mention of west Lancashire, of Mr. Tony Mulhearn or of anyone else.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk has been one of the most disgraceful Members of Parliament for Merseyside for many years —*[Interruption.]* In 10 years, he did not attend one meeting of the Merseyside group, and often flatly refused to meet official delegations from Merseyside, from his own constituency, from the unemployed——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman seems to be making more of a speech than an intervention.

Mr. Parry *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order The hon. Gentleman has had long enough.

Mr. Parry *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may make one last point.

Mr. Parry: Mr. Kilroy-Silk refused to meet pensioners and handicapped people from his own constituency, including blind people. That is why he is attacked by people in the Labour party. He has done nothing for more than 10 years. He has put it in his book——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say to the hon. Gentleman that we have dealt in considerable detail with what is alleged to have happened in the past? The only issue before us is whether this warrant be issued. We must not concentrate on what is to happen in the next few weeks.

Mr. Hind: I wish to reinforce what I said. These matters need to be seriously considered. We have heard the hon. Member for Riverside. I declare an interest as a member of the legal profession. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to meet me in the Lobby afterwards, I can start to prepare his libel case against Mr. Kilroy-Silk.

If Mr. Kilroy-Silk is correct, he was not good enough for Knowsley, North but he was good enough for west Lancashire. He obviously decided that discretion was the better part of valour and decided to stick with Knowsley, North because he thought that the Tories of west Lancashire were made of sterner stuff.

5.34 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Perhaps I should remind the House that the Labour Chief Whip has moved the writ in the normal way. It is very unusual for the moving of a writ to be the subject of debate in the House. When the motion has been debated, it has normally been because Back Benchers on both sides of the House have considered that the party claiming the seat or previously representing it has been too dilatory. In other words, in the few debates that we have had, the complaint has been that the motion should have been moved more swiftly and that the electors of the constituency concerned are being denied the services of their Member of Parliament.

The purpose of the House in debating such matters has always been to ensure that the constituents' interests are paramount and that they should have the first opportunity of putting to the test the rival claims of the different political parties that they will provide the best Member of Parliament for that constituency.

I thought that the leader of the Liberal party made a thin, threadbare and wholly unconvincing case that was not related in any way to the action that has been taken in the courts or to the issuing of the writ. Candidates are often subject to procedures in the courts, but we must decide whether we should move the writ and whether, therefore, we should give the people of Knowsley, North the opportunity of voting for their new Member of Parliament at the earliest moment.

Mr. Steel: What precedent is there for doubt about the nomination of the candidate to be hanging over the period of the issue of a writ? I know of none.

Mr. Shore: I can think of no precedent, but it is not relevant to the issue of the writ, which is entirely a matter for the House. It would be an invasion of the privileges of the House, as we have heard, if the court were to make such a judgment. Indeed, to the best of my knowledge there is a named, nominated candidate for that constituency. Each party operates under different rules and procedures, and until and unless our rules and procedures are shown to be false in a court of law, that nomination stands.

The only positive feature of the leader of the Liberal party's unfortunate introduction of this debate was to expose the motives of the alliance parties. He confessed at the end of his speech that if we proceeded today it would be unfair to alliance candidates. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) has already very properly drawn attention to the heading in the *Liverpool Daily Post* or the *Liverpool Echo*—I forget which—in which the leader of the Liberal party apparently threatened, "Hurry up or else". No doubt the Liberals would move the writ themselves. It is an astonishing volte face in a ridiculous period of time.

I now wish only to congratulate some of the hon. Members who took part in this debate on providing us with some entertainment and with even more buffoonery. However, the House should now reach a decision and give the people concerned the opportunity of deciding who is to be the Member of Parliament for Knowsley, North.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That Mr. Speaker do issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the county constituency of Knowsley, North, in the room of Robert Kilroy-Silk, Esquire, who since his election for the said county constituency hath accepted the office of steward or bailiff of Her Majesty's Manor of Northstead in the county of York.

Orders of the Day

Sex Discrimination Bill [*Lords*]

Order for Third Reading read.

5.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The Bill has two aims: to extend equal opportunities and to remove unnecessary bureaucracy. I know from the reports of the Committee stage and from our debates on Report yesterday that there are still differences of opinion about some of the detail of the Bill. Some Opposition Members seem strangely fond of bureaucracy and reluctant to agree to any proposals aimed at its reduction. But I know that all sides are united in supporting the Bill's primary aim of extending equal opportunities.

Our nation needs the talent of all its people if it is to become more efficient and therefore more competitive and prosperous. Only in that way can we hope to provide more real job opportunities for both men and women. We will not achieve this if either men or women are denied opportunities because of unreasonable, restrictive sex discrimination. The Bill is a further step towards the removal of such discrimination.

Hon. Members will not want me to review the details of the Bill's provisions, but I will touch on its highlights. With the new clauses inserted in Committee it now has three parts. The first, clauses 1 and 6, amends our legislation to conform with the judgment of the European Court of Justice. It said that our legislation was deficient on three counts: the blanket exemptions for small households, firms with five or fewer employees and the way that it dealt with non-legally binding collective agreements. Following a suggestion in another place this part of the Bill also brings partnerships of five or fewer within the scope of the Sex Discrimination Act — a fitting acknowledgement of the increase in the number of women entering business on their own account and of the Government's commitment to self-employment. One in four of those who are self-employed and also one in four of those who are enterprise allowance scheme participants are women.

We have had extensive discussions on the wording of the provision concerning private households. It is a most important provision since it could directly affect the homes of everyone in the country at some point in their lives. I know some hon. Members feel that the wording is still not sufficiently precise, but in my view it nicely balances two principles: the elimination of unreasonable sex discrimination and respect for private life.

The second part of the Bill consists of the new clauses added in Committee, clauses 2 to 5.

Clauses 2 and 3 provide for equal treatment in retirement age, and we introduced them in Committee as a result of the European Court's judgment in February in the case of Miss Marshall *v.* South-West Hampshire area health authority. Clause 2 makes it unlawful for an employer compulsorily to treat a woman differently from a comparable male employee solely on grounds of age. For example, it makes it unlawful compulsorily to retire her at 60 while allowing a man in a comparable situation to go

[Mr. John Lee]

on working until 65, or to refuse her promotion or training because she is nearing 60 while allowing such rights to a man. Clause 3 gives a woman who is dismissed by her employer the right to claim unfair dismissal up to age 65, unless of course the undertaking where she works has a different normal retirement age which applies to both men and women.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Will the Minister take this last opportunity to explain why the Government have not ended some discrimination against women who are still not entitled to redundancy payments if they are between the ages of 60 and 65? Surely that point should have been tackled when we were dealing with pensions and unfair dismissal. However, the Government did not deal with it, so will they tell us why?

Mr. Lee: If I have time, I shall endeavour to answer that point later. However, as the hon. Gentleman knows, we are pressed for time. Clauses 2 and 3 represent a major step along the road to full equality, which has been welcomed on all sides. No longer can it be assumed that a woman has finished her working life before a man, and many employers are having to reconsider their policies which rest on this assumption. Although we have provided for employers to have up to a year to comply with these new provisions, not all will need so long to rearrange their procedures and adjust their manpower planning, and I hope that employers will make these necessary and welcome changes as quickly as they can.

Clause 4 removes the administrative hurdle which previously faced organisations wishing to provide training for people of one sex in occupations where they are seriously under-represented or for people in special need of training because they have been out of the labour market discharging domestic or family responsibilities. Experience has shown that this check is no longer necessary, and I believe that its removal will give further encouragement to the aim of bringing more women into occupations associated with science or new technology in which their numbers are still too few.

Clause 5 closes a small loophole in sex discrimination laws by preventing local authorities from using public entertainment licensing powers in a sex discriminatory way. I know of no authorities which currently discriminate, but the deficiency in our law was brought to our attention by the European Commission and we are now remedying it.

I turn to the third and final objective of the Bill—the repeal of restrictions on hours of work. Clause 7 removes outdated and discriminatory restrictions on the hours women may work in industrial undertakings, and clause 8 repeals the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954, which restricts night baking by male bakery workers.

The repeal of restrictions on women's hours are quite simply aimed at removing discriminatory legislation that has outlived its original purpose. The restrictions originated as long ago as the mid-19th century when industrial conditions, the position of women, and society in general were very different from today. It is high time that the 1·5 million women in the manufacturing sector should shed the somewhat second-class status that these restrictions imply. They should be permitted to determine their own hours of work with their employers without the law's intervention. It is illogical that women in this one sector should be held back in this way. The repeals will merely put these women on a par not only with men in manufacturing but with the 8 million women in jobs where there are no legislative restrictions on hours of work.

The repeals will also remove a bureaucratic burden from employers. At present, employers may request the Health and Safety Executive to issue special exemption orders, renewable annually where they argue that it is necessary for increased efficiency. The House has not refused a request in recent years, and during the year 1984-85 more than 4,000 special exemption orders were granted covering more than 200,000 of the 1·5 million women in manufacturing. Almost half of those exemptions allowed some night working by women.

The flexibility provided by this exemption procedure strengthens the case for repeal rather than diminishing it. It implies that the restrictions on hours have little practical relevance in today's world. But I must stress that we would not repeal the restrictions if it involved any risks in our view to health and safety.

In this context, we should not forget the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. This comprehensive Act takes the modern approach to health, safety and welfare at work, leaving older legislation to play a subsidiary role. It imposes on all employers a general duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees. Employers must still consider the effects of changes in hours on their employees.

As I have said, the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954 regulates the hours which men may work in the baking industry, specifically excluding women from its provisions. The repeal of restrictions on women's hours would produce a ridiculous situation whereby the hours of men working in bakeries would continue to be regulated but women's hours would not. The options are to repeal the Act as we have chosen to do, or to extend it to women as the Opposition would prefer.

I do not want to rehearse previous arguments raised in Committee and on Report. Let me just make two points: first, the Act empowers the Secretary of State to issue exemptions suspending the statutory restrictions on hours if a collective agreement exists. Six such exemptions have been granted over the years, exempting from the Act some two thirds of employees in baking who settle their hours by collective agreement. The weaknesses that existed in the bargaining machinery of the industry are therefore no longer apparent.

Secondly, the Federation of Bakers has assured us that there is no prospect of job losses on the scale that the union fears. Although we understand the very natural anxieties that women may feel about the repeals, these fears must be kept in perspective. Millions of women — the vast majority — work in jobs where hours are not regulated by law and they organise their lives without apparent difficulty. Their experience suggests that women in manufacturing will be just as capable of doing that and will benefit from the increased opportunities that greater flexibility and removal of discrimination will bring. The repeals will also lift an unjustifiable burden from employers and will help to promote enterprise and ultimately employment, which is the Government's fundamental aim.

To sum up, this Bill will promote equal opportunities and flexibility in employment and will remove some

unnecessary bureaucracy. It is another step along the path to equality, and as such I am proud to be identified with it. I commend it to the House.

5.49 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): The Minister was blindly complacent about women's rights. If the Bill is an example of the Government's attitude to those rights I am glad that we shall have an election within the next 12 months or so and get a different Government.

It is a sad coincidence that we should be discussing this particularly bad Bill this year, because 1986 marks the publication of the Equal Opportunities Commission's 10th annual report. Considering what the EOC has said about the Bill and the rearguard action that the present chairperson had to mount in another place, the report has an ironic subtitle:

"So much to build on".

Needless to say, it went to press full of optimism that its advice to the Government on the provisions dealing with protective legislation would be heeded. The commission must now be feeling decidedly pessimistic.

As the full implications of this ragbag of a Bill have gradually unfolded, its true purpose has emerged ever more strongly. It is clear that it has nothing to do with real equality for women. After a decade of sex equality legislation—introduced by a Labour Government—the Government have thrown away a golden opportunity to review and amend the legislation positively and constructively.

Labour Members recognised that such unique legislation—as it was at the time—would have its imperfections. Indeed, I was a member of the Standing Committee that considered the original Sex Discrimination Bill and I recall that, as a Government Back Bencher, I pointed out some of the imperfections in it. I know that if we had a Labour Government today those imperfections would be put right.

Equally important, we knew that the legislation would need constant review and amendment in the wake of case law and changing expectations. The Equal Opportunities Commission, which was established simultaneously with the enactment of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the amendments to the Equal Pay Act 1970, was enjoined to keep both Acts under review and, where necessary, to report to Parliament with recommendations for change.

In addition, throughout the past decade individual women, women in the labour movement and women's organisations have drawn attention to the deficiencies and weaknesses which have been found, through practice and experience, to exist in the original legislation.

There has also been a growing awareness of the need for positive action—I shall repeat that for the benefit of Conservative Members who do not know the difference between positive action and positive discrimination; it is displeasing to see the empty Government Benches following our previous riveting debate. There has been a growing awareness of the positive action that must be taken to ensure that equality for women means real equality rather than a paper commitment to an abstract concept.

Positive action means, for example, the provision of creches in Manpower Service Commission skillcentres, which the Government have consistently obstructed; it means removing the punitive tax that the Government introduced on workplace nursery places; it means encouraging affordable, reliable, safe and accountable public transport, which the Government are attempting to destroy; it means extending employment rights and benefits to part-time workers — almost exclusively women — whose rights are being systematically wiped out by the Government; it means implementing the EEC directive on parental and family leave, restoring maternity rights and benefits, which the Government have ruthlessly plundered, and allowing local authorities to raise their rates to provide the real care in the community which women need to be able to exercise their right to work.

Positive action also means adopting equal opportunities policies throughout the public sector, promoted by contract compliance to educate and bring in line the private sector. It also means eradicating the discrimination that riddles our tax and security system—a task which the Government's Green Paper on taxation reform and their Social Security Act 1986 have singularly failed to perform.

I am conscious of the shortage of time for the debate because of the intrusion of the previous debate. My list could go on and on, yet what is the Government's reply? They have introduced a ragbag of grudging, partial provision with only minimum compliance with changes that have been forced upon them, and they have repealed protective legislation to level down protection for women and men, which has been pressed for by no one.

I emphasise that not one organisation with expertise in anti-discrimination and health and safety laws has requested or advocated the total repeal of that protective legislation. It is the epitome of negative action and the Conservative Members in Standing Committee seemed to have no trouble understanding that concept.

The Government have ignored all advice and have blocked every attempt to provide measures to level up, equalise and improve the conditions of all workers employed in the sectors covered by the Bill. I shall await with great interest a statement from the new Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security with special responsibility for women's health on her views on the implications for women's health when women in the manufacturing sector and the baking industry are forced to work double day shifts, weekends and bank holidays, includng Christmas day, with no code of practice governing the introduction of such enforced changes and no right of appeal for unfair dismissal. I hope that the new Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who served on the Standing Committee on the Bill before her elevation, will keep the matter under close scrutiny, because the Government have failed in their duty to women by forcing through this legislation.

We are advised that clause 1 is unnecessarily wide and may lead to costly litigation and conflicting rulings. Clauses 2 and 3 introduce provisions which will lead to discrimination against men over 60, perpetuate discrimination against women in redundancy rights and create even more anomalies and uncertainty over retirement-related fringe benefits.

Clause 4 will need careful monitoring to ensure that it is not abused. Clause 5 merely closes one small gap in the yawning chasm which section 51 of the Sex Discrimination Act has become and which, together with the Marshall ruling, is a prime example of where further positive action must be taken.

We are advised that the outcome of clause 6 will be random and uncertain, as it fails to provide any

[Ms. Jo Richardson]

mechanism to deal properly with its provisions. Clauses 7 and 8 effectively wipe out any claims that the Government may have wanted to make for themselves as responsive or caring.

The Government's obstinate refusal, against the advice of the EOC and all the trade unions involved, to equalise protection upwards exposes their complete lack of understanding of real equality—equality which improves the quality of life in the workplace, in the home and in the community.

The attitude that has been displayed and some of the views that have been expressed during our debates in Committee and in the Chamber by some Conservative Members, one of whom stated that he would be happy to see the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act scrapped—a mind-boggling prospect—do not augur well for the review of the Acts which the EOC has recently announced that it intends to conduct. The task of the EOC will be made all the more difficult by the passing of this shoddy Bill, and the Government's refusal to accept the EOC's recommendations on so many aspects of the Bill must fill the Commission with trepidation about future reviews.

I am pleased to say that we in the Opposition have already taken on board all the issues that the EOC has outlined in its review and much more as a priority for the legislative programme that will be brought forward by our Ministry for women. That Ministry will be established when we get a Labour Government and such a Ministry cannot come soon enough for the women of Britain. The next EOC report after this Government have gone may have to be subtitled "Building from the Ruins". A Labour Government will be prepared to undertake that task. We oppose this Bill and will vote against it. We eagerly await the day when we can start rebuilding and giving women the opportunities and the back-up that they need.

6 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): In recognition of the reduced amount of time for this debate, and in deference to hon. Members who have spent much more time on this Bill than I have, and for some of whom I deputise today, I shall make just one or two comments on this measure.

The Bill is a small measure in relation to one of the biggest issues of our day—the institutional discrimination against women which deprives our community, our employers and this House of a contribution that we can ill afford to miss. The Bill misses many opportunities to redress imbalances. Like the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), I regret that the Government's way of achieving equality in the baking industry is to reduce protection rather than to increase it. It is not in accord with the present realities facing trade unions to suggest that simply by removing their protection women will be able to negotiate better conditions in the baking industry. That is not the case, and it is not something of which the unions are particularly proud. To put anyone in that position by legislation is reprehensible.

Many other measures are required to enable equality to be a reality for women, as opposed to simply trying to abolish discrimination. The existing legislation fails to address any of the problems. Some small points in the Bill are worthy of support, and for that reason the Bill is just about worthy of support, but only just.

6.2 pm

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): The one good thing about the Bill is its title. It has been the habit of the Government to misdescribe most of the Bills that they have introduced. They introduced a trade union-bashing Bill and called it an employment Bill. It had nothing to do with employment, because not only did it not create a single job, but it actually reduced the number of jobs. They introduced an erosion of civil liberties Bill and called it the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. They introduced an emasculation of wages councils Bill and called it a Wages Bill. At least this Bill has an honest title, because in the same way as a Finance Bill is for finance, and the Consolidated Fund Bill deals with the Consolidated Fund, so this sex discrimination Bill is for sex discrimination. Its long title ought to begin, "A Bill for the purposes of creating or, where it already exists, of enhancing sex discrimination."

Contrary views have been expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House about the purpose of and motivation for the Bill. The Government's argument is that it will sweep away old-time legislation and, in certain circumstances, equalise the conditions of women and men. That was the line taken last night by the right hon. and learned Gentleman—I have forgotten his title—[AN HON. MEMBER: "The Paymaster General."]—Yes, the Paymaster General. I ought not to have forgotten his title, because he lives much in my consciousness. He has a smooth oleaginous line of patter which reminds me of a chap from my boyhood days who used to sell gold watches for half a crown at mock auctions, or run out markets as we used to call them. The Paymaster General reminds me of that sort of sale.

The equality argument is put forward by the Government, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) said, we know what this Bill is about. It will tip the employer-employee relationship even further in the interests of the employer and weaken the already weak bargaining power of workers who are already weak because there are 4 million people unemployed. It will weaken especially the bargaining power of women workers.

There are two interpretations of what will be the effect of the Bill. How would an impartial person judge its effect? What evidence is there on the basis of which an impartial person could judge between the two interpretations? I suggest that there is one piece of evidence, because the Government gave the game away when they refused to accept new clause 1. That clause, which we put forward, would have left it to women workers to decide whether they wanted to be equal in status and equal in opportunity to earn more money by way of overtime or weekend work at the cost of leisure and safety, and at the cost of worsening their environmental conditions and of having to queue at bus stops at midnight on their way home from double day shifts.

If the motivation for the Bill is what the Government say it is, matters should be left for women to decide. After all, the Government are much in favour of secret ballots and in favour of a woman worker having the right to express an opinion on such a major question as who is to represent her on the executive of her trade union. They are

in favour of a woman worker having the right to express an opinion about whether her shop shall be a pre-entry closed shop, a post-entry closed shop or a non-closed shop — matters which many women probably do not understand at all. On such marginal things as how long she has to work each day, on how many hours she will be required to work without a break, whether she can be required to work at weekends or on Christmas day, and whether she will be required to work in unfavourable and unsafe environmental conditions she has no say at all.

If the Government were really seeking to improve women's conditions, they would have said yes to a ballot. They are talking about liberalising women. There is one great piece of liberalisation that anybody can confer, and it is the right for people to have a say in decisions that affect their lives and welfare and the lives and welfare of their families. The Government have denied that right, and that throws into question all their bona fides and the smooth talk of the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Paymaster General and the ostensible reasons — which are not the real reasons — that the Government put forward for the Bill.

I shall make two more points about the Government's case. A quick look at each of them shows that they do not hold water. The Government ask us why we worry, because if anybody is done by unfairly she can always go to an industrial tribunal. I shall not go over the ground that we covered yesterday about industrial tribunals, because we demonstrated beyond peradventure that they are difficult and expensive of access and will probably be made more difficult and more expensive. Even when one reaches a tribunal one finds that it does not run very well, because in many cases the people who run tribunals are not very well qualified to deal with the problems that come before them and are scarcely qualified at all in any understanding of sex discrimination.

A right of appeal has been taken away from women workers. Even under the stress of war in 1940, when we were facing what most people thought was the imminent danger of defeat and being overrun, we still allowed an appeal from the chap who said that his creed did not permit him to fight. We allowed him to appeal even in that terrible, critical and dangerous situation.

The Minister could not answer me yesterday when I raised a question on that point, so I shall now answer it myself. A lady of deep, devout Christian conviction, who, as a result of the Bill, was for the first time required to work on a Sunday and refused to do so and was then sacked—as she could be under the Bill—would have no right of appeal. She would not have the same right of appeal on the grounds of conscience and faith as young men had in 1940 against conscription. That is absolutely disgraceful.

The Government ask why we bother about these matters and why we do not leave them to be settled, not by law, but by negotiation between trades unions and employers. There are a number of sweat shops in my constituency. A large number of women work in the needle trades, many of them part-time in small establishments or at home, and they have no protection. They are virtually ununionised, partly because they work in small establishments, which makes a union difficult to organise, partly because there is a rapid turnover of personnel, which also makes a union difficult to organise, and partly because many of them are immigrants whose knowledge of the language is not good. For those reasons and others, there is little trade union organisation.

How does some poor girl on her own face an employer and negotiate with him? The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) was right to say that it is nonsense in present-day circumstances to talk about the negotiating process as one of negotiation between equals. The 4 million people unemployed have completely destroyed that. The queue of people at the factory gates cuts off the negotiating limbs of those inside the factory.

All the grounds that the Government have put forward in favour of the Bill, all the grounds that they have put forward to fend off our criticisms, are nothing but pretence. It is a pretence that the purpose of the Bill is anything other than to worsen the conditions of women workers; it is a pretence that any injustice is covered by the protection of industrial tribunals; and it is a pretence that we can leave these matters to free and equal negotiation. Under any sort of examination, the Government's case falls apart.

6.13 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I shall speak briefly on the clauses that affect women bakery workers and their families. The bulk of women who work in the baking industry in my constituency wish to put their families first. They are good wives and good mothers and they work because they have to—they need the money. The effects of this Bill on their family lives should not be ignored. It is no use the Government deploring the break-up of families and juvenile delinquency with one breath, while with the other they force mothers to work nights.

Night working for women brings particular problems in trying to manage both the home and the family. Children need their mothers, and husbands — at least most of them—need their wives. Child care provision is difficult enough for mothers to obtain during the day—during the night it is virtually impossible, if not non-existent. They face the problem of caring for the family and trying to snatch a few hours' sleep during the day in houses that are not insulated against noise, and that puts an added strain on them.

In my constituency the problem of sleeping during the day is very real and is made very much worse by the open-cast wagons running around the roads in ever-increasing numbers. The lack of money available to councils to insulate council houses against such noise is an issue that we must consider when discussing night working, especially for women. The bulk of women in my constituency do not like night working, either for themselves or for their husbands. They do not want their social and family life to be diminished—yet that will be the effect of the Bill.

I hope that the Minister will realise that tired women are an added health risk in factories. It is not too late for him to change his mind, and I hope that he does so.

6.16 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) on raising an important point about people who work shifts and at night facing the problem of establishing normal sleeping patterns during the day. That applies especially to women, many of whom have to contend with

[Mr. John Evans]

young children. I am sure that my hon. Friend's comments reflect the views of many women who will be affected by the Bill.

In what is, for obvious reasons, a rather short Third Reading debate it is germane for me to make it clear immediately that the Opposition will divide the House and vote against the Bill. We shall do so, not because we disagree with everything contained in the Bill — we concur with certain parts of it — but because the Government have used it to introduce deregulation. Throughout the Committee and Report stages we argued that such deregulation should not be enacted, and we continue to oppose that on Third Reading.

The Opposition welcome parts of clauses 2 and 3 as a proper response to the European Court's decision in the Helen Marshall case. It is right once again to put on record the congratulations of the House to Miss Marshall on her determination in taking her case all the way to the European Court and winning it, thereby materially altering the lives of many women.

We are still, however, concerned about some aspects of the clauses. The first is the timing of the implementation of the changes. Clause 10 provides that those clauses will not be implemented within 12 months of the passing of the Act. That means that the inequalities and inequities that the clauses are meant to remove will legally be in force for the next 12 months, thus providing an opportunity for women to continue to be discriminated against. The Government could enact the clauses much more quickly than they propose. We have never had a proper explanation of why we have to wait 12 months.

Another matter of concern is the inequality in the eligibility for state pensions. The Equal Opportunities Commission said that it remains

"very concerned at the failure to tackle the anomalies and differences in treatment between men and women which result from the unequal state pension age. For example, a woman between the ages of 60 and 64 will have the option of deferring retirement beyond the state pension age. She will be required no longer to pay the national insurance contributions and her eventual state pension entitlement will be enhanced for each year of employment over the age of 60. In contrast, a man will gain no such option. It was accepted by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Ian Lang) during the Committee stage of the Bill (column 192) that 'we all agree that discrimination in retirement will not be eliminated until there are equal state pension ages for men and women'."

Of course, the Government have ignored that aspect completely. I suspect that we could have further representations in the courts on this issue.

On the issue of redundancy payments, the EOC argued:

"Women will continue to be discriminated against on the the grounds of sex, in that they will cease to be eligible for a redundancy payment at age 60 . . . The Government regards the provision of redundancy payments as a matter falling under the EEC Social Security Directive and not under the Equal Treatment Directive. The Commission doubts whether this is a proper interpretation of the position under European Community law and notes that the European Court of Justice has recently reiterated the fundamental importance of the principle of equality of treatment between men and women. The Court has given strict interpretation to clauses in the Equal Treatment Directive which derogate from that principle, in particular Article 1(2) which purports to remove issues of Social Security from that Directive."

That was from the EOC newsletter of October 1986.

Finally, in relation to other associated benefits, the EOC states:

"A second defect of these clauses is the omission from paragraphs *(a)* to *(c)* of Clause 2(1) of words which appear in the comparable paragraphs of s.6(1) and (2) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 dealing with access to benefits, facilities or services and subjecting a person to any other detriment. The Government intends that sex discrimination shall continue to be lawful to the extent that these issues are related to death or retirement."

I submit to the House that the Government should have tackled these issues during the passage of a Bill which purports to deal with sex discrimination.

Clause 7 deals with the removal of restrictions on working hours and conditions of women. That lies at the heart of the Bill. We have reiterated all the arguments in Committee and on Report, and we have made it clear that what the Government are doing, which will worsen the conditions of work for men, and especially for women, is entirely unacceptable, and we will certainly oppose the Bill.

Clause 8 deals with the repeal of the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954. The repeal of that Act is doubly injudicious. Not only do the arguments about worsening the conditions of workers apply here, but there was not, and never has been, any demand for the repeal of the Act from workers or employers. Any anomolies in the Act could have been righted, in most cases, simply by applying its provisions equally to men and women, rather than by removing the Act entirely and reducing the conditions of work of male and female employees to the lowest common denominator.

Although the Government maintain that the Act is outdated and no longer necessary for the well-being of the industry and the workers within the industry, it is clear that the real reason behind its removal is that the alternative—extending the Act to cover women—would go against the Government's avowed intention to remove so-called bureaucracy and barriers to efficiency in business. It is in keeping with the general tenet of the Bill — if in doubt, scrap it. The Government argue that repealing the Act will have no effect on the conditions and hours of the work force in the baking industry. If that is the case, why are they trying to scrap it? In reality, they know that it will have a fundamental and negative effect on the work force. It plays into the hands of unscrupulous employers, who will use the opportunity to exploit the work force even more than at present.

A survey conducted by the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union found that the weekly average working hours in the industry amounted to 64 hours for dayshift and 63 hours for nightshift. In two large bakeries, they found 72 hours to be the average. The Government's own figures show that at least 30 per cent. of the work force in the industry are still covered directly by the terms of the 1954 Act. The other 70 per cent. may very well work under separate, negotiated agreements, but these agreements are based on the 1954 Act, and its removal, coupled with fierce competition within the industry, will lead very quickly to employers enforcing new agreements which will be less advantageous to workers in terms of their working conditions, but very much more advantageous to the Government's friends, the employers, in terms of their renewed ability to increase profits.

Yesterday, a petition signed by over 2,000 workers in the baking industry was presented to Parliament. It expressed the view, very clearly, that the repeal of the Act was not desired by, nor is felt to be in the interest of, the work force affected. The Act was the result of 10 years of

pressure from workers in the industry expressing the same sentiments. It also followed four inquiries into the effects of abolishing bakery nightwork. In less than one year, and without any substantial body of opinion to that effect, the Government are planning in this Bill to abolish the Act and thereby make bakers' lives more hazardous. For that reason, and the other reasons that I have outlined, the Opposition will vote against the Bill.

6.26 pm

Mr. Lee: The Bill makes a number of changes which will help to improve the position of women in employment and secure for them the effective equal opportunities which we all wish to see. Although the European Community has played a part in this development, I see it as essentially a continuation of the movement towards the removal of unfair sex discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities between men and women which has been supported by both sides of the House and to which this Government have been firmly committed.

Perhaps, I could mention just one change to which I attach great importance and which will I believe significantly improve the position of women at work both in the short and the long-term. That is the removal of discrimination in retirement ages following the Marshall judgment on which the Government acted with commendable speed. As I explained in my opening remarks, we consider it necessary to provide for a short period of 12 months after the Royal Assent for employers to make the changes in their retirement arrangements which will be needed. I should like to repeat my view that it will be in the interests both of employers and all their employees to remove, as soon as possible this long outdated anomaly of requiring a woman who wishes to continue working to retire in circumstances where a man can stay on. I am therefore heartened to hear of firms including Securicor, Mecca and the Prudential which are already taking steps to equalise their retirement ages and hope that many more will follow their example during the next few months without waiting until the last moment before the requirement comes into operation.

That does not contradict in any way the Government's aim of improving the competitiveness and efficiency of the economy. On the contrary, it must serve the ends of sound business practice as well as of justice between the sexes to ensure that the best use is made of all available skills and talents. I am therefore pleased to note the support which has been given to the general aims of the Bill, despite differences on individual provisions. The Bill is sensible and progressive, adds to labour market flexibility and should be warmly welcomed. I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 194, Noes 105.

Division No. 293] **6.28 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruce, Malcolm
Budgen, Nick
Butterfill, John
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Cranborne, Viscount
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Greenway, Harry
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*

Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Coleman, Donald
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Leighton, Ronald
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Mark Fisher.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

Salmon Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

6.40 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Most of us who have been involved with the Bill from the beginning, and others in another place, would say that one of the most important issues of the Bill is drift netting. It is unfortunate that the only amendment dealing with drift netting has not been selected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that Mr. Speaker, before he makes his selection, takes all factors into consideration, including matters which have been discussed at earlier stages of the Bill. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman with his well known ingenuity will find that some of the selected new clauses and amendments will allow him to make his points.

Mr. James Tinn (Redcar): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As someone with a similar interest to that of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) but with a different point of view, may I ask that we shall have the Chair's indulgence in our ingenuity?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must not stretch my words that far. I said that it may be that the hon. Gentleman's points would be in order on other new clauses or amendments. However, we must judge that when we come to it.

New Clause 10

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION FURNISHED UNDER THE DISEASES OF FISH ACT 1983

'(1) In subsection (1) of section 9 of the Diseases of Fish Act 1983 (disclosure of information obtained in pursuance of section 7 of that Act), after paragraph *(c)* there shall be inserted the words "or

(d) for the purpose of enabling a water authority to carry out any of their functions under the 1937 Act.".'.—*[Mr. Gummer.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: New clause 2—*Measures relating to the prevention of disease among fish*—

'(1) Notwithstanding and without prejudice to the provisions of section 30 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975 ("Introduction of fish into inland waters"), any person who knowingly supplies any fish or spawn of fish to another for the purpose of the introduction of that spawn or fish into an inland water in circumstances where the written consent of the water authority within whose area any part of the water is situated has not been obtained under section 30 aforesaid, shall be guilty of an offence, punishable on summary conviction with a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale.

(2) In subsection (1) of section 9 of the Diseases of Fish Act 1983 ("Disclosure of Information"), there shall be added the following paragraph—

"*(d)* for the purpose of enabling a water authority to enforce the provisions of this Act and the 1937 Act in fulfilment of its duty to maintain, improve and develop fisheries within its area by virtue of paragraph *(a)* of subsection (1) of section 28 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.".'.

Government amendment No. 33.

Amendment No. 34, in clause 33, page 28, line 28, after 'introduce', insert

'in respect of salmon or trout'.

Amendment No. 35, in clause 33, page 28, line 29, at end insert

'which is not in any way connected either directly or indirectly to a river'.

Government amendments Nos. 49, 50, 53 and 54.

Mr. Gummer: We have had an extremely interesting debate in Committee on a whole range of issues. I undertook to listen carefully to what was said to see whether we could meet some of the points raised by hon. Members from both sides of the House. One of those points is covered in new clause 10.

The clause concerns the disclosure of information collected under the fish farm registration scheme. That scheme was very properly set up for specific purposes. Parliament restricted the situations in which the information gathered under the scheme could be disclosed. My hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) and other of my right hon. and hon. Friends stated that the scheme did not meet a particular need in combating fish disease because there were circumstances in which water authorities might need the information gathered under the registration scheme. As authorities have functions relating to the control of fish disease, it seemed correct, as fish disease is of such great importance even though few instances were involved, that we should meet the contention so helpfully put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Woking. Therefore, new clause 10 will allow such information to be given to water authorities where the authorities can show that they need the information to fulfill their responsibilities under the Fish Act 1937. I believe that the National Farmers Union will be content with that approach in principle. I therefore hope that the new clause will be accepted by the House.

New clause 2 has two parts. I hope that the second part will become redundant under the circumstances of the proposed new clause 10. The first part deals with the offence of supplying live fish to a customer who has not obtained water authority consent to introduce the fish to an inland water if the supplier knew that the consent had not been obtained. I assume that my hon. Friend the Member for Woking does not intend the supplier to be prosecuted merely for failing to ask the customer whether he had obtained the necessary consent. That would be out of proportion to the original offence on the customer's part. We have to assume that the supplier knew that the customer did not have the water authority consent to introduce the fish and that therefore an offence was commited under section 30 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975. In those circumstances, the criminal law already provides for the supplier to be prosecuted for aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring the commission of an offence under section 44 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980. The subsection is unnecessary.

Some hon. Members have suggested that the subsection is necessary. My hon. Friend the Member for Woking has drawn my attention this evening to the anxiety which one water authority has in that matter. I have looked at the case as carefully as has been possible in the short time since that anxiety was expressed, but my advice is that section 30 of the 1975 Act would, in the circumstances which the water authority has raised with my hon. Friend the Member for Woking, meet the case.

However, the Government's intention is to meet the worries which lie behind the first part of new clause 2. Obviously I will consider the matter further to see whether action should be taken. I believe that the subsection is unnecessary and I hope that we will cover the second part of the new clause 2 in new clause 10. I therefore hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Woking will be willing to withdraw his proposed new clause 2.

Government amendment 33 covers section 30 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975. That makes it an offence to introduce fish or spawn into any inland water without the consent of the relevant water authorities. There is no right of appeal if the water authority says no.

Water authorities have a statutory duty to maintain, improve and develop the fisheries in their areas. The Government therefore accept that controls under section 30 of the 1975 Act are necessary to prevent release into rivers and other waterways of fish which could damage the existing fish population, for example, pike into a salmon stream. We consider, however, that section 30 represents a considerable and unnecessary burden for the general run of fish farms.

Deregulation forms an important part of Government policy and we shall take appropriate opportunities to remove unnecessary restrictions. That is what clause 33 seeks to achieve. There is no doctrinal view that we should remove regulation where it is valuable. My hon. Friend the Member for Woking and others have raised the point that there are circumstances in which the measure, which was not originally seen as a measure for the protection of fish and the elimination of fish disease, might be helpful. It might be helpful where there is a direct connection between a fish farm and other inland water where that connection might be a source of disease.

Under the amendment, we intend to retain the controls under section 30 of the 1975 Act on the introduction of fish or spawn into fish farms operating in cages or netted-off sections of rivers or other waterways. There are grounds for retaining controls on such sites because they are not insulated from other inland waters. The amendment would cover that area of real concern.

I know that my hon. Friends sometimes feel that we ought to go further and deal with cases where there is a connection with a conduit or ditch. Generally, fish farms connected by conduits come under water authority control because they will need the authority's consent to discharge effluent under the Control of Pollution Act 1974. I do not believe that the alternative amendments proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Woking are necessary. If my hon. Friend's amendments were accepted, the only people who would no longer have the extra burden of section 30 would be those with fish farms completely unconnected to a river. Therefore, section 30 would continue to apply to the overwhelming majority of fish farms, most of which are connected to a river by a conduit. I do not believe that such control should continue to be applied to these sites. As I have said, these measures were not introduced to control disease, but ever since they were introduced we have shown increasing concern about fish disease.

There is legislative back-up for the action that we wish to take. We are extremely strict on occasions when we feel that there is a danger of increased fish disease. But we do not believe that this control is any longer necessary on that ground, and it is certainly not necessary on any other grounds. However, we accept the point made by my hon.

[Mr. Gummer]

Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), and in the light of what we have been able to do I hope that he will accept the change that we have made.

I know that hon. Members feel strongly about fish disease. It is of enormous importance. We do not think that new clause 2 is the way to deal with the problem. We have the Diseases of Fish Acts which vest the principal responsibility in Ministers. It is important to do what we can under the legislation to place very tight controls on the movement of fish and eggs that are or may be infected by serious diseases.

It is important to reiterate the Government's absolute commitment to continue with the tough and tight controls on fish and eggs in order to ensure that we protect the stock. In view of what I have said, I hope that the House will agree to Government amendment No. 33 and that my hon. Friend the Member for Woking will withdraw amendments Nos. 34 and 35.

I think that we have the right balance between deregulation of a part of the Act that was not introduced for this purpose — but which some water authorities have found useful for part of the purpose — and the retention of that part that they may find useful.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): The Opposition welcome the notion of disclosing information under the fish farm registration scheme. If powers have been granted to the water authorities, it seems quite absurd that earlier legislation has prevented the dissemination of the information that is needed in order to carry out their functions.

However, I wonder whether this measure goes far enough in the way in which it attempts to combat fish disease. I agree with the Minister completely that this is a very important matter, but do the new clause and disclosure do enough to stop disease, and do the water authorities have all the powers that they need in order to carry out this work?

I should like to paraphrase part of a letter that I have received from Dr. Ron Linfield of the Anglia water authority. He said that to improve our capability to enforce controls over both fish diseases and the introduction of alien or exotic species we needed an amendment to either section 7 or section 9 of the Diseases of Fish Act 1983. That would create for water authority officers with particular responsibility for carrying out statutory fishery functions a right of access to the fish farm register and associated movement records held at each farm. He said that the amendment we needed to give special recognition to the role of the water authorities gave the general prohibition on disclosure of information by the MAFF that it had created in section 9. Does this go far enough or should not the new clause have been more comprehensive in order to restrict the spread of fish disease?

The Minister said that inland waters could be connected by means of conduit, but are rivers covered? Inland waters can be connected to other inland waters, but what happens when an inland water is connected to a river? That could surely be a source of disease.

We agree that the control of fish disease is crucial and we completely support the notion that there should be restrictions on the movement of fish as well as other controls.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for going a limited way towards meeting the amendments that I tabled. They are not a whim of my own but represent the collective view of the water authorities.

In general there seems to be a wide gulf between my right hon. Friend's Department and the water authorities over fish farms. In my experience, water authorities are in general not quite as happy to be persuaded by the NFU — the spokesman for the fish farms — as the MAFF sometimes appears to be. Perhaps I am being unfair to my right hon. Friend's officials—I probably am from time to time—but I think that a strong case is building up for a complete reform of the law relating to fish farms, not merely in respect of disease but also in respect of pollution, planning and other aspects of fish farming. We can perhaps return to that on another occasion as it will not be debated tonight.

My right hon. Friend has half met the intention of new clause 2. The half that he has not met should be taken a bit more seriously. Although I recognise that the correspondence that I put into my right hon. Friend's hands only half an hour ago—which came to me shortly before that from Dr. Linfield of Anglia—is difficult to digest, it nevertheless bears out the need for action in this area.

A particular case that the Severn-Trent water authority drew to Dr. Linfield's attention is an example of the sort of thing that happens under the law as it stands, and it is likely to happen more frequently after the law has been changed. In this case the North West water authority issued a consent for trout to be introduced into a farm in its region from a trout farm in Somerset. This source was cleared by the Ministry and the South West water authority, and the consent was issued. The fish were supplied but did not come from Somerset. The supplier named in the consent, in addition to being a fish farmer, also carried live fish about by way of trade, and he obtained them not from his own farm in Somerset but from a farm in Nottinghamshire belonging to the Severn-Trent water authority which was not informed of the destination of the fish.

When the fish were delivered to the site in the north-west, a fish disease was diagnosed shortly afterwards which was attributed to the supplying farm. The Severn-Trent water authority thought that was unfair, but when the whole matter was looked at it subsequently emerged that a different consignment of fish, for which consent was issued on the understanding that the supplier would be providing them, was in fact supplied from quite a different fish farm.

The complexity revealed in that brief summary shows that there must be precious little effective control in this area by MAFF officials and very little scope for relaxation if there is to be effective prevention of the spread of fish disease.

I wish that we had been able to go over this in greater depth in Committee——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Raise it in the 1922 Committee.

Mr. Onslow: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would not make stupid observations. When he is on his feet he is bad enough, and when he remains seated he is quite absurd.

I do not believe that my right hon. Friend's officials can be relying on the support of the water authorities for the

brief which they have given him. I doubt whether those interested parties outside official bodies, who take great interest and show much concern about river pollution, would endorse what my right hon. Friend has said. The adequacy of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 is strongly contested by bodies such as the Anglers Co-operative Association, of which I am a council member. It takes a close interest in these matters and is better informed than many water authorities. I ask my right hon. Friend to ask his officials to give him the details of the West Beck case. That case illustrates how dangerous the pollution problem can be and how important it is to keep tight control over fish farms and the quality of the water which they release into our rivers.

Evidently my right hon. Friend will not be persuaded. I would let amendments Nos. 34 and 35 go by without calling upon him to make any further comment, but I must ask him to answer my queries concerning new clause 2. I await, with interest, what he has to say.

7 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am glad that the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) is being persistent in this matter, because it is a cause of concern in many parts of the House. The potential for the spread of disease or the arrival of unwelcome species of fish is great. One only has to consider what happened when mink escaped into the wild in some parts of the country to realise that dangers could exist in the rivers.

I echo the hon. Gentleman's thanks to the Government for going some way but I cannot understand why the Government do not want to make these provisions as tight and reliable as possible. The Government, at a time of expansion in fish farming, should make sure that there is maximum control in these matters, as such expansion poses many dangers.

Many new entrepreneurs are attracted to the business and there are good people involved in the industry. If expansion is taking place, who knows whom it will attract? It is important that the water authorities should be able to control the situation. The fears which have been expressed by the hon. Member for Woking must not be realised. Our salmon and trout must not be endangered. I urge the Minister to listen carefully to the arguments presented to him by the hon. Member.

Mr. Gummer: In reply to the questions posed by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), we believe that the amendments go far enough to provide the information which is needed by water authorities to undertake their responsibilities under the Diseases of Fish Act 1983. If we did not believe that, we would have phrased the amendments in a different way. The hon. Gentleman was right to ask a direct question and he has got a direct answer.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West expressed concern about the phrase "inland waters". We used that phrase because, in law, they do include rivers, lakes, reservoirs, streams, etc. Rather than put all those words in, the phrase "inland waters" was used. I am sure that, in legal parlance, that phrase will cover all the examples.

The reason that conduits are mentioned——

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Cundies.

Mr. Gummer: Is that what I have to say to the Scots? I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon. In fact I would not say it in Scots because there are few examples of this type of fish farm in Scotland. Therefore, in this case I may use the English term.

A conduit refers to a particular kind of connection other than a ditch. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West was concerned that we should get the parlance right and I shall not tease him by asking whether he knows where rivers come or go. Nevertheless, one must specify both conduits and ditches. Conduits, in some cases, link the fish farms to the river and they are affected by the Control of Pollution Act 1974. The fears of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) would be realised if we were suggesting a removal of control which lessened our power to deal with pollution. I have studied this matter in great detail.

The problem between my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) and myself is that we have a differing view about whether this provision gives the additional protection necessary for the elimination and containment of fish diseases. That is the issue and it is a difficult one to resolve because we have both looked at the same facts and come to different conclusions.

I have had time to study the West Beck case. As it stands, there is breach of water authorities' consent under section 30 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975. If the supplier knows that the appropriate consent is not being complied with, the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 makes it an offence to aid and abet in these circumstances. In this case, the supplier and the receiver are committing an offence.

The difficulty is that the legislation which we are largely rescinding under this Bill was enacted not for the protection of fish from disease but for other reasons. Those other reason are not now prayed in aid of retention: what we do pray in aid is the legislation's usefulnes in preventing disease from spreading.

I see no reason for retaining any more of the legislation than that part which will continue to be useful. If I thought that by retaining more of it, or all of it, we would in any way improve the protection of fish from disease, I would agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Woking. I have not been so persuaded, and I do not believe that the House should be. Although I have studied the West Beck case with care, I shall reconsider it. If I find that there is some information therein of which I was not aware I will have further discussions with my hon. Friend concerning the matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 7

USE OF BAITS AND LURES

'.—(1) The Secretary of State may, subject to the provisions of this section, make regulations specifying baits and lures for the purposes of the definition of "rod and line" in section 24 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Protection) (Scotland) Act 1951.

(2) The Secretary of State may make regulations under this section only on—

(a) application to him by a district salmon fishery board; or

(b) a joint application to him by more than one such board,

and regulations made in respect of such application shall be made only in respect of the district of the applicant.

[Mr. Gummer]

(3) Regulations under this section shall specify, subject to such exceptions as may be provided therein, all or any, or a combination of, the following:—

(a) baits and lures or classes of baits and lures;

(b) times when the regulations apply;

(c) areas to which the regulations apply.

(4) An application under subsection (2) above shall be accompanied by the applicant's written proposals which shall state—

(a) the baits and lures which it is proposed should be specified;

(b) the places to which and the times during which the proposed regulations should apply; and

(c) the reasons for the proposals.

(5) Paragraphs 3 to 9 of Schedule 1 to this Act shall apply to the making of regulations under this section as they apply to the making of a designation order, and for this purpose—

(a) references to a designation order shall be construed as references to regulations under this section; and

(b) references to an applicant, and to an application, under paragraph 1 shall be construed respectively as references to an applicant, and to an application, under subsection (2) above.

(6) In section 24(1) of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Protection) (Scotland) Act 1951, at the end of the definition of "rod and line" there shall be inserted the following—"and, in the case of fishing for salmon in an area to which and at a time during which regulations made under section *(use of baits and lures)* of the Salmon Act 1986 apply, is not specified in such regulations in respect of that area and time".'.—*[Mr. John MacKay.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 8 to 10.

Mr. MacKay: New clause 7 and the related consequential amendments Nos. 8 and 9 provide the regulation-making provision for baits and lures which I promised at Committee stage when considering an amendment proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). It is a clause much in the style of clause 6—the annual close time clause—in that it rests upon local initiative to start the ball rolling where there is a perceived need for some control over baits and lures.

Although under the clause regulations would be made by the Secretary of State at the request of a district board or boards, there are safeguards for those who may be affected or who may consider that regulation is unnecessary in the relevant district or districts. First, there will have to be some local consideration and discussion in the board and, of course, I remind the House, anglers will have a say because of their representation on the new boards. In addition, a baits and lures regulation would have to go through all the statutory procedures for designation and annual close time orders which require the Secretary of State to consult; to cause the proposals to be advertised; and to hold a public inquiry if he considers it necessary. There are therefore many safeguards against the possibility of capricious or ill-thought-out proposals being introduced. I believe that they are sufficient.

The Association of District Salmon Fishery Boards and the Salmon and Trout Association support the idea of powers to control the use of baits and lures. In discussion with officials of the Department, representatives of the Scottish Anglers National Association were somewhat ambivalent, seeing advantage in some control, for example, on the use of shrimp or prawn, but unhappy about the risk of prohibition of the use of the worm in some Highland areas.

I hope that those who fear that they might be adversely affected by unreasonable regulations will be reassured by the arrangements for detailed consideration that are provided in the clause. There will be ample opportunity for opinions to be made known and taken into account before the Secretary of State decides to make any particular regulation or not. It should be noted that district boards have the power only to ask for regulations, not to make them, and also that regulations can be made for part of a district so that, for example, the upper waters of the river can be treated differently from the lower waters.

Amendment No. 10 is a minor, technical amendment to correct an existing omission. It gives my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State the power to amend section 10 of the Tweed Fisheries Amendment Act 1859 as well as sections 6 and 11 if, on the application of the River Tweed council, he makes an order changing the annual close time on that river. That is a necessary consequential amendment, so that there shall be no inconsistency between the Act and the annual close time order.

I hope that my hon. Friends and others who took part in the interesting debate on the matter in Committee will welcome the decision that I have made to table the new clause.

Mr. Home Robertson: I doubt whether anglers with exotic tackle are a significant factor in the overfishing of salmon, but as the Bill provides so much scope for restricting other types of fishing, it is right that we should have the provision to regulate certain types of angling tackle at specified times. That is what the Minister is suggesting. It is fair enough that the district boards should be able to seek such regulations.

My only concern is that the device could be used for another form of discrimination against people whose faces are not thought to fit on Scotland's salmon angling beats. For example, when my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) next goes fishing in Scotland I trust that he will not run into any legal arguments with bailiffs about the nature of his fishing tackle just because he comes from Bannockburn while people from Tokyo, Chicago or even Woking are allowed to carry on fishing with the same sort of equipment.

If anyone doubts that such discrimination is possible, he need look no further than the *Glasgow Herald* of the ninth of this month. The Duke of Argyll was accused of indulging in some sort of illegal fishing operation, although admittedly it was with nets rather than angling gear. It was duly reported to the police, who sent a report to the procurator fiscal. According to the *Glasgow Herald*, the procurator fiscal said:

"I sent the report to the Crown Office . . . My approach is anything involving people in the hierarchy, as you might say, I send off to Edinburgh."

I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West would be counted as a member of the hierarchy, but I suspect that if it was him there would be no question of the procurator fiscal seeking guidance from the Lord Advocate. My hon. friend would probably find himself in the dock at Dunoon sheriff court pretty damn

quick. But, seriously, providing the regulations in the new clause are enforced fairly, we shall be prepared to support it.

Sir Hector Monro: I thank the Minister for fulfilling the commitment that he gave in Committee that he would look at the matter favourably. I know that the district boards and the Salmon and Trout Association will be pleased that he has implemented it through the new clause. I am grateful to him.

Mr. Beith: I support the new clause. It is consistent with the principle that conservation should be the overriding objective, and that all sections and types of fishery should have conservation measures placed on them if a need can be shown. As the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) said, several other sectors of fishery are having extensive requirements placed upon them, and anglers must take their share, too. It is in everyone's interest that conservation should be carried out.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 3

SCOTTISH ANGLERS' TRUST

'(1) There shall be established a co-operative of anglers to be called The Scottish Anglers' Trust to administer and improve those angling waters under their control and to develop the sport of angling in Scotland.

(2) Membership of the Trust shall be open to all on payment of a subscription.

(3) Waters admininstered by the Trust may include those of public bodies leased at nominal rents to the Trust and those of proprietors willing to admit the public on condition that they are relieved of responsibility of organisation.

(4) The Trust shall be entitled to representation on District Salmon Fishery Boards in those areas in which angling waters are administered by the Trust.

(5) The Trust shall have the power to apply to the Secretary of State for an Access Order under the terms of subsection (5) below.

(6) The Secretary of State may, if satisfied that there is a demand for salmon angling in an area which cannot be met other than by the use of compulsory powers, make an Access Order. The Order shall specify: (a) the waters to which it applies, (b) the number of persons to be admitted at any one time, (c) the payment to be made to the proprietor, (d) the method of administration, (e) the season, (f) methods of fishing and (g) the routes and means of approach to be used.'.
—*[Mr. Home Robertson.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

7.15 pm

Mr. Home Robertson: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause would provide for the establishment of a national anglers' co-operative trust in Scotland, with power to acquire, administer and improve salmon and trout fisheries for the benefit of all its members. Membership would be open to everybody on the payment of a subscription. The new clause also provides for powers to establish public access to salmon and trout fisheries where it is the only satisfactory way of providing fishing rights for the public.

A new clause such as this is necessary because in many areas of Scotland salmon fishing is virtually exclusively retained for the benefit of those who own fisheries or can afford to pay high prices for a day's fishing. The Bill goes to enormous lengths to protect and extend the rights and privileges of proprietors of salmon fisheries. That has been our main criticism, as my right hon. Friend the Minister well knows. The new clause seeks to achieve at least some balance by establishing a body to promote public access to fishing and to represent wider interests on the district salmon fishery boards.

I stress that we acknowledge and recognise the excellent work done by local angling clubs and associations in many parts of Scotland. However, it has to be said that salmon fishing remains an exclusive and expensive preserve for very rich people in many areas not covered by such an angling association. That is why we believe that it is necessary to take action to establish a Scottish anglers' trust.

It is not only the Labour party that is concerned about this aspect of salmon fishing, because back in 1962 the then Conservative Secretary of State for Scotland, Mr. John Maclay, who might be remembered by some hon. Members present, set up a committee to report on Scottish salmon and trout fisheries. The committee was chaired by my eminent constituent Lord Hunter. Its second report, published in May 1965, made several recommendations. I shall not go into detail, but I commend to the House and the Government paragraphs 108 to 126. The report specifically recommended the establishment of a Scottish anglers' trust and a system of access orders to provide public access to fisheries.

The Bill could have been a golden opportunity to combine better protection and conservation of salmon stocks with fairer administration of fishing rights and better public access to enjoy that part of Scotland's natural heritage, but inevitably the Government and their backwoodsmen in the other place have chosen instead to reinforce proprietorial privileges and to do little else. That is one of the reasons why we fear that the Bill will fail to conserve salmon. It discriminates blatantly in favour of certain vested interests. It has to be said that inherently contemptible laws tend to be treated with contempt.

New clause 3 would go some way towards restoring the balance and promoting public interest in conservation and angling. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I understand the thrust of the new clause and have considerable sympathy with it. If the Bill and the consequences that flow from it ensure that there are more fish in Scottish rivers, we should then take measures to ensure that there are more fishermen to take advantage of the fishing. In view of my constituency interests and the wider interests of angling in Scotland, I feel that what we should be looking for in the long run is an expansion of leisure fishing in Scottish rivers, with the increased numbers involved, because the economic benefits that would flow from that would be fairly substantial and widely spread.

The benefits that accrue to my constituency from salmon fishing stem from the number of people who come there when the fishing is good, and who spend money in the local economy, in the hotels and pubs and on the services in the area. I should like to see more people doing that. To the extent that a measure such as the new clause would achieve that, I would support it. However, I believe that if the Labour party had really wanted to press the matter and table a new clause that could carry widespread support, it would not have gone as far as it has with the powers that it proposes to establish.

The Government will not accept the new clause under any circumstances. If such a clause had been passed by a

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

Labour Government, a Conservative Secretary of State would seek not to implement any of the powers in it. It would be preferable to establish a trust which was likely to work outside the ambit of day-to-day party politics, and which went hand in hand with a policy of ensuring the maximum number of fish in Scottish rivers and giving the maximum number of people the opportunity to catch those fish, thus increasing the activities of the salmon fishing industry in Scotland.

That ought to be the spirit behind the Bill and our desire that it should be passed. Regretiably, however, as the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) said, the Bill is deficient in a number of ways, but that is not the point to highlight. I am not convinced that the Bill will achieve effective conservation.

I have considerable sympathy with the new clause. I support the establishment of a Scottish anglers' trust. However, the powers that the Labour party seeks would result in a move too quickly and too far in the other direction. Therefore, I am unable to support the clause as it stands. The establishment of such a trust is, however, desirable.

Sir Hector Monro: The only good point about the new clause is that the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) moved it briefly. He did not have the courage to say that it would result in the nationalisation of Scottish rivers, nor did he bother to say where all the money would come from to buy out Scottish riparian owners. He did not bother, either, to give sufficient credit to the very large number of angling associations and private owners who let fishing rights at very moderate rates throughout Scotland. The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) knows that when he came to fish in Dumfriesshire he was able to fish for salmon for £5 a day. That is a modest fee.

Although all hon. Members want as many anglers as possible to be able to fish, what is needed is more conservation so that more fish become available for fishing. I should prefer that, rather than the purchase of privately owned water to be made available for public use. Opportunities are provided for those who want to fish. I hope that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland will resist the new clause. It is unnecessary.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): One would have hoped, although I admit that it was a forlorn hope, that when the Government decided to introduce the Salmon Bill it would have led to the conservation of salmon and to more public access. Unfortunately, the main thrust of the Bill is to set proprietorial rights in concrete instead of increasing public access.

Fishing rights in Scotland are confined to a very small minority. I challenge the basis of the salmon fishing legislation. It is wrong that rivers which have been in existence for countless thousands of years, and the fish in those rivers, should be the property, by virtue of legislation, of a tiny minority of wealthy people. I support the clause unreservedly. It would be a start if the public were able to have more access to angling waters. Then they would develop an interest in the conservation of salmon stocks.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I too, support the new clause unreservedly. I am fairly certain that those who support it do not envisage that anglers will be standing shoulder to shoulder along the river banks of Scotland. However, access must be widened. I am certain that the angling clubs in my constituency would welcome wider access.

In some instances the return of the salmon has been very largely due to the fine work of public bodies I mention as an example the River Clyde Purification Board. Salmon are again to be seen in the Clyde. The heart of this clause is access to this very fine sport. It should not be confined to a small group of very rich people, as is the case in many instances.

Mr. Canavan: I support the new clause wholeheartedly. I tried to introduce a similar clause in Committee. Unfortunately, on account of its lack of wisdom, the Committee did not accept it. This is a very moderate clause.

At least twice I have tried to introduce a private Member's Bill on the Floor of the House. Its purpose was to establish a democratically constituted Scottish anglers' trust. I point out to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) that the opposition to my Bill at First Reading was led not by the Tories, from whom one would expect opposition, but by the leader of the once great Liberal party, because of his vested constituency interest. Therefore, we saw what at one time was national Liberalism being reduced to narrow-minded parochialism.

Therefore it is hard to swallow what the hon. Member for Gordon said about his party having considerable sympathy for this new clause. It may be that in his heart of hearts the hon. Member for Gordon has considerable sympathy for the new clause, but on this issue he has been nobbled by his party leader, in the same way as other members of his party have been nobbled on defence by their leader. However, I shall not dwell on that matter. I know that they are very embarrassed about it and I do not like to see people being embarrassed.

I should like a far more radical measure to be introduced that would extend the ownership of fishing rights in Scotland. The new clause would help towards that end, but it is no secret that I should prefer there to be complete public ownership of all the freshwater fishing rights in Scotland. It is unfair for the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) to claim that this new clause would bring that about. My private Member's Bill would have achieved that aim, although it would have resulted in a decentralised form of public ownership rather than in nationalisation.

The ownership of fishing rights in Scotland is very much connected with the history of land tenure in Scotland. The owner of fishing rights is frequently the riparian landowner. That applies in particular to very lucrative fishing rights. We should try to democratise Scotland's most popular sport. The Scottish Sports Council says that over 500,000 people participate in freshwater fishing. Football is thought to be tremendously popular. Last night there were about 50,000 people at Parkhead for the European cup tie, but over 500,000 people participate in freshwater fishing. Because it is such a tremendously popular sport there is understandable concern among the participants, particularly among those on low incomes, that they do not enjoy a reasonable degree of access. The new clause would improve access and bring about a gradual widening of ownership.

The hon. Member for Dumfries referred to compensation. If a genuine request for compensation were made by those who had invested in fisheries and in restocking and conservation, I believe that clubs would be more interested in preferential terms of access rather than in financial compensation. I am sure that a measure such as this could be introduced for next to nothing in terms of financial compensation. If a group of people in an angling club put a great deal of work and investment into a particular stretch of water, surely a deal could be struck between the Scottish anglers' trust and the local angling club whereby the club received a certain number of rods per year on the river. Presumably, there would be an overall limit on the number of rods. With the Scottish anglers' trust, there would be an opportunity for democratic participation in the rules for the distribution of rods, access, permitted tackle, permitted times, prices, and so on.

7.30 pm

There is no doubt that, in many cases, people who claim compensation have no moral title to do so. Whatever legal title they have, they certainly have no moral title to compensation. Their title to fishing rights is very much tied up with their land ownership rights. That is based on the hereditary principle. When I first introduced my Bill to establish a Scottish anglers' trust, I read out the names of those who were involved in applying for a special protection order in the Tweed catchment area. It read almost like a House of Lords Division list. Almost all were hereditary peers.

The names included the Marquis of Lothian, whose boy is in the Scottish Office; the Duke of Roxburghe; the Duke of Sutherland; and Lord Home of the Hirsel, who I believe before he died in a previous incarnation was called the 14th Earl of Hume. He got his land and fishing rights from the 13th Earl of Hume. The 13th Earl of Hume got them from the 12th Earl. The 12th Earl got them from the 11th Earl, and so on. The first Earl of Hume stole them from the people. Hon. Members who do not accept my version of history in terms of stealing land and fishing rights from the people might say that the land was gallantly fought for.

I remember the story of a man who was caught by the local landlord allegedly for poaching. The landlord said, "Get off my land". The poacher replied, "Who said that it's your land?" The landlord said, "I'll tell you this, my boy, my ancestors fought for this land. That is how it is my land." The poacher replied, "Get your bloody jacket off now and I'll fight you for it." That is the morality of land tenure in Scotland. Hon. Members laugh, but it goes back to the battle of Bannockburn. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) laughs because it is true, and he appreciates my saying it. Going back to the battle of Bannockburn, the land was fought for. Some people changed sides at half time because they found they were in danger of being on the losing side. They changed their jerseys at half time just to ensure that they were on the winning side to get the land, fishing rights, and so on.

It is about time that the balance was restored, and that we returned land and fishing rights to the people. I do not expect all hon. Members to agree with my radical ideas. The new clause does fall short of my ideas, but it is a good measure. It is interesting to note that even people such as Lord Hunter, who is not a great friend of mine, have come out with similar proposals. I hope that the Minister and the House will sympathetically consider accepting the new clause.

Mr. John MacKay: We have had this debate on a number of occasions. During the first half of the speech by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) I thought that he had lost the tape of his usual speech. However, during the second half he was back on stream. I wondered when the list of the people who came forward with the Tweed order would come before the House. The hon. Gentleman is well known for his devotion to a Scottish anglers' trust. As he rightly told us, he sought leave of the House to introduce a Bill in 1979 with the intention that the trust would be eligible for Government funding. Leave was refused on that occasion. He tried again in 1984, and he was no more successful.

On both occasions, as he said, he was opposed by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel). A few moments ago, the hon. Member for Falkirk, West rebuked the right hon. Gentleman for looking after the interests of his constituents. I did not know that looking after constituents' interests was a vested interest. My constituents, like those in the borders constituency, did not want the anglers' trust that the hon. Gentleman was seeking. He wanted it because some of his constituents want to fish on the highways and byways of Scotland. They want to go where they like and fish by whatever method they like. That has caused great problems in the Tweed valley, the Tay valley and in many other parts of Scotland, including my own.

On both occasions the trust would have been concerned with freshwater fish — brown trout, grayling, and the like, but not salmon. The trust which he proposed in Committee would have had power over salmon in fresh water but not in salt water. It would have had no power over brown trout and other freshwater fish. The trust as proposed in the new clause would have power over salmon angling in Scotland in fresh or in salt water.

The principal argument is always that people cannot get salmon fishing, yet the hon. Gentleman told us that over half a million people fish in Scotland. I know that some people fish only for brown trout. However, many fish for both. Of course, there are some extremely expensive beats. I recall that a sporting event took place in Mexico at the time of the Committee stage. I pointed out to the hon. Gentleman then, and I do so again, that £1,000 a week for more than one rod, perhaps eight or 10 rods, to fish on some of the expensive beats does not compare unfavourably with the £1,000 it would have cost a person to follow Scotland to Mexico to see the World Cup matches. One pays at the top range for one's sport if one wants to play at that level. If a person wants to pay a rather more modest price, as most of us do, he can find places all over Scotland where he can pay a modest price to get at some fairly good salmon fishing aside from members of angling clubs who can have access to some good water through that angling club.

In Committee, I said—Opposition Members will not be surprised to hear it again — that the Government could not accept what is essentially a doctrinaire proposition. It infringes unfairly on the rights of those who own salmon fishing rights in Scotland. Nothing that I have heard tonight makes me wish to change my mind. I do not want to go through the clauses in detail. However, new clause 3(5) states:

[Mr. John MacKay]

"The Trust shall have the power to apply to the Secretary of State for an Access Order".

That is not a democratic arrangement. There is no provision for appeals or for public and local inquiries. There is no consideration of the proprietor's position. Effectively, the Secretary of State is asked to exercise compulsory powers over land for the benefit of the anglers' trust or its members without any of the normal safeguards of individual rights.

I shall not continue. I do not suppose that the House is surprised by the line I take. Apart from a few people who wish to fish where and when they like, and by what means they like, I do not believe that there is any great demand in Scotland, outside the doctrinaire ranks of some parts of the Labour party, for such a body. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw his new clause. If he does not do so, I am quite sure that most hon. Members will agree with me.

Question put and negatived.

New Clause 4

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SALMON CONSERVATION

(1) The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Secretaries of State acting jointly shall within three months of this Act coming into force, establish an advisory committee to consider such matters relating to the conservation of salmon as the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State or any of them shall from time to time refer to it.

(2) The Committee shall present its first report to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State no later than twelve months after the coming into force of this Act and thereafter annually on the anniversary of the first report.

(3) Without prejudice to the provisions of subsections (1) and (2) above, it shall be the duty of the advisory committee to consider in the aforementioned first report whether the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Secretaries of State or any of them should be conferred with powers which would enable a scheme or schemes to be introduced for the better regulation of salmon fisheries including the more effective collection of catch statistics.

(4) The advisory committee may appoint sub committees for England, Wales and Scotland to report upon such matters and at such times as it considers appropriate.'. — *[Mr. Randall.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Randall: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: New clause 5 — *Measures for conservation of salmon*—

'(1) The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State or any of them may, for the better regulation of salmon fisheries in accordance with the provisions of subsection (3) of Section *(Advisory Committee on Salmon Conservation)* by order made by statutory instrument make such provision in relation to the conservation of salmon as they consider appropriate, including a provision for prohibiting persons in such cases as may be specified in the order, from being in possession of salmon to which a tag authorised and issued by a responsible authority has not been affixed.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) above any order under that subsection prohibiting persons from being in possession of any salmon to which an authorised tag has not been affixed;

(i) May make provision for the following matters:—

(a) the type of material to be used in the manufacture of the tag, its method of construction and the manner of attachment to the salmon,

(b) the individual numbering of tags and for tags of different descriptions to be issued to different persons for different purposes;

(c) the specification of the duration of the validity of tags and make provision for the return of unused tags to the issuing responsible authorities;

(d) the creation of criminal offences consisting in the contravention of or failure to comply with provisions made under this section; and

(e) the enforcement of any provision made under this section.

(ii) Shall be such as to secure that the following persons shall not be guilty of offence:—

(a) any person licensed as a dealer in salmon in accordance with the provisions of an order made under section 28 of this Act, by virtue of his being in bona fide possession of an untagged fish prior to disposal; and

(b) any person who imports a salmon into any area which is subject to an order made under this section, other than for the purpose of dealing in salmon or otherwise gaining from its disposal.

(3) Without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph *(b)* of subsection (2)(i) above, an order under this section may—

(i) make different provision for different cases; and

(ii) contain such incidental, supplemental and transitional provision as appears to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State, or any of them, to be necessary or expedient.

(4) No order shall be made under the section unless a draft of the order has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of each house of parliament.

(5) In this section "responsible authority" means, in relation to England and Wales, the relevant water authority and, in relation to Scotland, the relevant district salmon fishery board.'.

New clause 6 — *Measures for the better regulation of salmon fisheries*—

'(1) The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State or any of them, may, for the better regulation of salmon fisheries in accordance with the provisions of subsection (3) of section *(Advisory committee on salmon conservation)*, by order made by statutory instrument make provision for a scheme or schemes which will facilitate the more effective collection of catch statistics by providing for the tagging of all salmon lawfully taken within England and Wales or Scotland.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) above, an order under this section may make provision for the following matters.

(a) the type of material to be used in the manufacture of the tag, its method of construction and the manner of attachment to the salmon;

(b) the individual numbering of tags and for tags of different descriptions to be issued to different persons for different purposes;

(c) the specification of the duration of the validity of tags and the return of unused tags to the issuing responsible authorities;

(d) the creation of criminal offences consisting in the contravention of or failure to comply with provisions made under this section; and

(e) the enforcement of any provision made under this section.

(3) Without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph *(b)* of subsection (2) above, an order under this section may—

(i) make different provision for different cases; and

(ii) contain such incidental, supplemental and transitional provision as appears to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State, or any of them, to be necessary or expedient.

(4) A statutory instrument containing an order under this section shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'.

Amendment (a) to new clause 6, leave out subsection (4), and insert—

'(4) No order shall be made under this section unless a draft of the order has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, each House of Parliament.'.

New clause 9 — *Moratorium on net fishing in River Tay*—

(1) The Secretary of State for Scotland shall lay before Parliament, before 31st December 1986, an order for a moratorium on all net fishing for salmon in the River Tay and its tributaries.

(2) The order for a moratorium and any order to amend or end the moratorium shall require the approval of the House of Commons by affirmative resolution.'.

Mr. Randall: New clause 4 deals with the establishment of a statutory advisory committee on conservation, new clause 5 provides enabling powers for the Minister to introduce conservation regulations and new clause 6 deals with the more effective collection of catch statistics.

In June we were delighted when the Minister of State came to the Standing Committee and announced as a concession to the Opposition that he intended to establish an advisory committee.

Mr. Onslow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Randall: I shall not give way immediately, because I have only just begun.

The purpose of the advisory committee is to collect more accurate information and to establish effective fishery management regimes. I was pleased when the Minister made that announcement, and I have read *Hansard* carefully to see what he said.

Some hon. Members were genuinely concerned about the slant of the Bill. We had been working on it for some weeks and we did not seem to be addressing fully—at least certainly not to my satisfaction or to that of hon. Members on both sides—the issue of conservation. We were spending most of our time debating who would be represented on the boards and the fight between netsmen and rod-and-line men — I see Conservative Members nodding—and we were greatly worried. I was delighted when the Minister attended the Committee—because he obviously recognised that the Bill was in trouble—and announced the establishment of the advisory committee. Essentially, we have bolted on to the Bill the advisory committee, which will deal with conservation, among other matters.

Mr. Gummer: I have checked this matter carefully, and I want the House to be fully aware of the discussions in Committee. I announced the proposal for an advisory committee in response to the cogent arguments put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) and other right hon. and hon. Friends. I want to make that point because it would be churlish of the hon. Gentleman to claim parentage for this committee. Obviously he wishes to extend its arrangements, but to claim parentage when it lies with my hon. Friend would be a pity.

7.45 pm

Mr. Randall: To judge from the representations that I received, I thought that the Minister had been listening to people with fishing interests. I have talked to some of them and I thought that it was that pressure, as well as other pressure, that had led to the committee. However, I do not wish to suggest that the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) did not play a significant role. The Opposition take the committee extremely seriously. We certainly do not regard it as an expedient which got the Minister off the hook when the Bill was in such a mess.

It is interesting to see on the Amendment Paper the number of Welsh Members, as well as English and Scottish Members, who support the new clause. It shows the seriousness with which Welsh Members take the question of fishing in Wales, which is good. I would go so far as to say that the Welsh economy relies heavily on fishing. Indeed, it is so important that the Minister's credibility is at stake over the operation of his new advisory committee. We expect him to deliver on this.

Because of the importance of salmon fishing in Wales, I have received representations about the duration of the advisory committee. It has since been suggested to me that the Minister said that it would last for three years. I have read *Hansard*, and I cannot find that. Will the Minister tell us whether that will be the case? I would prefer him to be open minded about the matter, and if the committee serves a useful function to consider that, rather than have a fixed time scale for it.

New clause 5 refers to tagging for regulation purposes. In a transaction, salmon would have to have to be tagged or labelled. There would be exceptions, but that would be the general thrust. The major short-term interest for Wales is to develop a more effective system for creating catch statistics. Scottish fishing is in such poor shape that it is crucial to proceed with effective conservation action as soon as possible. Is the Minister sympathetic to using tagging techniques purely for developing statistics? Will he encourage the advisory committee to give fair and due consideration to that matter? Tagging is important both for statistics and as a useful pilot scheme, so that if at a later date the committee so decides we can use tagging for licensing and regulation schemes.

Mr. Onslow: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman is saying. He seems to be making a case for statistics. What is wrong with the present method of collecting statistics in Wales?

Mr. Randall: I can answer that simply. In Committee, as many hon. Members mentioned, we received information that people were generating statistics and cases to serve their own ends and interests. The Minister spoke at length about that, and I agreed with what he said. We need an unbiased source of information about migration patterns, what fish are where, and so on. In Committee I could not feel confident about the information that we were receiving or whether we were making the right judgments. Will the Minister keep an open mind about the use of tagging for catch statistics as a pilot scheme?

In Committee various hon. Members said that tagging was not popular in Scotland. I have received information that the main reason why many Scottish fishermen are worried about tagging is that they are afraid that the cost will be added to the licence fee. I do not know whether the Minister has also picked up that information.

From the beginning, the advisory committee should have been the core of our measures to improve conservation. It is the most important matter that we shall discuss tonight. I want the committee to be durable. I do not want the Minister to disband it for various reasons. I

[Mr. Randall]

certainly want it to be effective. Will the Minister tell the House whether he feels that he has all the necessary powers to implement all the possible future recommendations of the committee? If that is not so, it could constrain the committee. For those two reasons — durability and effectiveness — I should like this to be a statutory advisory committee. My hon. Friends and I feel so strongly about this that, unless the Minister gives some concessions tonight, we shall seek to divide the House.

Concern has been expressed about the representations on the committee. I hope that the Minister takes this as seriously as we do. We hope that the chairman will be truly independent, and that the committee will represent a broad and appropriate range of interests, especially relating to Wales. I hope that the representation from Wales will comprise people with experience of fishery management, and not just fishermen. My hon. Friends and I will be most interested to hear the Minister's views on overall representation on the committee.

New clause 6 is a fallback clause for the better regulation of salmon fisheries by using tagging to produce better catch statistics. The reason for tagging is simply to conserve fish. Fishermen in Wales believe that tagging can, and will, work if given the chance. It is important that the Minister has an open mind on this, and I shall be interested to hear what he has to say in response to the various issues that I have raised.

Sir Hector Monro: I welcome the comments by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) about the advisory committee. This concept was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow).

I agree that the new clause concentrates on conservation. The Government have taken two steps in this direction—first, by setting up the standing advisory committee. I hope that it will begin work soon, report continuously and not keep the House waiting. There is also the Government review which will report within three years on east coast drift netting. Both are important steps. However, the Bill has insufficient provisions for conservation and the future of salmon.

I am sure that the Minister knows that today the International Atlantic Salmon Symposium has been meeting in Biarritz. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister has a representative there who will be taking a note of what is said. I understand from the director of the Atlantic Salmon Trust that an important conservation resolution was passed today. I must admit that neither my shorthand nor the telephone line were particularly good, but it stated:

"In view of the greater increase in and potential of salmon angling, and its appreciable smaller harvest, each national Government of salmon-producing countries is urged to declare a salmon policy which will institute conservation measures within its area of jurisdiction, a management programme to reduce commercial harvesting of salmon with a view to increasing stocks, and improving recreational salmon catches."

I hope that the Government will take some action to implement this resolution at the earliest opportunity. I would be grateful for the Minister's views on this, and on the International Salmon Symposium.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman apologised for his shorthand. May I ask him if the resolution contained a last paragraph relating to payment of compensation to those in the commercial salmon fisheries who would lose their livelihoods if Governments were to adopt the resolution?

Sir Hector Monro: No, there was no such paragraph. The resolution ended with the remarks about improving recreational salmon catching. It is still early days; let us get the principles right, and then we can deal with the details.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Surely my hon. Friend would not object to compensation in principle.

Sir Hector Monro: My hon. Friend knows that we dealt with such proposals on an amendment in Committee when I expressed the wish to phase out—I emphasise that it must be phasing out—drift netting on the north-east coast. Of course, compensation would have to be paid because we would be removing their livelihoods from a substantial number of people who fish in those waters.

Conservation is at the heart of the Bill and in this we have been supported throughout by the chairman of the Salmon and Trout Association, the Scottish Landowners Federation and the district boards. We all want to see more fish in the rivers so that we can increase the stocks. I have been disappointed that the Bill does not go very far, especially in relation to drift netting off the north-east coast. We do, of course, appreciate that there would be an impact on jobs, but Scotland faced that problem some years ago and survived the difficulties.

New regulations will reduce the pressure on drift netting off the north-east coast. People are beginning to understand the balance between the numbers who fish off the north-east coast as compared with those people in the United Kingdom as a whole who benefit in one way or another from salmon fishing. As the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) has said, the tourist industry, the hotel industry and the many people who support salmon fishing would all be affected.

We must consider one statistic especially. Between 1950 and 1959 catches of salmon and grilse off the north-east coast averaged 2,000 per year; from 1970 to 1979 that figure was 48,140; between 1980 and 1984 it was 60,330; and in 1985 it was 77,000. The rivers cannot stand this dramatic increase, which is why our stocks and catches are falling. I warmly support the article in *The Times* yesterday by Lord Moran, who has done much in another place to increase the conservation provisions in the Bill.

Mr. Tinn: The hon. Gentleman seems to be quoting selectively from statistics. Figures supplied to me by the Northumbrian water authority show that during these periods there have been normal cyclical variations in catches. For instance, in 1976 the salmon catch was only 4,500, the year before it was 21,000 and a year later it was 14,000. In other words, it is an up and down story. It was meaningless of the hon. Gentleman to talk about averages.

Sir Hector Monro: I disagree. I was dealing with averages over a period of 10 years which I think allows for ups and downs in the cyclical life of the salmon. Anyone involved in fishing knows that. It is important to realise the dramatic increases that have occurred in salmon catches, probably as a result of the modernisation of gear and of monofilament nets, none of which existed in the early days of the fisheries.

Whatever action the Government have taken already, they will have to go a great deal further before we shall be

able to see an enhancement of stock in the rivers of the United Kingdom. If we do not set our own house in order, how on earth can we expect those interested in fisheries in the Faroes, in Greenland or even off the coast of Ireland to take any action? We must take some action because at present we are falling very flat on our faces. The advisory committee must take the strongest possible measures in recommending to the Government the appropriate course of action.

I hope that when my right hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate he will give us an emphatic assurance that he will listen to what the advisory committee says and then take action. We do not want a ghost-like committee making reports that are shelved and nothing happening. We have not got anywhere near solving the issue of conserving a remarkably important resource. If we do not take much stronger steps than we have taken so far, the future of rod salmon fishing in Scotland in particular, and, indeed, the fixed nets around our coasts, will be seriously curtailed. The time for action is not too soon.

8 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) said, many Welsh Members have signed the new clauses, some of whom, like my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), will not speak, although I think that I can speak for him and certainly for a number of others. I also speak as the president of the Welsh Anglers Council, a body which covers coarse, game and sea fishing. It is remarkable that it should have got all those anglers together to work in one direction, but it has been doing so and they are unanimous on the principles and ideas behind the three new clauses.

The Welsh scene is the only one that I can really speak about. It is worth reiterating, at least to make sure that the public conception of these matters is right, that large-scale illegal fishing in Welsh rivers is no longer the story of the romantic poacher catching one for the pot; it is big business and highly commercialised. It involves refrigerated vans near the bank and considerable battles on the banks between our bailiffs and those unscrupulous people who will take violent action to ensure that they get their illegal catch.

Another feature of the Welsh scene, different from the Scottish scene, is that Welsh angling is extremely popular. It is not exclusive. The sport is run primarily by responsible angling clubs and the charges and fees are not expensive. The petition that I presented to the House last night contained 18,600 signatures of people supporting the principles of these three new clauses and was promoted and brought by popular angling clubs such as Llandysul, Tawe and Tributaries and Tregaron — all genuinely representative of the communities and the people who enjoy the sport of fishing.

That is why in the three new clauses we seek, first, to inject a sense of urgency into the process. As the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) said, time is not on the side of the salmon or on the side of conservation. The decline is serious, and we have not been able to chart it effectively. The Welsh water authority, a strong supporter of these proposals, was surprised and shocked by the decline shown by the 1982 inquiry which it could not anticipate. It realises that a severe decline has taken place and that it has not been properly discovered and charted.

In new clause 4 we say that the establishment of the advisory committee cannot be a genteel leisurely affair. Therefore, as we say, we hope that it will be set up within three months, if not sooner. Obviously one issue will be the personnel. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West, and he is reflecting the views of the Welsh angling fraternity, that we do not want fishermen to give and support the professional advice that we think will be necessary.

The Minister should take powers to introduce a scheme for tagging. That has caused division within the Committee and even among friends who, on a cross-party basis, have worked hard to implement conservation measures. In new clause 5 we are asking only that the Minister takes the power. Obviously, we would like him to implement a tagging scheme, but new clause 5 only requires the Minister to take power now so that if the advisory committee finds and convinces him that a tagging scheme is an essential part of the conservation of salmon stock it can be introduced without the need to come to the House for a full-scale new Bill.

Let us be realistic. We have vast experience of such legislation. I have had 20 years and other hon. Members have had even longer. We know that to get a Bill into the annual timetable and to bring a measure before the House through the Cabinet sub-committees and so on is not an easy task. Therefore, even with an early realisation that tagging was an integral and intrinsic part of conservation, we fear that two, three or four years would slip by before legislation could be enacted to give the Minister power to introduce such a scheme. All that we are asking for in new clause 5 is that the Minister should take the necessary power.

Within the Principality there is unanimity. The Welsh are not notorious for unanimity. Indeed, the reverse is the case. We can usually divide happily and easily amongst ourselves. But there is a consensus bordering on unanimity among all the interested parties and groups that tagging could be introduced, at least in the Principality. With the popular support that there is for such a scheme, we could run a pilot scheme within the Principality.

The hon. Member for Dumfries mentioned the important conclusions and considerations of the symposium at Biarritz. Another major announcement that has come out of that symposium is an announcement by the French representative that the French intend to introduce a full-scale nationwide tagging system next year. I have the details of the outline here. Tagging has now been seen as a national solution to the problem of conservation by the French, not just the Welsh or a small group of interested and fanatical fishermen. Mr. Claude Batault, special adviser to the Minister at the conference, has announced that the French will introduce a nationwide tagging system to cover both rod and line, commercial fishing, commercial fishing at sea and imports. The French do not think, as I think the Minister argued in Committee, that that contradicts GATT. The reasons given at the symposium for the French introducing tagging were conservation and better catch statistics. That double purpose is contained in new clause 5 and in our fallback position in new clause 6.

Mr. Onslow: It is fair to remind the House that there are fewer salmon in French rivers than in Welsh rivers and

[Mr. Onslow]

that the French proposal to limit any one rod angler for salmon to a total catch of four in a year might be inadequate in Wales.

Mr. Rowlands: The details of the introduction of a nationwide scheme would be for the advisory committee to advise on. That is the purpose of new clause 4. It seeks to make sure that the advisory committee makes salmon tagging an urgent priority and considers the proper means of implementing it. But here is one nation which, fearing the threat to its salmon stock, is to introduce a nationwide scheme. Therefore, it is not just a sectional interest of fanatical Welsh anglers which is promoting this concept; there is a great deal of support for it.

The Principality supports the principle of tagging. Tagging will complement the licence dealing system, not duplicate or contradict it. They go together. Together they could be an effective system of conserving and collecting statistics which we in Wales feel are woefully inadequate. I hope that the Minister will not turn his back on the petition signed by more than 18,500 anglers and supporters of angling right across the country who support the proposals in the three new clauses that we have brought to the House tonight.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): We all support the cause of conservation, but the new clauses are deficient because no mention is made of the damage done to salmon stocks by seals. Salmon stocks will not be adequately protected until we grasp the nettle and deal with the sensitive question of the need for a much greater culling of seals. They are destroying North sea fish stocks, including salmon, at a frightening rate.

According to a recent estimate, there are 84,000 seals in the North sea, taking approximately 50,000 tonnes of fish a year. I have been told by fixed-net salmon fishermen who fish off the beach at Bridlington that often up to one in four of the salmon that they catch are not saleable because they are dead or because they are maimed after being bitten by seals. Unfortunately those animals, which look so attractive and receive so much sympathy when they are culled, are very much like foxes. They do not just attack a salmon and eat it but are like a fox which kills all the chickens in a hen house rather than killing one and eating it. The seals take indiscriminate bites out of salmon, often leaving them alive and maimed, thus making them unsaleable.

I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister to this problem, and express the hope that when he considers conservation measures he will support the demands of the Bridlington fishermen for a greater culling of seals.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): If the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) has made the strongest arguments he can against the new clauses, they must commend themselves strongly to the House. I associate myself with the comments that have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House. They are particularly relevant to the Welsh salmon fishing problem. As the hon Member for Methyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) said, angling in Wales is a popular sport. It is the ordinary person's pastime and interest, and probably the greatest participatory sport in Wales.

I have had 200 letters about the Bill from anglers in my constituency. They were worried that it concentrated on the problems of Scotland. We appreciate that that is necessary, but the Bill does not address itself to the problems of fishing in Wales, and especially the conservation of salmon stocks in Wales.

Whatever the problems caused by the seals taking a part of the migration salmon stocks — obviously they take some—it is difficult to believe that they are taking any more than they took in centuries gone by. Yet historically in Wales salmon fishing has been a popular sport. Salmon have been available in Welsh rivers for centuries. Now, suddenly, in the past decade or two salmon have become scarce.

Mr. Townend: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is not aware that the seal population in the North sea has quadrupled during the past 20 years. Naturally, if there are four times as many seals they are likely to take four times as many salmon.

Mr. Wigley: I was interested to hear of the seal tagging exercise that gave the hon. Gentleman such detailed information on the number of seals. I am taking a longer view. I am looking back over the centuries. There is no doubt that during the past couple of decades there has been a massive drop of salmon numbers in Welsh rivers which is not due just, or mainly, to seals. Obviously they play a part in the reduced salmon stocks, but it is not a major part.

Hon. Members who know the angling scene in Wales know what is happening. We know, as the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney said, that it is not the traditional poacher taking the odd salmon here and there. We have all lived with that as part of the social scene. Now there are large-scale operations. Poachers come with gelignite and blow up rivers. Other poachers come with poison, God help us. The rivers are poisoned and made barren for years.

8.15 pm

We know from court cases that people have come from Manchester and raided rivers such as the Dyfi and then received a sentence of a few months when they should have received a much severer sentence. The cumulative effect of their actions has been massive.

Representations have been made, especially to hon. Members who represent Welsh constituencies, by the Welsh Salmon and Trout Angling Association. In a letter, it said:

"The Welsh Salmon and Trout Angling Association wish to bring to the Government's notice that the angling community of Wales is deeply concerned that the conservation provisions contained within the existing Salmon Bill are totally inadequate as far as Wales is concerned. Since 1976 the Welsh Salmon and Trout Angling Association have campaigned vociferously for measures to be introduced to save the Welsh Salmon stocks. We as the governing body are concerned that in terms of conservation the present Bill does nothing to safeguard the run of migratory fish to their spawning beds and consequently to increase the spawning potential."

I know that many hon. Members on both sides of the House fish on our excellent rivers, such as the Conwy, the Dyfi and the others mentioned by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney.

I am glad to see the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding), as I know of her husband's great interest in this matter. I know his patience in that he could spend 10 or 11 hours in debate in the House or in Committee. He needs that patience to fish for salmon in

rivers such as the Dyfi now. Ten or 20 years ago it would not have been surprising to talk of catching half a dozen or a dozen salmon. Now it is a matter of special interest and a topic of conversation if somebody has caught a salmon. People say, "Oh—you have actually caught a salmon." That is the change that has occurred. The Government must take this problem to heart.

There are two main requirements. We want to give the advisory committee teeth and to include on it people who fish in Wales. I mention Wales especially, because I know the problems there. The committee's job is ongoing and it must be given teeth to do it. There is also a need for tagging. Information is needed about the salmon if there is to be a scientific base on which to found further action to conserve the salmon stocks.

Such proposals are supported by anglers and those involved with the water authorities. The bailiffs often face a difficult task in trying to enforce regulations. All sections of the community in Wales support these proposals. It would be sad if the Government missed this opportunity. Indeed, if they miss this opportunity to rectify the situation, I am sure that the problem will be raised again in private Members' Bills.

This matter is very important to my constituents, and that is why I am here tonight rather than at my party's annual conference. I hope that the Government will seriously consider the new clauses and either accept them as they are, or give a firm commitment that they will move in their general direction.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): All of us have taken a close and active interest in the proceedings on the Bill. I welcome the Welsh voice which is in such strong and full throat tonight, and many of the comments that have been made. Indeed, I share the concern of the Welsh Members. The problem does not just concern Wales, although perhaps, judging by what we have heard tonight, the problem is even more serious there than in some Scottish rivers.

Having examined the culling system, I am not convinced that tagging in the United Kingdom would fulfil the objectives that have been ascribed to it as successfully as some of the hon. Members think. After all, the alternatives proposed by the Government go a long way towards meeting the fears of right hon. and hon. Members.

I refer, for example, to the dealer licensing system. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), who introduced those Welsh anxieties, will bear in mind that when the Bill was introduced there was no question of a nationwide licensing system. It was limited purely to Scotland, and this was one of the big changes the Government made in their thinking. Those two measures are most helpful.

In Committee, Conservative and Opposition Members expressed concern about the need for further action. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland have taken a keen and assiduous interest in the Bill, and will be aware that it has its critics both in the House and outside. The Bill represents a great opportunity. As we all know, such opportunities do not come easily, and in the foreseeable future this is probably the last chance to legislate for salmon. That is why we have all stressed the need for more action than that proposed in the Bill. Perhaps that is the main reason why Opposition Members want a statutory advisory committee.

As we all know, if the British can fumble and fudge anything, they will do so by setting up a committee. The fear is that, if we set up a committee that is not statutory, that is just what will happen. The arguments that we adduce in favour of stronger action will be whittled away and drowned in the mumbling away of a committee that has no powers. Accordingly, if my right hon. Friend the Minister decides to go against those who want a statutory advisory committee, I hope that he will at least give us a strong assurance that this Bill will not be the end of the matter. There are strong grounds for believing that further action is needed, and we would expect that committee to be able to report with authority, and in a way that would morally bind the next Government to take action.

The new clauses mention statistics. It has been extraordinarily difficult to get hold of statistics to prove to doubters that we are facing a serious situation. Consequently, we are all very much indebted to the Salmon and Trout Association, which has taken up the cudgels on our behalf. In Committee the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland gave figures that have enabled analysts to relate netting jobs to specific rivers and areas of Scotland. The association asks us to recognise that its calculations are only approximate, and not accurate to the last decimal point. As a result, it believes that the number of netsmen involved is small, and at times as few as 520. At peak periods, the number rises to 1,177. Using the 1984 catch figures, and assuming a landed value of £2 per pound, the average earnings per man amount to just over £1,000 for net and coble fishermen. The figure is higher for fixed engine fishermen. The association points out that earnings fluctuate wildly between districts, and rise to more than £6,000 in the far north.

The association believes that in the north of Scotland some 70 netsmen take around 86 per cent. of the salmon catch, amounting to 46,000 fish. It argues that we should be much tougher in our attitude to those who fish by net in estuaries or who fish at sea using drift nets. I agree with that, and that is why the Bill falls short. We should increase the weekly close time for Scottish nets to 60 hours. However, that has been rejected by the Government.

The committee set up by the Government should look at the figures carefully and take action accordingly. The figures all suggest that salmon and sea trout have much more economic value as a sporting resource to the economies of Wales, England and Scotland than as a food. Moreover, some of us believe that we are approaching the point of no return in the damage being done to a great natural resource. The factor uniting fishermen and others is that we want to conserve the salmon. With those thoughts in mind, I shall listen with interest to what my right hon. Friend the Minister has to say.

Mr. Tinn: I should like to correct an impression that I may have given the House on Second Reading. I then mentioned Dr. Derek Mills of the department of forestry and natural resources at Edinburgh university, and, without having sufficiently checked my facts, I rather loosely referred to him as having changed his mind. I said that he had been a critic of the drift net fishermen of north-east England but that he had now exonerated them.

More in sorrow than in anger, Dr. Mills kindly wrote to me pointing out my error. It was wrong to say that he had exonerated them, although he and other fishery scientists had shown that the current low in salmon catches in Scotland and other salmon-producing nations was

[Mr. Tinn]

cyclical, occurring about every 25 years in the past 100 years. They believe that that can be attributed to oceanic conditions. However, Dr. Mills fairly said that that did not automatically mean that the north-east England drift net fishermen are exonerated. Perhaps I made that rather welcome assumption too easily. However, I have already apologised to Dr. Mills, and I am happy to correct the impression that I gave.

The drift net fishermen of the north-east of England are rather like Banquo's ghost, in that, although they are not mentioned in the Bill, they keep popping up, just as they did in Committee. The drift net fishing industry in the north-east of England is essentially small scale. It uses the traditional north-eastern coble, which is rather less than 30 ft. Only 182 vessels are involved. Far from being a free-for-all, it is the most tightly controlled fishery in Europe.

I have a few suggestions for the advisory council. For example, it should consider the policy pursued by the Northumbrian water authority. That authority and the drift net fishermen could already give some useful tips. For many years they have had a strict limit on licence numbers. The authority has formed conservation areas for salmon in areas and rivers where salmon tend to collect. In the north of the water authority's area, the length of drift nets at sea is restricted to 600 yd and to 400 yd in the Yorkshire area. The working week and the season are also limited. Moreover, the licensee can employ only those crew named on the licence.

The protection of stocks has been a central theme, and, in contrast to elsewhere, there has been a marked recovery in salmon stocks in Northumbrian rivers. It seems a little odd that the poor Scottish salmon cannot get up to the Tay, yet they are getting to the Tyne and the Tweed in increasing numbers. I assure hon. Members that our fishermen are not asking the nationality of the salmon and throwing them back if they are English.

I am sure that the advisory committee will be happy to look at the practices of the Northumbrian water authority, and the north-east coast fishermen will be happy to co-operate with the authority and in any conservation measures. However, conservation measures to save salmon must not mean the extinction of the drift net fishermen of the north-east coast.

8.30 pm

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): In the light of what the hon. Member for Redcar (Mr. Tinn) said, the House should recall that it has been clearly established that 94 per cent. of the salmon and grilse taken in the North sea fishery are bound for Scottish rivers. No matter what statistics the hon. Gentleman provides about the nets, we must take account of that important aspect.

I agree strongly with my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and others that the Bill does not do enough for conservation. However, I regard the Bill as no more than the end of the beginning of the creation of a better climate for conservation. It is no more than a start and, as time goes by, it will become clear that more measures will have to be taken.

One of the best indirect forms of conservation is that provided by the creation of, and the increase in, salmon farming. In the 12 months up to September this year, 11,000 boxes of Scottish wild salmon were sold at Billingsgate market, but during the same period 43,000 boxes of Scottish farmed salmon and 51,000 boxes of Norwegian farmed salmon were sold at the market. For some reason that I do not understand, boxes of wild salmon are slightly heavier than boxes of farmed salmon.

The comparison is remarkable and it emphasises a point made implicitly by my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) who said that salmon should be considered a sport resource. Because of the development of salmon farming, we no longer live in an age when wild salmon need to be regarded as a food source.

The need for an advisory committee is self-evident. It is clearly essential. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister of State on taking the advice of my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow)—

Mr. Randall: And others.

Mr. Morrison: My hon. Friend the Member for Woking, who tonight probably became the first chairman of the 1922 Committee to be described as the Opposition, was the originator of the proposal. He and, of course, others deserve credit for persuading the Minister to accept the idea. I believe that the advisory committee will play an increasingly important role and will perform not only the functions set out in new clause 4, but many others as well.

I am convinced that, as soon as the announcement of the establishment of the committee was made, it automatically became durable. Politically, no Minister would dare to abolish it; that would be a political impossibility. Therefore, I am not convinced that we should make the committee a statutory body. Indeed, if it is not a statutory committee it may retain more flexibility and perhaps could stray into areas that need looking at, but which it might not be able to examine if it were a statutory body.

I understand the desire of Opposition Members who wish to have a statutory committee, but it seems to me much more important that the committee should be established quickly and should act quickly. Even if the Minister cannot give us the names of the members who are to be appointed soon, I hope that he will tell us when the committee will start to operate. That would be a great reassurance to the House and, more important, to all those involved in salmon fishing.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I wish to speak about Welsh interests. As a lifelong angler who belongs to a Welsh angling club, I support new clauses 4, 5 and 6 because they are vital for the conservation of salmon stocks.

We are at the 11th hour. Salmon are a disappearing asset and many fishermen do not catch even the four salmon per season to whch reference was made earlier. I challenge the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) who said that the collection of statistics would not be improved by the tagging of salmon. The Welsh water authority is collecting statistics and supports the tagging of salmon. Indeed, it has on the stocks a programme for salmon tagging, because it believes that better statistics could be provided under such a scheme. That is a potent argument.

It is important that we do not make the advisory committee just another quango. Members must include people with knowledge and interest and members of local organisations who know what they are talking about and, in particular, know a lot about the management of fisheries.

It is important that a tagging scheme is introduced at the earliest moment after the establishment of the advisory committee. We have not a minute to waste in the conservation of Atlantic salmon.

I wish to put on record the input to the new clauses from the Welsh Salmon and Trout Angling Association, the Welsh water authority and many Welsh angling clubs. Mention has already been made of the 18,000 signatures on petitions in favour of tagging. It is important that any tagging scheme should include imported fish and farmed fish, though I recognise that that would create difficulties. However, I am closely associated with agriculture, where all stock is tagged as a matter of routine, and I do not believe that it should be too difficult to tag salmon, whether they are farmed or taken in the wild.

We are in the stone age in our recording of salmon. We know very little about the true catch. Tagging will enable us to know how many salmon are caught, and that will enable us to improve our fisheries.

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman should not minimise the problems for fish farmers of tagging stocks. Many of the fish farms in Scotland and Shetland and in the islands are small businesses and tagging, however admirable a practice, would present formidable problems for such small businesses.

Mr. Livsey: I note the remarks by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). I accept that there are some problems but they can be overcome. It should be possible to tag farm fish in the same way as it is possible to tag farm animals. Salmon have to be boxed before they are marketed and they can be tagged when they are being prepared for the market. I see nothing difficult in that. In response to my speech on Second Reading the Minister said that he would consider the possibility of a Welsh tagging scheme. I hope that he will accept that the views on this side of the House are strong. They are the views of Welsh fishing interests and of those who are actively engaged in angling in Wales. They consider this to be essential for the future of salmon fishing in Wales.

Mr. Onslow: You have been generous, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in allowing us to have what is virtually a Third Reading debate on these new clauses. That will save a lot of time and enable some Scottish Members to catch their trains. I shall make no apology if I keep one or two Scottish Members a little late. Indeed, some of the things that I propose to say may be of assistance to them.

The Minister told us that he would introduce an advisory committee. I think it really is rather impertinent for the Opposition Front Bench to try to claim parentage for that committee. They have no title to it. The committee is probably the most important thing to come out of our Standing Committee deliberations. I hope that the Minister will tell us a number of things that will give encouragement to those hon. Members who have taken a close interest in these matters for a long time. That does not include the Opposition Front Bench.

The need to make progress is perceived all the more when one considers that we have had to take this Bill in the spillover session. We might have started to deal with a number of matters at the end of the summer if we had been able to complete consideration of the Bill then, and it is a matter of regret to many people that we were not able to do that. However, such things happen. I hope that the eagerness of the Scottish Minister responsible for these matters will not be frustrated by our delays. I hope that the period of thought that my right hon. Friend the Minister enjoyed during the long recess will have enabled him to formulate some fairly clear ideas about what the committee will do and that he will tell the House about them tonight. He may not be able to tell us the precise membership, but I hope that he will be able to tell us the names of the people whom he has invited to serve and the names of those who have agreed. He would do the House a service by telling us what he foresees as the composition of this committee.

Although most of the debate has been about Wales, it must be admitted that there are far more salmon in Scottish rivers than there are in English and Welsh rivers, more is the pity. It would therefore be wrong to deny the Scots a proportionate share of representation on the committee. Of course we do not want on the committee people who are landed proprietors and who take no interest in their fisheries—*[Interruption.]*—such as the hon. Gentleman who has just made a loud noise from a sedentary position.

Mr. Gummer: I give my hon. Friend the assurance that the Government will not ask the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) to play a part in this committee because, as my hon. Friend says, he has not yet taken the same interest in his own fisheries.

8.45 pm

Mr. Onslow: I am sure that the House will be relieved to hear that.

Apart from the membership of the committee and the balance of its composition, I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us about staffing. Perhaps he will also tell us where it will be located. I do not even mind if the Committee is preponderantly Scottish provided that its headquarters are in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food rather than in Scotland. In many ways it is easier to get at MAFF and to twist people's arms and it is MAFF that probably needs its arm twisted most in these matters. That is purely a personal opinion. A more important point is whether the Minister can tell us more about the activities, duties and responsibilities with which he will charge this committee. In Committee we were much encouraged to hear that seal predation was high on its list of tasks. I share the anxiety about the effect of the enormously increased numbers of seals on the north-east coast that prey on salmon stocks.

The matters aired under new clauses 5 and 6 puzzle me. Perhaps I could look first at new clause 6. It is extremely difficult to understand how it can be said that salmon tagging will be an aid to more accurate catch statistics. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) has his Welsh water authority licence in his pocket, but if he has—presuming that he has such a licence—he should look at it some time. He will see that he is required to make a fairly exhaustive return of any fish that he is fortunate enough to catch. I do not see how a requirement on him to tag fish when he takes them out of the water will have the slightest effect on the accuracy of his statistics or will be of assistance to the Welsh water authority.

If someone were quick enough to find a stretch of water in Wales between now and Saturday in which he could fish for salmon and caught a hen fish and, if he were a sensible

[Mr. Onslow]

chap and returned it to the water, what would he do about that? Would he put a tag on it and bless it before returning it to the water? If the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor thinks this through he will understand that salmon are not like cattle. One cannot have fish swimming around in a river with tags in their gills in the way that cattle walk around the market with tags in their ears. First, one has to catch the salmon. What possible benefit to statistics is contained in new clause 6?

Mr. Wigley: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is not aware that Mr. W. J. Ayton, the principal scientific officer of the Welsh water authority, has written to Welsh Members pressing for such a tagging scheme to be introduced. His reason is that the officers need this information in order to undertake their work. They are the experts and surely we ought to listen to them.

Mr. Onslow: We might listen to the scientist in the Welsh water authority if he could show why this clause should also be applied to England and Scotland. There has been no argument to show why it should be so applied. It may be and probably is a Welsh idea, but that does not automatically mean that it is a good idea to apply to the whole of the United Kingdom. Even the Welsh nationalists may understand that point of view.

The genesis of the salmon tagging scheme for the Welsh water authority area is embodied in new clause 5. That is not a conservation or statistical measure. It is designed to make it possible to catch poachers. I am extraordinarily surprised that we have not heard more about that purpose, because this scheme is designed to prevent the sale of illegally caught salmon.

Let us go back to the beginning. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) takes an occasional interest in these matters and he probably remembers the amount of work that was done by the water authorities to control the sale of salmon. He probably has a copy of the exhaustive report produced by Dr. Gordon Bielbey and his team in which the salmon tagging scheme was recommended. If the hon. Gentleman looks closely at it he will see that it was in order to prevent the sale of illegally caught fish and not for conservation, although poaching is a major threat to salmon stocks.

The hon. Gentleman does the House and the Department a discourtesy if he supposes that everybody, who takes an interest in these matters did not look closely at the practicability of this scheme. I know that Ministers looked closely at it. I discovered from conversations with them that they were not convinced that it was practicable to introduce such a scheme. I was disappointed to learn that, but ultimately I was convinced that they were right. If one looks at the implementation of the salmon tagging scheme, its weaknesses become quite clear quite soon. It depends upon the issue of a great number of tags and their application to fish that have been legally caught. A man with tags can apply them to fish that he has caught illegally. That is a major flaw in the scheme.

In respect of Wales, the major flaw is that its rivers are so close to England, if they do not actually form the boundary. If there were not a salmon tagging scheme in England that made it an offence to possess a salmon without a tag, that would be an open invitation to every poacher in Wales to take his illegally caught fish across the border as quickly as possible. Indeed, that already happens because modern poachers are so mobile. Poachers from Monmouth and Hereford poach in the Conwy with dinghies and gill nets. Recently two men from Monmouth were caught with more than 50 salmon valued at £1,000, representing a loss of 13 per cent. of the average rod catch in a year.

Mr. Livsey: I wish to clarify one point. The proposed tagging system does not mean tagging fish and then releasing them back into the water, but only tagging those fish that stay out of the water and are sold. The hon. Gentleman's remark about the men apprehended in Monmouth emphasises my point. If they were apprehended with salmon that were not tagged, it would be the end of the story. They would, quite rightly, be prosecuted. We all know that industrial poaching in Wales is severe.

Mr. Onslow: The hon. Gentleman is wrong because the men from Monmouth were prosecuted under current law and their car and tackle were seized. Therefore, there was no need for a tagging scheme to deal with those poachers. The three men from Hereford were using a dinghy and gill nets to poach the Conwy. If they had succeeded in returning to Hereford before being caught, they would have had no difficulty in disposing of the fish. We must catch the poacher on the spot. Whatever longstop scheme is being considered, the important safeguard is enforcement on the river and prevention of an illegal catch on the spot.

The Welsh water authority says that on the river Dee 150 boats are standing by ready to poach salmon. All this talk about salmon tagging would not come from Wales to anything like the same extent if it were able to field the necessary number of water bailiffs on the spot. If the rivers were actively protected, that would be the most beneficial defence. I hope that we do not lose sight of that.

The proposed dealer licensing scheme will also need to be monitored by the committee. We have yet to be told how it will work. If the scheme does not stop the illegal catching and sale of salmon, we will have to consider what further step is necessary. Again, I think that the best defence will be the water bailiffs. An elaborate bureaucracy built around the movement of metal tags will not be anything like as efficient as a man and a dog on the river bank.

Mr. Rowlands: I acknowledge the great deal of work done by the hon. Gentleman on behalf of those with trout and salmon interests. However, all those to whom I have spoken in Wales, including those in the front line, believe that a tagging scheme will be an important and integral part of their work of identifying what is legally or illegally caught fish. The hon. Gentleman questioned why the scheme should apply in England when it is a Welsh provision. I point out that both new clauses state that the provisions can be introduced in different cases if so desired. There is flexibility in our proposal.

Mr. Onslow: I should be more ready to accept the hon. Gentleman's argument if the proposed committee were already in existence and had reported on that matter. I hope that he will understand that a water bailiff who is trying to prevent poaching of salmon from his stretch of water is keen and skilled in the detection and prevention of illegal fishing. Whether or not illegal fishermen have tags in their pockets or satchels is neither here nor there. If the tagging scheme is to be of value, it must apply to

salmon offered for sale. Dealer licensing exists to control the sale of salmon. I have heard no argument that shows that tagging is likely to be more effective than dealer licensing or why it is necessary to run the two schemes as complementary to each other.

Mr. Rowlands: I apologise for intervening again. Our point is that we believe that the two schemes are complementary—they are not alternatives. How, under the dealer licensing system, will anyone but the dealer know whether the fish was legitimately caught? At least if a fish is presented with a tag, the dealer will know that it was legally caught. If the fish does not have a tag, the dealer can question the bona fide character of the person offering it for sale.

Mr. Onslow: Perhaps, like me, the hon. Gentleman would be better to suspend judgment on that matter until we are told how the dealer licensing system will work and be enforced. It is premature to insist upon the introduction of tagging for salmon offered for sale. The provisions of new clauses 5 and 6 go much further than was originally suggested.

I am not anxious to detain the House any longer than necessary. I end as I began by saying that the Minister, in what he will say to the committee at the end of our debates, has an opportunity to show people both within and without the House that he is serious in his wish to promote the conservation of salmon in British rivers. I hope that he will give evidence of that by witnessing—especially in his MAFF responsibility — the fact that water abstraction, water pollution, the land drainage schemes and the afforestation schemes that affect the character of so many rivers—especially in Wales—and which have done such damage to Welsh rivers by turning them into gutters that simply carry away the run-off are matters as serious for the conservation of salmon stocks as anything that we have been discussing. I hope that the advisory committee will be encouraged to turn its attention to these matters as well as the other matters that have been discussed.

Dr. Godman: I promise to be brief. I regret that I was not a member of the Standing Committee, because I was assigned—or condemned – to the Social Security Bill Committee.

I wish to make one point about the exchanges tonight. When listening to some of the contributions from Conservative Members, I was reminded of the charges levelled by Louis Macneice against Oxford dons, when he said that they had charm without warmth, and knowledge without understanding.

What is needed is an advisory committee. That is why I support new clause 4. However, I have some reservations about the system of tagging, especially, as I said earlier, for fish farmers. Many of the companies are very small, and some employ no more than two or three people. They are frequently situated in exposed areas and work under difficult circumstances. I know that farmers also work under difficult circumstances, especially hill farmers, but I have reservations about tagging because of the problems faced by the very small enterprises in the islands off the coast of Scotland.

I should like to hear a few words from the Minister on the membership of the committee. I should like to know something about the chairman, although that will not be possible at this moment. I have no doubt that the Minister and his officials will choose the chairman with considerable care. I have no idea whether he will be a radical in terms of the approach to modern methods of conservation. However, I hope that such a committee will examine the commercial salmon fisheries on both sides of the border with equal care, because not all the damage inflicted upon rod fishermen in Scotland is inflicted by English drift net fishermen. I do not know much about the damage inflicted by the seals in Bridlington bay. The seal expert is present. I do not claim to be an expert on the eating habits of the seal.

9 pm

I want to comment on what was said by the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). He voiced his concern for the Scottish salmon fishery. A salmon beat owner said in the *Glasgow Herald* recently:

> "Angling in the upper and middle Tay in June, July, and thus far in August has been like playing golf at Gleneagles with no holes on the greens."

There is a serious problem.

That owner's concern over the activities of English drift net fishermen was shared by the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs in its report on fisheries protection. One of the recommendations in the report was:

> "There should be a ban on monofilament nets in all UK coastal waters, and the northern English drift net salmon fishery should reduce its catch to traditional levels, leading ultimately to its being phased out, with financial compensation."

That is, understandably, a somewhat biased recommendation, since there is no mention of the activities of commercial salmon fishermen in Scotland.

Mr. Beith: Did the hon. Gentleman not think it reprehensible that when making that report the Select Committee did not take any evidence from any representative of the North-East Salmon Fishery or any of the bodies involved in regulating that fishery?

Dr. Godman: As a member of that Committee, I am willing to accept that that is a fair criticism, delivered strongly by the hon. Gentleman.

Damage is inflicted by commercial interests in Scotland. The same copy of the *Glasgow Herald* stated:

> "The biggest of the Tay netters, the Tay Salmon Fisheries Company . . . reportedly sent more than 600 boxes of salmon and grilse to London during July, while the netsmen of Insch . . . and Barony fishings despatched more than 500 boxes in the same period. That does not take account of the salmon sold to local hotels and fishmongers, sold on Edinburgh and Glasgow fish markets or on the major north of England fish markets or to the Scottish smoked salmon industry."

If we are to criticise commercial salmon fishermen, we have to be fair-minded. Such fair-mindedness, perhaps understandably, was completely missing from the intervention of the hon. Member for Dumfries. The hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) offered a much more reasonable criticism and suggested that the weekly hours given over to net fishing should be reduced, and that makes a great deal of sense.

The committee should be in a position to commission research and monitor the commercial fishing activities on both sides of the border. If it examines the English drift net fishery, it must also analyse, in an equally rigorous way, the commercial activities north of the border. Such a committee must reflect the differences in the importance of the salmon fisheries in the countries that make up the United Kingdom.

Mr. Canavan: I strongly support reasonable conservation measures, which is why I have tabled new clause 9, calling for a moratorium on net fishing on the River Tay and its tributaries. In Committee we had many debates in which hon. Members on both sides called for a proper balance between the interests of rod and net fishing. Emphasis was put on the number of jobs involved in net fishing as well as the number of jobs involved in the spin-off tourist industries connected with rod fishing.

I do not want to interfere in the patch of other hon. Members who represent the interests of their area. My amendment refers to the River Tay and its tributaries only. It may be that the River Tay is sui generis. Some evidence was published in the *Glasgow Herald* on Monday 21 August, in an excellent article by James Freeman — it has already been quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) — referring to reports that

"Tay salmon netting interests have caught an estimated 20,000 fish during low water in the month of July . . . Ian Mitchell, managing director of Tay Salmon Fisheries and himself a keen angler, said yesterday that it was possible that the 20,000 figure was correct . . . Mr. Michael C. Smith, an elected member of the Tay District Fishery Board . . . said: 'These netsmen are doing more damage to our Scottish stock than all the Greenlanders, Faroese, and Northumbrian fishermen and the poachers and the seals put together.'"

This is a serious case of overfishing with nets on the lower reaches of the river, and the people on the upper reaches whose jobs are involved in the sport of angling are suffering the consequences.

By coincidence, on the day that that article appeared in the *Glasgow Herald,* I went fishing on the River Earn, a tributary of the River Tay, with a friend of mine. I spent the whole day there and caught nothing. That is not unusual with me, because I am not a good fisherman. I go fishing simply to get a bit of fresh air and recreation and to look at the countryside, and if I catch any fish, that is a bonus. However, my friend is an expert fisherman, and he also caught nothing. That is no wonder when one looks at the evidence of the overfishing that is going on in the estuary of the River Tay.

There are about 25 netting stations in operation on the lower reaches of the River Tay and one company, the Tay Salmon Fisheries Company, owns more than 100 netting stations. Granted it does not operate them all at the one time, but that shows the capability of one company to overfish those reaches of the river. The Government must take radical action to stop that. Ironically, the only action which the Government are proposing with regard to the River Tay is a protection order governing the upper reaches of the river, which will inhibit the opportunities of rod anglers. The Government ought to be attacking the net anglers in the lower reaches of the Tay, not the rod anglers in the upper reaches.

Of course there is concern about jobs. However many jobs there are in net fishing on the River Tay, there are more than 30,000 jobs in the Highlands dependent upon rod fishing. I submit that that figure is far in excess of any estimate which the Government can produce about the number of jobs in net fishing on the lower reaches.

Following the Committee stage of the Bill I half expected some letters of protest, because not everyone agrees with everything I say. I cannot understand that sometimes. After my contributions in Committee I expected a host of letters from trade union interests representing the netsmen on the River Tay, from the netsmen themselves, or from the Tay Salmon Fisheries Company telling me how important the netsmen are for employment prospects in the Perth area. However, I received not a whimper of protest. I wonder whether any other hon. Members of the Standing Committee received any whimpers of protest about employment prospects.

Mr. Home Robertson: I assure my hon. Friend that I am not going to whimper. In fact, I agree with everything that he has said. I should like to draw my hon. Friend's attention to the fact that the Minister was kind enough to send us a list of the number of people employed in the net fisheries on the various rivers. The list shows that about 162 people obtain employment, often of a seasonal nature, on the River Tay. I acknowledge that my hon. Friend's point is a serious one and that there is probably a need to review the fishing effort, but I believe that he is going a little far in seeking to write off those jobs straight away. Perhaps he should adopt a more softly, softly approach.

Mr. Canavan: I have experienced working at the net fishing on the River Tay. When I was a student more than 20 years ago, I had a job working on the River Tay during my holidays from university. At that time — and I suspect that the position has not changed much — the Tay Salmon Fisheries Company mostly employed and exploited students and temporary cheap labour. There was no trade union and we were paid 5s. an hour. We were not asked whether we could swim, and we were sent out in a boat into the middle of that fast flowing river, and beyond, to lay the net.

Because of the low level of pay and the danger involved, I do not believe that these jobs are worth defending. I shall not stand on the Floor of this House or anywhere else and defend them. The Minister may defend those jobs, but there are of course vested interests in the Tory party in that respect. It is not just the Duke of Argyll who is apparently illegally net fishing on Loch Fyne. Lord Mansfield, a former Minister, with a specific responsibility for the pre-legislative stage of the Bill, has a vested financial interest in the Tay Salmon Fisheries Company. I suspect that the muted attitude of Ministers and the Government Front Bench on that matter speaks for itself.

It is time that we took firm action against the people who exploit workers and the rivers, who are acting to the detriment of those who love salmon fishing as a sport, and who are also acting to the detriment of the employment prospects of those in the Pitlochry area and other areas further up the River Tay. I shall never defend such organisations as the Tay Salmon Fisheries Company, many of them the same inherited landlords to whom I have referred previously, whose motto seems to be, "I shall not sow, I shall not grow, but by heavens I shall reap."

9.15 pm

It is about time that justice was restored. All that I am proposing is a moratorium for a trial period. I have not even said for how long. If, after several months or years, it is found that a complete moratorium is too strict, it will be up to the Secretary of State to come forward with alternative proposals. We would then have the opportunity of debating them. That surely would be a far more democratic way of deciding the matter.

Dr. Godman: I remind my hon. Friend and the House that the Scottish fisheries Minister recently banned commercial fishing on Loch Ryan. Therefore, there is a precedent.

Mr. Canavan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning that precedent. What I am proposing is not unreasonable or unprecedented, and I ask the House to accept it.

Mr. Beith: I welcome the setting up of the advisory committee. The new clause is about trying to firm up the details of the creation of the advisory committee, and perhaps the Minister will say something more about it.

I hope that the committee's membership will be sufficiently widely drawn to enable it to draw on the wide expertise that is available on salmon matters and to reflect the range of interests involved. It should not be a committee of interests, but it should contain people who understand the different fisheries and economic interests involved. It should not be seen to be biased in any particular direction.

As for the tagging proposal, I moved the new clause in Committee that would have enabled the Welsh water authority to have its wish to carry out a tagging experiment within Wales. We pressed the Minister extremely hard, but in the end he resisted. Subsequently, in his absence on important duties elsewhere, it fell to his hon. Friend to resist. I felt that, had the Minister been able to listen to the full and persuasive argument advanced in all parts of the Committee, and had he been present with his full authority, he would have been able to give a little more ground than did the Scottish Minister.

It is a perfectly reasonable request that this experiment should be carried out. It is an experiment upon which scorn has been characteristically poured by the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), who can rarely speak for very long without sounding either scornful, patronising or both. I hope that some day he will give that up.

Many people in the Welsh water authority who have a great deal of experience genuinely feel that this would be useful. It would make prosecutions easier and would ensure that the provenance of salmon held or transported anywhere in Wales had to be demonstrated. That is a perfectly sensible proposal. Wales is not an area in which there has been a great expansion in fish farming. The main expansion has been in Scotland, and the problems that can be dealt with there do not arise so acutely in Wales as in other parts of the United Kingdom.

The Welsh water authority should have been given its opportunity to carry out this experiment. There is now a fear that, were the salmon advisory committee to become persuaded that it would be a good thing, the powers do not exist to carry it out because they are not on the statute book. Ministers would thus have to come back to the House, with all the pressures of the legislative timetable, and seek an opportunity to bring forward another Bill. That is not very satisfactory.

I tabled a small amendment to the new clause designed to ensure that the House would have the opportunity to vote on the implementation of the tagging scheme rather than be confined to the extremely unsatisfactory negative procedure. I well know that that would be quite satisfactory to the movers of the new clause and to the Welsh water authority. I am disappointed that the Government have not moved further on that point. What would they do if the salmon advisory committee decided that such a scheme was desirable?

That brings me to the comments of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), echoed briefly by others, on the north-east salmon drift net fishery. No fishery has been subject to more detailed restriction and control than that one. In conjunction with passing the Bill, many new controls and restrictions have been placed upon the north-east salmon drift net fishery. It now has far longer close time than any in the Bill or advocated for other fisheries. The weekly close time for the north-east salmon drift net fishery is 84 hours as opposed to 42 hours in Scotland, although there has been an argument for a slight increase in that Scottish 42-hour close time.

The hon. Member for Dumfries amazes me by his apparent conviction that the rivers on the west coast of Scotland are suffering great deprivation because of what takes place in the north-east salmon drift net fishery off the north-east coast of England. It simply cannot be the case that the west coast rivers of Scotland are so drastically affected by what goes on off the north-east coast of England. The effects of the north-east salmon drift net fishery—scientific evidence has shown it affects less than 7 per cent. of the Scottish catch—must be concentrated on the English rivers along the Northumberland coast, which have generally improving salmon catches, the River Tweed, which flows through England and Scotland, and a number of east coast rivers in the south-east of Scotland.

The north-east fishery cannot be held responsible for salmon catches around the entire Scottish coast. The vast majority of fish are caught by commercial netsmen in Scottish rivers. I agree with the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) that the only convincing case for a reduction in the salmon catch in Scotland is to reduce the commercial netting catch in Scotland. If the north-east fishery was banned tomorow the impact on Scottish rivers would be limited. A great many people would lose their livelihood for little gain, but it would be absurd if nothing was done about Scottish commercial net fishing.

All the decisions should be taken on the basis of conservation and a reasonable balance between those who have traditionally obtained their livelihood from salmon fishing and the need for conservation. That idea appears to have permeated the Government departments involved and it is present in the Bill. I welcome the fact that Ministers have realised that the livelihoods of different groups of people are involved. One cannot simply wipe away people's livelihood, especially if the effects would be as limited as the evidence suggests.

It is interesting to note that the condition of some of the rivers in the north-east is not as deeply depressing as the condition of rivers in other areas, especially Wales. Anyone who has studied the Tweed recently will notice that there are large numbers of fish in it. That has given rise to a good deal of poaching and the Tweed commissioners have had to take on a number of extra bailiffs.

A week ago I went to Norham in my constituency and saw for myself a river full of salmon. There was an extraordinary sight of an angler playing a salmon on his hook while other fish popped up around his boat, sticking their heads out of the water. A marvellous photograph of that event appeared in the local newspaper—taken no doubt not far from the stately dining room window of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) as he gazed down upon the scene. The photo shows the angler with the salmon on his line and another popping its head out of the water only yards away.

Such a situation has arisen partly because of the low level of water in the River Tweed, and many fish were unable to get further up the river. It is not true that salmon

[Mr. Beith]

in the river Tweed represent a collapsing resource and that sooner or later there will be none in the river. It is a resource that has to be carefully conserved and the best scientific advice must be obtained to ensure that that conservation takes place. All the interested parties must be given fair treatment.

These are the principles which we sought to keep in the Bill and which the Minister sought to enshrine in the Bill. Some of the restrictions placed on the Northumberland fishery will bear hard upon it but those fishermen recognise that they and others have to take their fair share of conservation measures. It is in their interests as well as everyone's that there should be salmon for everyone to fish in the future.

Mr. Gummer: I am pleased that we have had a long, important debate on the new clauses. It is perhaps the most important series of issues that will be raised on Report.

I accept very much the view of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), that we should take the advisory committee very seriously, which he does. When the Bill was already prepared in large measure, I thought it worth while, as I came to it afresh, to look closely at the most contentious issues. I started with the clear view that salmon tagging was the right way to solve the major problem of the poacher and make a major contribution to conservation, for this is a conservation Bill.

We cannot distinguish between the stopping of poaching and the conservation measures because there is no doubt that very large numbers of fish are taken from rivers by poachers, which has a serious effect on conservation, not just because of the numbers but because of the methods used by poachers, which were so dramatically presented by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). He rightly reminded us that the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) was very much out of date in the way in which he described poachers, who were family, furry individuals who fitted into every natural group and were merely taking the odd fish for the pot. That is not the person we are talking about, although I do not want to make the distinction that suggests that poaching in any cirumstances is acceptable. However, there is a type of poaching that is so unacceptable that anybody who has any interest in conservation must realise that it should be stopped. Connected with the poaching of salmon and the effect on conservation are violence and the use of methods that destroy rivers, which none of us could support.

Therefore, when I approached the matter, the idea of the tag attracted me considerably. Even had I been listening to every word on that day when the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) put forward with such enthusiasm the case of the Welsh water authority, I would still have had to say to him that I did not believe that I was right to think that tagging would solve the problem. Indeed, I take a stronger view than that. I believe that tagging has within it such inherent difficulties that it would make the problem worse because it would make people rely on the tags and, by relying on the tags, have a false sense of security. I want to express the argument carefully, and I want the House to be aware that I have taken seriously the arguments about tagging.

I have also sought to think about the arguments on an advisory committee. No such committee was envisaged when the Bill was first proposed. I responded to the pressure of my hon. Friends, not to have a simple way of getting off the hook, if we may use that phrase, but because I believe that an advisory committee is necessary for the Bill to have its full impact.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison) that the argument about the statutory nature of the committee, based upon the fear that such a committee might be abolished by the whim of a future Minister, is unreal. It is not a political possibility for a Minister, having set up such a committee, to take such a short cut with it without a reason that could be seen by all.

There are also other examples of advisory committees, at least in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which are serious and important but which are not statutory. Their advice is taken seriously by the Ministry. The Farm Animal Welfare Council is an example. Therefore, the seriousness of the committee should not be determined by whether it is statutory. I prefer non-statutory committees because there is a flexibility about them that makes them worth while. This committee's seriousness must be judged by the House on the basis of what it does and of its membership.

In seeking to establish this committee we wanted to demonstrate that, above all, we are concerned with conservation. During the Committee stage I said that I did not believe that salmon should be treated as a food resource. I am pleased that that view has been taken up again this evening. Salmon are not primarily a food resource. If one looks at the figures, one sees that only 11 per cent. of the salmon eaten in this country are wild salmon. The rest are either farmed or imported salmon. Therefore, one cannot think of the 11 per cent. of British salmon that were caught last year as a food resource. One has to regard salmon as being very much more important to the leisure and tourist industries and to employment. Salmon as a food resource comes very low down the list.

9.30 pm

To ensure that that attitude prevails, we thought, first, that we ought to choose as chairman of the committee somebody who has a proven interest in conservation matters. Secondly, we thought that it was necessary that this person should clearly be seen to have had connections with the industry but that he should not be parti pris. That was difficult. I spent a great deal of time looking at very many names. Most of them turned out quite clearly to be on one side or another of the many arguments. Thirdly, we thought that it was necessary to have someone who would be able to deal scientifically with some of the fundamental issues relating to fisheries management that have been raised this evening. I am strongly of the view that one factor that has bedevilled a rational discussion of the issue has been the constant series of statistics that have been produced, all of which appear to contradict each other. There seems to be no way in which one can say that a particular list has to be accepted because it contains the most credible statistics.

Therefore, I am pleased to be able to tell the House that the regius professor of natural history at the university of Aberdeen, Professor Dunnet, who has the kind of experience that we need, has said that he is willing to become the chairman of this committee. I think that the House will be very grateful to Professor Dunnet. He has

the additional advantage of being a Scotsman who lives in Scotland, who works in a Scottish university and who has a very close association with salmon research in Scotland. That, we feel, will give confidence to those who wish 80 per cent. of the salmon to be in Scottish waters.

As for the membership of the committee, I should have liked to present to the House this evening a list of those whom we had approached so that the House would know exactly who they were. However, I am unable to do so. It is important that the chairman of the committee should play some part in the discussions on the representation of a whole range of interests. The committee will advise those Ministers who have responsibility for fisheries. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will agree that such a committee will be able to work better together if all its members feel that it is a representative body. I take the point that, on a per capita basis, it is not representative. However, we want a spread of representation right across the board. I have now completed my primary look at the range of people and organisations who feel that they ought to be properly represented. As my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) suggested, it is probable that a majority of those on the committee will represent Scottish interests because most salmon are caught in Scotland. It is vital that the committee should be seen as a committee of Great Britain and not as one that merely covers Scotland.

One of the criticisms in Committee was that we do not have a national salmon policy. If the advisory committee is to make such a policy a continuing one, it must represent the whole of Great Britain. For that reason, the secretariat will have a London focus, as the membership is bound to have a Scottish focus. The secretary will be a MAFF appointee. His deputy will come from DAFFS. There will also be an input from the Welsh. I have not forgotten that, and I hope to show why it is of great importance. I hope that it will be a committee whose structure, balance and spread will allow it to be taken extremely seriously.

I have already discussed with Professor Dunnet one or two issues which the committee will consider. The committee will meet before the opening of the new season, whatever happens. I hope that the Opposition will accept that, to all intents and purposes, that means the immediate setting up of the committee. The committee will deal early on with statistics. It will consider the collection of statistics and their reliability.

I shall draw to the committee's attention the points that have been made in the debate about the possibility of using tagging as a means of collecting statistics. I believe that there are real problems in that respect, and I do not underestimate them. The suggestion that tagging a fish makes the statistics drawn from that tagging more reliable presents some difficulty. I shall certainly draw to the committee's attention the discussion that has taken place. It will obviously be within its remit. I think that it would be absolutely natural for the committee to discuss that issue at an early date.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) will be pleased that I have already agreed that the question of predators is one that the committee should discuss closely. I hope that the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) will not be upset about that. However, there is indisputable evidence that, because there is no culling of seals, there are more of them, which suggests that there is considerable predation by seals on salmon. Even if that is not true, it is important to establish the truth. Much of the heat that has been generated by differing interests in the salmon world is generated because no one can be sure about that fact, because we have been unable to provide the authoritative evidence we should like to have.

That is why I put the predators issue high on the list. Everywhere I went people said, "I do not know why you are bothering about the poachers until you do something about the seals," or, "I do not know why you are bothering about the north-east fisheries until you do something about the seals." Those people may be entirely wrong, but we must discover that. Therefore, we have asked the advisory committee to take up the matter quickly.

Mr. Wigley: The right hon. Gentleman would have heard the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) say earlier that circumstances were different regarding the salmon in his river—I think, the Tweed. The pattern in that river is quite different from that in Wales. Is that not indicative that there are factors other than the seals, which presumably would not discriminate between the Dyfi, the Tweed and the Beauly, which affect stocks? Perhaps we have extenuating circumstances in Wales which need attention in that context. Can the Minister assure us that the Welsh Office will also be involved and that the focus will not just be on Scotland and MAFF in London?

Mr. Gummer: I give absolute assurance of that. Throughout the Bill we have been closely concerned with the Welsh Office. It has given its agreement to the terms of the advisory committee and there will be a clear Welsh input into the committee secretariat. There is no question about that. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I do not say that it is all down to seals. I do not know whether it is down to seals. The trouble with most of these debates is that people have grown increasingly cross with each other when it is the facts and figures that they are disputing. That is true of the north-east drift net fisheries. I shall return to Welsh tagging because I should like to deal with it directly in a wider context.

The advisory committee will not deal with the north-east drift net fisheries because we said that a specific report would be laid before both Houses of Parliament three years from the passing of the Bill on netting in the north-east of England and off the east coast of Scotland in the rivers that we mentioned in our debates. It would be entirely improper to suggest draconian measures, such as closing down the north-east drift net fishery off the coast of England, when 60 per cent. of the fish that are netted are netted in the rivers of Scotland. That is precisely the reason put forward by hon. Members on both sides of the House. That would be wholly unacceptable. It is also wholly unacceptable to deal with the public right of working fishermen in that way without any reference to the private rights of others in another part of the United Kingdom. That is not the business of fair Government legislation.

For that reason, we set out to achieve two objectives. First, we would restrict still further the north-east drift net fishermen. Many of my hon. Friends have asked how quickly that would be done and I can tell the House that all the measures that we promised to put in place will be in place before the opening of the new season. Secondly, the measure to prevent the use of licensed nets by endorsees in the absence of a licensee is being introduced by clause 35 of the Bill.

[Mr. Gummer]

Both the Yorkshire and Northumbrian water authorities have made bylaws banning drift netting at night and standardising the weekend close time. We expect to be able to confirm them shortly. There are statutory limits to how quickly we can do that, but we shall confirm them shortly. This week I confirmed the Yorkshire water authority's order that will phase out seven drift net licences as the present licensees give up, and replace them with fixed net licences.

The two remaining measures are orders under section 28 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975 to allow the use of fixed nets throughout the Yorkshire and Northumbrian water authority areas respectively. We do not anticipate any difficulties with the Yorkshire water authority area, but the Northumbrian water authority order has met considerable opposition from anglers. We must ensure that it meets the requirements without in any way diminishing the effect.

I can assure the House that all measures will be in place before the next season. In those circumstances it seems perfectly right that in three years' time we should study the effect of all types of netting on the supply of salmon into all kinds of rivers. Then we might again have some figures and facts on which to make decisions, instead of one man constantly saying that it affects 7 per cent. of salmon and another constantly saying that it affects every salmon, including those that are a long way from the north-east drift net fishery. Facts will help considerably.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) will accept that we should proceed in this way. If he is right and it is recommended that we take considerable, tough measures, the Government must be prepared to take them. I have always said that. If it is true that there is a major danger, we must put conservation first. We started our discussion in those terms and I should like to end now by saying, in exactly those terms, that conservation must come first. I give that undertaking. If, between now and the end of the three years, the Government have evidence which shows that we must take further steps, we shall have to do so. We have the powers to do so. We do not have to rely on new powers. We could take those steps, and I give my assurance that we would so do.

9.45 pm

Let me deal now with Welsh tagging. I intended, if it were possible, to tag, because I thought that tagging was right, but now I am convinced that it is not. The reason for that is that in every other country with the sort of problem that we have tagging does not seem to provide the answer. Our problem is that we would have to tag a large number of fish in a large number of places of disparate situation.

We cannot pray in aid the French. If we take every salmon that the French intend to tag, that is fewer than in one Scottish river. The French have fished all their salmon out. It is easy to have a tagging system if there are no salmon to tag. The idea that we should follow the French in conservation measures is difficult to accept, but to follow them in conserving something that they have already fished out is not sensible.

I have news fresh from Biarritz where they have been considering this issue carefully. There, they have presented a policy which, in almost every particular, the Bill is already applying. In other words, what we are trying to do and what we shall be doing with the powers provided by the Bill will, I hope, be able to provide exactly the sort of national salmon policy which the discussions in Biarritz lead us to want.

I know that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney is a great devotee of the French and a great francophile, but what the French intend to do will not wash. They are not, at the moment, going to tag fish caught at sea, farmed salmon or imported salmon. They think that they might in the future. But consider the danger of tagging only some salmon. That gives the poacher the most wonderful thing that he has ever had. All he has to do is to get hold of a few tags and he legitimises his own illegitimate catch.

Let me explain why I think that the Welsh water authority is mistaken in its proposal. I wish it were not so, but if it is wrong to tag nationally because it cannot be done without creating opportunities for fraud so much greater than any advantage one might have, it becomes even more wrong to tag regionally or even in the Principality alone. Any salmon poacher who poaches salmon on rivers, particularly those which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Woking suggested, are close to the border of the Principality, has only to skip over the border and there is no need for tagging to take place at all. It does not make sense as an anti-poaching device. Indeed, it does something much more dangerous. Once again, it enables people to legitimise that which they would find it difficult to get away with without a tagging scheme.

That does not mean that I have closed my mind to tagging for ever. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney must accept that if, after going over a matter again and again to try to find a way of accepting it, one still cannot be convinced, it is not unreasonable to share one's pretty good certainties with the House.

Mr. Rowlands: I do not find it very convincing that the Minister has not closed his mind to the issue of tagging. Therefore, let me put a different proposition to him. If the Welsh water authority, a responsible authority, in conjunction with the Welsh Salmon and Trout Association, brings a detailed project for the conservation of salmon in Wales to the advisory committee, when will the committee be able to receive an urgent submission of that kind and advise on it which, if the Committee supported it, might then reopen the Minister's mind? Will he give me an assurance that such a detailed submission will be within the remit of the advisory committee?

Mr. Gummer: I have already given the assurance that, as soon as possible after the Bill's enactment, the advisory committee will seek to assess how effective its anti-poaching measures are. We shall not necessarily wait for the water authority, but may tell it that if, in the circumstances then obtaining, it wishes its proposals for salmon tagging to be considered, the advisory committee will look at the matter. I have already given that undertaking, and I believe it to be right. I understand that the water authority might say that its tagging scheme can run with, and improve, the dealer licensing scheme, but I hope that we can agree that when the committee has considered whether the dealer licensing scheme is operating satisfactorily, it can look at the Welsh water authority's tagging proposals if it then has any. I hope that the Welsh water authority will take to heart the point that

it could considerably help its case if it considered the number of water bailiffs and others available. No one can say that it is sensible to have a partial salmon scheme.

I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Redcar (Mr. Tinn) about the cyclical pattern. One must be careful with the salmon figures, but that is why the committee has the matter as one of its first remits. I was unhappy about some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), but he too is not convinced about tagging and that is only right. I hope that the proposals that we have put forward for the committee, the seriousness with which we view the matter, and the fact that it will be as representative as possible will make him happy to support us.

The experience of the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) as a student has given him a miserable view of anyone in the netting industry. I wish that he was not as biased against Scottish netsmen as some Scots appear to be against English netsmen. We should not be biased against rodsmen or netsmen. The aim is to try to conserve salmon. The hon. Gentleman's constant attacks on my noble Friends are a disgrace. They have a long history of supporting conservation measures and their probity is unquestioned, other than by the hon. Gentleman. If we hear again about how he was sent out in a boat as a student, we shall have to ask why he did not set up a union instead of complaining that there was not one for him to join.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am not complaining that the Minister has said a great deal about Scotland—that is fair enough in the context of his reply—but I invite him to clarify one important point concerning who the advisory committee will report to. The Minister said that the sponsoring Minister for the advisory committee on salmon conservation will be his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

It is well known, and the Minister has acknowledged, that 70 per cent. of the salmon in British rivers are found in Scotland. A significant number of the recommendations made by the advisory committee would have to be implemented, or at least considered, by the Secretary of State for Scotland. Will the Minister say a little more about the relationship between the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in relation to that important advisory committee?

Mr. Gummer: I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman has not followed what I have been saying, but I thought that I made it clear throughout our debates in Committee that the committee is an advisory committee to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales. I have tried to show how we have attempted to meet the interests of all those concerned.

It is not acceptable for the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) to suggest that tagging fish is the same as tagging sheep. The two methods would not be the same. The problems are quite different, and it does not help to try to draw comparisons.

My hon. Friend the Member for Woking rightly said that we would come later to dealer licensing. I believe that that is the way to counter the argument on tagging. Indeed, that is why I have agreed to extend dealer licensing. It should cover the whole of the United Kingdom and not just Scotland. However, I assure my hon. Friend that I shall seek the advice of the committee on a whole range of matters, which will not exclude the dangers that he mentioned.

We have presented the House with a mix of a dealer licensing system, an advisory committee and a chairman who will clearly have the support of all salmon interests, and we have thus changed the way in which the salmon industry is viewed. I hope that the House will accept that the new clauses are unnecessary and that a fair wind should be given to our major proposals.

Mr. Randall: I shall be brief. The Minister has expressed doubts and uncertainty about tagging, but in Wales there is unanimity that it is essential to an effective system of conservation. There are successful tagging schemes in other parts of the world, such as Canada, and I believe that we too should gain some practical experience.

The new clauses would allow us to take powers, and we could then see what the advisory committee has to say about the technicalities of tagging. That is the best way forward, and it will ensure that we have a good system of conservation.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 32, Noes 128.

Division No 294] **[10 pm**

AYES

Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Canavan, Dennis
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Dewar, Donald
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Foster, Derek
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Livsey, Richard
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Meadowcroft, Michael
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Pike, Peter
Randall, Stuart
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon

Tellers for the Ayes:
Dr. Roger Thomas and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hayes, J.
Heddle, John
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*

Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Major, John
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Salmon Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. — *[Mr. Maude.]*

Salmon Bill *[Lords]*

Again considered.

New Clause 12

'ACCOUNTABLE DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARDS

'(1) The Secretary of State by order shall have power to establish District Salmon Fishery Boards for such districts containing a fishery as he shall designate and shall provide that a majority of members of each board shall be nominated by the relevant local authority or authorities in such numbers as he shall deem appropriate, the remaining members of each board being elected in terms of Schedule 2 to this Act.

(2) A district salmon fishery board shall have the powers and duties conferred—

(a) on them under this Act; and

(b) by any other enactment on a district board within the meaning of the Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Acts 1862 to 1868;

and references in any enactment, other than in this Act, to a district board within the meaning of the Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Acts 1862 to 1868 shall be construed as references to a district salmon fishery board.'. — *[Mr. Donald Stewart.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 12, in page 12, line 6, leave out clause 13.

No. 13, in clause 14, page 13, line 37, at end insert—

'(1A) The press and the public shall be admitted to all meetings of district salmon fishery boards.'.

Mr. Stewart: Amendment No. 12 is consequential and I am happy to support amendment No. 13.

In his reply to the previous debate, the Minister said that conservation should come first. The Bill has little to do with conservation. When it was first published the Salmon Conservancy said:

"The balance of influence on the boards still remains in the hands of the major proprietorial interests whose eligibility for election to the board is determined by the value of the fishery. Co-opted anglers and tenant netsmen have restricted power only."

It is clear that under no circumstances can co-opted members outnumber proprietors.

The purpose of the amendment is to change that position. We want to make a start, albeit minimal, on community involvement in salmon fisheries.

Mr. Home Robertson: We made our position on the composition of the district boards very clear in Committee. As the Minister will recall, the Opposition voted against schedule 2, which provides for a 20th century re-enactment of a medieval system of proprietorial authority, with only a token presence representing other interests and without any voting power or authority.

All relevant interests, including the public, should be represented on the boards. However, having flogged the issue to death in Committee and voted against the Bill on a reasoned amendment on Second Reading, I could not think of much to add on Report. However, the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) has come to the issue as fresh as a daisy and tabled an uncharacteristically reasonable new clause to provide for proper representation and accountability for the boards. We welcome his support for the case that we have been putting to the Government for a number of months. We endorse the objectives of his new clause. As he may have noticed, I have added my name to its list of sponsors.

Amendment No. 13 stands in the name of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who is apparently unavoidably absent tonight. He will have noticed that I have added my name to his amendment. I wholeheartedly agree that district boards, which in effect will be statutory public authorities, should conduct their proceedings in public and that the press should be free to report on their deliberations.

Had the hon. Gentleman been in his place in Committee to move his amendment, I would have been happy to support him. As he is again not with us tonight, I am happy to say in his absence that, in principle, the Opposition are prepared to support his amendment.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I wish to follow the example of brevity set by the two previous speakers. I wish to support new clause 12 because the considerable argument about the right balance on the boards between riparian owners, netsmen and anglers has convinced me that the proposed structure that locks co-opted members into a minority position should not be accepted.

As the Government have argued that they are trying to increase democracy through this measure, it is inappropriate that the rather dubious democratic structure that they propose will mean that that majority using the facility will be in a minority position.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling) *rose*—

10.15 pm

Mr. Kennedy: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman knows all about minority positions, but I hope that he will forgive me if I do not give way.

The co-opting of anglers and tenant netsmen is something of a token gesture towards increasing representation. Efforts to introduce election rather than the system of co-opting have failed. However, there is no doubt that the balance of influence still remains in the hands of the major proprietorial interests whose eligibility for election to the board, as the right hon Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) said, is determined by the value of the fishery. Therefore, there is restricted power only for the co-opted anglers and the tenant netsmen.

Other interested parties, such as local businesses, hoteliers and representatives of local tourist boards, do not seem to be having the major input that we would wish, especially given the importance of the industry to the Highlands and Islands.

The Federation of Highland Angling Clubs and Association has been extremely diligent in keeping its local Members of Parliament and others, including my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) who served on the Commitee, well informed of its views. I am extremely grateful on my behalf and on behalf of my hon. Friends from the Highlands and Islands to Mr. Bill Brown of Strathpeffer, who, as well as serving with the federation, is secretary of the Scottish Anglers National Association. He has been extremely active on behalf of that association. The Federation of Highland Angling Clubs and Association put it extremely well when it said:

"Our criticism must be in the clause which says that anglers should be 'co-opted'".

It points out that in opposing co-option it has made several suggestions, one of which would be that the

[Mr. Kennedy]

Secretary of State should appoint co-opted angler representation. The association looked to the system which operates with the purification boards as a comparison which the Government could have looked at. Concern has been expressed by groups such as the Highland regional council and, I am sure I am right in saying, by the Western Isles council and other tiers of local authority in the Highlands and Islands.

In taking this step forward to establish district salmon fishery boards under the guise of democracy, the Government have given insufficient input to local angling interests and local fishing interests as a whole. Essentially, within the new structure, they have consolidated the power and hold, which is not democratic, of those who have the biggest cash control and personal stake and interest in the industry. It is disappointing that the Government have not gone further.

Given that there is such a great deal of interest in the decisions which the boards will be taking, in the activities they will be carrying out and the functions they will perform, it is only right, especially given the long drawn out arguments, that if the Government are going down the road of democracy, which is what they argue, that meetings of the board should be open to the press and the public. In that respect I endorse amendment No. 13 which follows on from new clause 12 and stands in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed. I do not see that there is any convincing argument against openness of Government decision-making in this respect. It is sad that we do not have more openness in general in the composition of the fishery boards that are to be established, and, through that, more genuine democracy of the type that the Government have claimed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I had no intention of making a contribution to the debate, but as the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) would not give way I shall make one point. It is an extraordinary argument that rests on democracy and suggests that Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all should be involved in the deliberations of the boards. The hon. Gentleman is not arguing that the National Farmers Union, British Wool Marketing Board, the Red Deer Commission or other such organisations should have Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all. No doubt he would argue that, in the case of the NFU, it is appropriate that decisions about farming and representations about farming should be made by those involved in it and who know something about it. There is ample provision in the legislation for outside interests to be represented.

The hon. Gentleman does not come to the House and tell us that more people should be involved in decisions about forestry or any other activity. It strikes me as an odd notion of democracy that says that everyone should be involved in the business of deciding how best to run or manage our rivers. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman does not give the considerable credit that is due to the many people who, as riparian owners, put in time, money and effort to make sure that our salmon interests are preserved and enhanced to the greater benefit of the community and to the considerable benefit of Scotland. The hon. Gentleman is simply perpetuating the old class war and playing to the gallery rather than looking at the interests of salmon fishing in Scotland.

The hon. Gentleman made no attempt to say how all these various democratic groups would make their financial contribution. Presumably, once again he is looking to the ratepayer and the taxpayer to foot the bill.

Mr. John MacKay: The new clause does what the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) wishes it to do. It changes the composition of the boards. We intend to retain the influence of owners on the boards because of their ownership of fisheries and their direct contribution to the boards' finances.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) is right. The interest of proprietors has been essential. Not all of them come from Burkes Peerage or the House of Lords. Most of those who own parts of rivers or rivers in my constituency are ordinary farmers or are in the hotel business or the like. They are not people like the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), and their holding in the land is much more modest in size and value than that of the hon. Gentleman.

Such people have done a splendid job, and it is because of their efforts over the years, both collectively and separately, that the salmon stock in Scotland is not at the level that some of the pessimists would have us believe they would be. There is a great deal to be said for the principle that he who pays the piper calls the tune. We have recognised that other interests should be represented on the newly constituted district salmon fishery boards, which is why we have introduced representatives of the anglers and the tenant netsmen, who will have voting representation and play a full part in the operation of the boards.

It is not clear whether the local authority nominees which new clause 12 would require would have voting rights, but I presume that to be the intention. That would be manifestly unjust. One might see the argument put forward by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) that those in the hotel and tourist trades, who have a direct interest in the fishery trade and looking after it and making sure that it prospers, should be involved but many of the proprietors and anglers on the board will have that interest.

Giving local government a majority on the board would change the balance of power entirely, from those who own the fisheries, pay the fishery assessment and are interested in the fishery assessment, to others who, however worthy they may be, do not. By their weight of numbers they would be able to cause the board to incur expenditure, perhaps great expenditure, without contributing a single penny directly or through the authority that they represent. The wise course is to stay with clause 13 and not support new clause 12.

I have given amendment No. 13 careful thought. I have some sympathy with it. I remember when I joined Oban town council many years ago fighting a battle to open council meetings to the public. However, I have concluded in this case—and I hope the House will agree—that it would not be appropriate to require the boards to open their meetings in the way that the amendment seeks. The co-option of anglers' representatives to the board can be expected to ensure a wider scrutiny of a board's activities, for example, through the reporting back procedure which the anglers will have for those whom they represent. There is nothing in the legislation to prevent the boards from inviting the public or the press to attend meetings. Perhaps newly constituted boards will bear that in mind.

It has been argued that as the boards receive no subsidies from public funds and are therefore not, as local authorities are, accountable to the public in a financial sense the reasoning that justifies opening local authority meetings to the public does not apply to the boards. Some hon. Members must know that many smaller boards hold meetings in the offices of their clerks. That may be the boardroom of the firm of lawyers who act as clerks.

I believe that it would be unreasonable to expect a board to incur avoidable expenditure by hiring halls just in case members of the press or public wish to watch the board's deliberations. That is not a sensible thing to ask the boards to do. That is not sensible expenditure or a sensible use of money and I hope that the new clause will be withdrawn.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Minister has a remarkably aristocratic view of the Highlands. The idea that the proprietors of the salmon rivers are the only people endowed with an understanding of what is in the public interest is preposterous. The suggestion that ordinary chaps are thoe who own stretches of salmon rivers bears no relation to the Highlands reality. I wish that the Minister would not try to pull the wool over our eyes. He will certainly not be pulling the wool over the eyes of his constituents, never mind the eyes of the constituents of my hon. Friends who represent the majority of the Highlands and Islands constituencies. If he continues to act in that way, he had better look to his laurels.

Local authorities are elected by the public in the areas and are well placed to represent the interests of those concerned that the fisheries should be managed to the benefit of the community. The new clause is a modest proposal. The Minister's lack of sympathy for the objectives of the clause will be noted throughout the Highlands. He has done nothing to ensure that there will be representatives of the tourist industry on the boards. He has also done nothing to ensure that there will be representatives of local anglers' associations or representatives of those who may have a specialist knowledge of the fishing industry but who have no commercial interest themselves. The constitution of the board is to be decided entirely by the disposition of those who happen, frequently by inheritance, to have acquired rights of ownership over rivers — rights often exercised exclusively, not for the benefit of the public.

The Minister is living in the last century, and it is about time that he woke up. It is about time that he recognised that not for much longer are the Scottish public prepared to see the God-given inheritance of these fishing waters disposed of as the private property of a handful of people whose forebears acquired them through no virtue other than their acquisitiveness.

If the Minister continues to dig in his heels and set his face against popular involvement in decisions about the preservation and improvement of fisheries in Scotland, he will reap much more drastic remedies.

10.30 pm

Sir Hector Monro: I had not intended to get involved in the debate until the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) got to his feet and behaved in an astonishingly ignorant way. He did not appear in the debate until 10.25 tonight and has taken no obvious interest in the Bill since it came to the House many months ago. The hon. Gentleman displayed his total ignorance of the management of the rivers in Scotland by quoting his own local boards and suggesting that that was the case throughout Scotland.

Does the hon. Gentleman know that the chairman of one of the best river boards in the south of Scotland, on the Annan, happens to be a school teacher and a local councillor? Is he aware that there are anglers on the local board? Is he aware that people interested in tourism are on the board? Just because the hon. Gentleman apparently has a particular dislike of the owner of a river in Thurso, he reckons that it is the same throughout Scotland. He ought to apologise for making disgraceful statements that are totally without knowledge of boards throughout Scotland. They do an exceptionally good job, manage the rivers well, let angling associations have adequate water and provide adequate water themselves.

As I told the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) hours ago, he could fish on some of the best salmon rivers in Scotland for £5 a day — on privately-owned water as well as on association water.

The House should take no interest in the criticisms of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland who has turned up at this late hour.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me?

Sir Hector Monro: No.

Mr. Donald Stewart: I introduced the new clause much more briefly than I would normally have done, and I am glad that other hon. Members have raised points that I wished to make. I am sorry that the Minister has turned down the new clause in such a cavalier fashion.

The Minister repeated some of the myths connected with the Bill. The myth that the working class in Scotland have beats on salmon rivers as a diversion from the darts club was effectively demolished by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). The other myth is that until recently these owners accepted that a man could take "one for the pot" and that nothing would be done about it. I cannot recall such a situation. They still believe that anyone poaching a salmon should be sent to Botany bay. They seem to regard this as more heinous than some of the worst crimes on the statute book.

The Minister also referred to what the owners had done for salmon stocks. I do not agree with salmon fishing off the north-east coast of England, but the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) made a valid point when he said that we should stop the netting of salmon in Scotland before we do so elsewhere.

I know a number of these owners who are netting their rivers. That is where conservation should begin. They are shipping the fish out to Billingsgate for a fast buck. If that were stopped there would be many more salmon going up the rivers. What the poachers are taking is a drop in the ocean, and I am sorry that the Minister did not accept the new clause.

Question put and negatived.

Clause 3

GENERAL REGULATION OF SALMON FISHERIES

Mr. Beith: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 4, line, at beginning insert

'When he considers it necessary to do so in order to conserve salmon stocks more effectively.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 2, in page 4, line 2, after 'appropriate' insert:

'and after taking into account the interests of any persons whose livelihood would be affected'.

Mr. Beith: These two amendments relate to provisions in the Bill by which the Secretary of State can make severe restrictions on the manner in which fisheries are managed. These restrictions may be contemplated for the best of reasons but they could have the effect of depriving certain categories of fishermen of their livelihoods.

If the Minister were to set a mesh size which was such that few salmon could be caught it would effectively destroy a particular fishery. If the Minister forbade a whole category of implements he would rule out an entire fishery. There are a series of provisions in the Bill which would enable the Minister to remove the livelihoods of groups of fishermen.

In Committee I sought to argue that a Minister should not have such powers without adequate parliamentary opportunity to consider the matter. I argued that the affirmative order procedure was the only reasonable way of doing so. At the moment the Minister can bring in an order prohibiting a category of fishing and the only thing that hon. Members could do would be to pray against the order. They would seek a debate — probably without success—on the Floor of the House. With luck it could be debated in Committee, but hon. Members would have no guarantee of a meaningful debate on the order. They would have no opportunity effectively to represent their constituents.

My argument for the affirmative order did not prevail as Conservative Members felt that this—in my opinion inadequate—procedure was all that was needed in such circumstances. I disagree.

Tonight, I have taken an alternative approach. I believe that the Minister should satisfy two conditions before he may embark on some of the actions that are open to him in the Bill. If the Minister seeks to exercise the powers in clause 3(2) he should do so only when he considers it necessary to conserve salmon stocks more effectively. I am sure that that is the Minister's intention, but it is just possible that a Minister may be persuaded, by argument, that one category of fishing should be abolished to improve the opportunities for another category. That is not a reasonable basis for exercising the powers available. The basis should be conservation.

If the Minister should decide that a specific net is bad, such a decision should be based on the conservation needs and with due consideration for the effect of such a ban on the livelihood of fishermen. Such considerations have not always featured in Government departmental practice. I have argued about this with the Minister on previous occasions in respect of other matters, including the ban on the carriage of monofilament nets. However hard the Minister tried, he left some fishermen with the feeling that they had not been properly consulted.

There should be a clear obligation to take into account the interests of those whose livelihoods may be affected by Government decisions. I hope that the Minister will say that that is his intention and that I have given an accurate interpretation of it. That would set a future pattern and give guidance to departmental officials. I would prefer such considerations to be contained in the Bill. The Minister must remember that conservation is the objective but that people's livelihoods are also involved.

Mr. Home Robertson: Amendment No. 1 shows that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is even more suspicious than I am about the Government's motives. The amendment would require the Secretary of State to make regulations on close times, mesh sizes and so on only

"When he considers it necessary to do so in order to conserve salmon stocks."

I confess that it had not occurred to me that any Minister, even this Minister, would introduce such regulations just for the hell of it or simply out of spite. However, I suppose that there is a case for guarding against such eventualities. Nevertheless, after the Minister's disgraceful response to the earlier debate I feel that he cannot be trusted to exercise his discretion fairly over this kind of issue. Therefore, I support in principle amendment No. 1.

Amendment No. 2 would ensure that before regulations are made account is taken of the interests of those whose livelihoods would be affected. I think that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed is right. It became very clear in Committee that there are people who would not hesitate to take action to close down legitimate netting operations, regardless of the interests of those who had worked the fisheries for generations, according to traditional and properly regulated practices. The House should recognise the importance of those jobs, however few, seasonal, or part-time they may be, in small and remote communities. The economy of a rural area can be very fragile, and the loss of even part-time jobs can have far-reaching effects.

Right hon. and hon. Members recognise that it may be necessary further to restrict the netting effort, but any such measures must take proper account of those whose livelihoods will be affected. Therefore, I support in principle both of the amendments.

Mr. John MacKay: I admit that the inclusion of the words contained in the first amendment is superficially attractive, but their inclusion would involve danger. The suggestion of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) would add a restriction. The Secretary of State may want to use his powers for purposes that are not strictly conservationist. They may, however, have an identifiable effect on, for example, the better management of a fishery. I do not deny that the existing regulations and any that will be made under clause 3(2) are essentially conservationist, in the widest sense of the word. However, to seek to qualify the Secretary of State's power by the amendment would be unsatisfactory, in view of the kind of questions and doubts that might be raised about the Secretary of State's power to act in the interests of the good management of salmon stocks. That is part and parcel of the conservation problems that the House has discussed.

As for the second amendment, in Committee I was far from convinced that anything other than a generalised requirement for the Secretary of State to consult such persons as he considers appropriate was necessary. I am still of the same mind. I hope that it can be taken as read that any Secretary of State, of whatever political persuasion, will have regard to salmon conservation, and also to other relevant matters, when he considers such questions and that he will consult all those who have an interest in and whose livelihood depends upon the fishery concerned. Obviously he will have to consider the views of

interested parties, whether or not their livelihoods are directly affected, and he will have to weigh all these factors before deciding whether to make a regulation.

I see no advantage in picking out one particular group. I had hoped that in Committee I had given the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed sufficient assurances to allay his fears. I have tried again to give those assurances. I hope that I have said enough to convince the hon. Member that his fears are groundless and that he will withdraw his amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 6

ANNUAL CLOSE TIME

Sir Hector Monro: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 7, line 4, leave out 'only'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 5, in page 7, line 8, at end insert—

'*(c)* after consulting such persons as he considers appropriate.'.

No. 6, in clause 7, page 8, line 4 leave out 'only'.

No. 7, in clause 7, page 8, line 8 at end insert—

'*(c)* after consulting such persons as he considers appropriate.'.

Sir Hector Monro: Clause 6 deals with the annual close time. I am not arguing the case for that one way or the other. However, when we discussed the matter in Committee, the Minister opened the door to a system that can be adjusted.

According to the Bill, the Secretary of State can make a close time order only if he has been asked to do so by the district salmon board or, if there is no such board, by two proprietors of salmon fisheries in the district. It is conceivable that the proprietors of both upper and lower stretches could act in their own interests in declining to ask the Secretary of State to make an order, even though in the interests of conservation, and indeed in the interests of common sense, it is important to make such an order. I should have thought that hon. Gentlemen such as the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who bailed out as quickly as he arrived, and does not seem to like boards and proprietors, would have been pleased if the Secretary of State could step in where it is obviously essential that he should do so.

10.45 pm

In this simple case, all we are asking in amendment No. 5—

"after consulting such persons as he considers appropriate"—

is for the Minister to step in and deal with the matter if malpractice, inefficiency or incompetence is taking place. It is conceivable that two proprietors might be in cahoots and they may not wish to have an order made that might be to their disadvantage but to the advantage of the river. I quite accept that the board would be in a position to advise the Minister on its interests. However, I am referring to a case where there is no board and where proprietors might not be acting in the interests of the river.

Throughout the Bill, the Minister, off his own bat, or on the advice of the board, takes powers to do a whole host of operations, yet he is not prepared to do so in the case of close time or in terms of estuarial limits. I have considered what he said in Committee, and I wonder what his objection is to taking steps when it is essential to do so. If he says that the amendment is defective or that something is wrong with its drafting, I shall be all the more disappointed, because he has known, since the Committee stage, that I would put down an amendment. He might well have put one down himself. I shall listen with interest to his argument as to why he will not accept what seems to be a simple, logical and worthwhile amendment which everybody with whom I have discussed it in the fishing world thinks is admirable.

Mr. John MacKay: My hon. Friend's amendments have again raised the question of annual close times and the way in which the Bill seeks to change them. In Committee, I undertook to reflect on the points made by hon. Members, including my hon. Friend, and to bring forward an amendment if I were more convinced about the case on reflection than I was at the time. I am afraid that the fact that I have not brought forward an amendment shows that I have not been persuaded by the arguments.

I do not think that any hon. Member would seriously wish that annual close times, which last for 168 days and have different dates for different districts, should be solely within the discretion of the Secretary of State. Annual close times have been fixed in the past according to local considerations, such as the timings of the runs of fish, and so on. Those changes in the dates that have taken place over the years have been made at the initiative of district boards which have had to petition the Secretary of State. I am not aware that any great difficulty has been caused by that procedure, other than in areas where there are no boards. We have sought to deal with this in future by enabling two proprietors in a district for which there is no board to apply for the sorts of changes for which the Bill provides—that is, for the extension to the period of the close time as well as changes to dates.

My hon. Friends would, in effect, wish me to provide that a board's decision not to apply for a change in the annual close time be subject to appeal to the Secretary of State. Presumably such an appeal would be made on behalf of local interests, but I wonder whether that would necessarily be the case. I doubt very much whether what should be a local issue would not be in danger of becoming a cause celebre of national proportions. The plain truth of the position is that, were we to go down the road that my hon. Friend invites me to go down, there would be little point in the power being given to the district boards and proprietors in the first place. We might as well treat alteration to the annual close time as a national issue from the outset.

I understand that my hon. Friend's concern is about conservation and controlling the balance of exploitation between nets and rods. We should look, not to the extension of annual close time, but to the extension of weekly close time. In Committee, I undertook on many occasions—I am happy to do so again—to consult on weekly close time with particular reference to whether Saturday morning should continue to be part and parcel of the open time for net fishing as soon as the Bill was enacted.

My hon. Friend's amendments to clause 7 fall within the same general principles—the question of estuarial limits and so on. These matters should be left to local initiative and responsibility. Local boards should bring them to the Secretary of State. If the Secretary of State

[Mr. John MacKay]

were to be given power to act without an application, we might as well give him all the powers from the beginning, rather than have the ball played first by the district boards.

I know that my hon. Friend will be disappointed, and that I have not managed to convince him in the past few weeks. However, on balance the Bill is correct. The initiative should come from the boards and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will have the power, after he has gone through the various consultation procedures, to act to ensure that all the local interests involved have their say.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister would say that, would he not? I was a little suspicious of the motives of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) in tabling the amendment. I wondered whether he sought to get round the rudimentary representation of the netting interests on the boards.

I welcome one factor in his speech. He recognised what we in the Opposition have been saying all along which is that in some circumstances the boards may note the most appropriate bodies as they are at present constituted to deal with the wider interests involved in Scotland's salmon rivers and lochs and to do the job that the House wants them to do. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's apparent conversion on that point and I am glad that he and some Opposition Members are raising questions about the efficacy of the boards.

Sir Hector Monro: I am disappointed in the Minister's reply. I am not arguing about the position of the district boards. They exist to advise the Secretary of State and to require him to make an order. I am concerned with the estuarial limits and the close time where there is no board and the proprietors may not be acting in the best interests of the river and of others who may wish to fish on it. I cannot see why in those special circumstances the Minister should not be prepared to take the decision into his hands, especially since he has already taken enormous powers under the Bill, many of which I welcome, particularly those relative to weekly close times. I cannot understand why he is prepared to bury his head in the sand or the water or whatever when a river may be being ruined by two proprietors who have got together and refused to take action. This is a simple, worthwhile amendment and I am most disappointed by his attitude.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: I know well the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and I have heard what the Minister has had to say. I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to know that his reply is disappointing. A major criticism of the Bill is that it does not grasp the nettle of estuarial interests. It is feeble in that respect and I hope that we shall return to battle this out through the committee that is to be set up and persuade other Ministers on another occasion of the wisdom of my hon. Friend's remarks.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 9

APPLICATION OF REGULATIONS AND ANNUAL CLOSE TIME ORDERS TO THE RIVER TWEED

Amendments made: No. 8, in page 9, line 15, after '6', insert

'and section *(Use of baits and lures)*'.

No. 9, in page 9, line 34, at end add—

'; and

(d) section *(Use of baits and lures)* of this Act includes power to amend section 6 of the Tweed Fisheries Amendment Act 1859.'.

No. 10, in page 9, line 36, after '6', insert ',10'.—*[Mr. John MacKay.]*

Clause 10

QUALIFIED PROPRIETORS AND UPPER AND LOWER PROPRIETORS

Mr. John MacKay: I beg to move amendment No. 11, in page 10, line 30 leave out subsection (6) and insert—

'(6) Subject to subsection (5) above, a qualified proprietor in a salmon fishery district shall not be eligible for election, co-option or appointment to the district salmon fishery board for that district in respect of more than one salmon fishery.'.

The amendment clarifies the intention of subsection (6). We want to ensure—and have done so in subsection (5)—that a qualified proprietor who is both an upper and lower proprietor in a district may act in either or both capacities. Nevertheless, where he owns more than one upper fishery, or more than one lower fishery, he should not be eligible to be elected or co-opted to the board for that district more than once in the same capacity—that is, as an upper or lower proprietor—and this minor amendment makes the position clear.

Mr. Home Robertson: We had some interesting debates in Committee on the subject of one man, one vote—or, as in this case, one proprietor, one vote—and we established that mulitple proprietors would apparently have multiple votes. Indeed, I rashly referred to them in Committee as "block votes". If we were to extend that principle to the other place, I suppose we should find that the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry would have two votes—one for Buccleuch and one for Queensberry—and that in this House the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay), the Minister, would have one for each. He should be so lucky.

I gather that the amendment will mean that a multiple proprietor with both upper and lower fishing rights will not be eligible for election, co-option or appointment to a district in respect of more than one fishery, and I suppose we should be thankful for small mercies.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 14

FINANCIAL POWERS AND DUTIES OF DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARDS

Sir Hector Monro: I beg to move amendment No. 14, in page 14, line 4, at end insert

'provided that such assessment shall not be assessed on any lower proprietor who has abandoned his fishery for a period of twelve months prior to the date of assessment.'.

I feel equally strongly about this amendment and I hope I shall have better luck with it. We debated this issue in

Committee, and while the Minister was not particularly encouraging, at least he did not shut the door in my face. Since then I have been in correspondence with him and I trust that he has given the matter further thought.

In debating the Bill tonight hon. Members have expressed concern about the need for conservation — how we want to get rid of nets, but without affecting existing fishermen. The amendment deals with proprietors and others who are buying out nets and abandoning them, the result being that the areas are not fished at all, and that must be in the best interests of conservation. The Minister seems to think, however, that an amendment to remove the assessment is inappropriate, and that the particular amendment is not best drafted. I have been waiting to be advised of a better word than "abandoned", and if that advice is forthcoming I shall be willing to amend the amendment, if there is time to do so. The dictionary tells me, however, that "abandoned" is the best word.

11 pm

We have a new organisation in Morayshire, called the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation. Some fishing enthusiasts have come together to form a charitable trust to purchase netting interests throughout the Moray Firth. That is what it has been doing, to allow more fish to enter the river so as to build up stocks. Surely that is highly commendable. The Minister should be saying, "Thank goodness that some people are doing what we all want to be done." No one is any the worse off, because the fish are coming up the river to add to the stocks to the benefit of the entire river.

When the assessment issue arises, however, the Minister says that he will not accept the amendment. When proprietors are doing good work, surely we should assist them by reducing what they have to pay in the form of assessment. I cannot understand why the Government are being so abstruse and objecting to the amendment. The principle is right, irrespective of the drafting, and I cannot understand why I am not receiving a green light from the Treasury Front Bench. I await the Minister's reply with interest.

Mr. Home Robertson: I understand what the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) is saying about the principle that there should be no assessment of what he terms "abandoned lower fisheries", but the thread of his argument is that there is a need to do away with some or all of these fisheries, which are the netting stations on our estuaries. The hon. Gentleman is suggesting that proprietors who achieve that end are doing a good thing. I have no doubt that if we were to read the reports of the Highland clearances we would find that some said that it was a good thing to do away with crofters. That may be an extreme parallel, but the hon. Gentleman is talking about closing down traditional and properly regulated industries which provide part-time employment for a few people. We should be cautious before we take that path. Apart from direct employment, consideration must be given to the other benefits to local economies.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) knows the Tweed almost as well as I do, and I think that he would agree that the area would lose much of its attraction if it were no longer to be the scene of the catching of salmon by net in the traditional way — in other words, in a properly regulated fashion underneath the bridges of the Tweed. If the hon. Member for Dumfries is not careful, he will find that there is that loss.

I accept along with everyone else that there will need to be a restriction placed on the netting effort, but I want the restriction to be properly regulated in a way that is seen to be fair. I hope that the advisory committee under Professor Dunnet will be able to make sensible recommendations that will bear on all sectors of salmon fisheries. I am going rather wide, but I have been goaded by the hon. Member for Dumfries.

Mr. John MacKay: The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) is being a little unkind to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) because he is talking about people giving up their netting right voluntarily.

I have some sympathy with the argument. Since the Committee stage we have obtained the views of the Association of Scottish District Salmon Fishery Boards. The association is concerned about the effect that the amendment could have on matters to which I referred in Committee — for instance, the possibility of proprietors of netting stations opting in and out of the fishery assessment and the difficulties for boards in deciding whether a fishery had in fact been abandoned.

The association has concluded that an amendment such as is proposed is not necessary and that the powers vested in boards under clauses 14 and 15 are sufficient. The association's views have reinforced my own doubts about attempting to regulate in this complicated area.

Clauses 14 and 15 were deliberately drafted to give boards wide general and financial powers and my view is that we should rely on these. The association envisages that these powers would, for example, enable it to deal with the question of the fishery assessment on abandoned, or perhaps suspended, fisheries by administrative means. A board could levy the assessment in the normal way but make an annual payment to the proprietor, equal to the amount of assessment levied in the relevant year — always assuming, of course, that the finances of the board permitted that or that it had a chance, perhaps for a transitional period, to allow that to be done.

My main concern is that my hon. Friend's amendment for automatic exemption from the fishery assessment would produce immediate loss of revenue without the scope and time for arrangements which might be possible under agreements made between a board and a proprietor. Any loss of revenue would result in problems for the boards in enforcement and employing bailiffs.

The problem is not exactly black and white. Leaving each board and each proprietor to reach agreement according to the circumstances is reasonable. I am taking a close interest in what is happening in the Moray firth area where some nets have been withdrawn and problems are being caused. At this time of night I do not want to go into the complications.

I am sorry to disappoint my hon. Friend twice, but I hope that he will accept that the machinery exists for a board to take action. Given the consequences that could befall a board if the automatic provision which he proposes were agreed, it is best to rely on the provisions in the two clauses.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) should consider the analogy of an empty building. If one abandons a fishery, why should one pay a fishery assessment any more than one would pay

[Sir Hector Monro]

local authority rates on an empty house? As the Minister said, we are discussing voluntary purchases and no one has been put out of work as a result.

Letters which I have received from the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust show that the initial operation has been successful. It is sad that assistance is not to be given for assessment. We are leaving the boards as judge and jury in their own cases. The boards are not likely to remove an assessment when they know that they will then lose money. I am disappointed. The Government's decision is a slap in the face for the conservation trust which is doing so much, and to others who are trying to buy out nets to improve the stocking of rivers. There are many conflicting interests involved in a Bill of this sort.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 17

TENURE OF OFFICE

Mr. John MacKay: I beg to move amendment No. 15, in page 17, line 4, leave out from 'he' to the end of line 5 and insert

'shall cease to be a member of that board'.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) tabled an amendment in Committee to do what our amendment provides and I was prepared to accept it, but the hon. Gentleman was not present to move his amendment. Indeed, he is not here now to hear me say that, having not had the opportunity to accept his amendment, I have brought forward my own.

Mr. Home Robertson: I must jump to the defence of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan). I suspect that he would have been so acutely embarrassed at being supported by the Minister that he has absented himself briefly.

I understand that the amendment means that, where a person has ceased to meet the requirements for membership of the board and is no longer a qualified proprietor, he will automatically have to come off the board. Originally it would have been possible to remove a board member only by a resolution of the board. I suppose that that was in keeping with some of the principles of the Bill.

I was a little alarmed that my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West had suggested the amendment, because it goes along with the characteristically enlightened principle that boards will represent and consist of the proprietor, the whole proprietor and nothing but the proprietor, which is a principle that we view with a mixture of disgust and despair.

How do we know when someone has ceased to be the proprietor of a fishery? If a board member surreptitiously sold his fishery—I admit that that is unlikely—or gave it away to a member of his family, how would the rest of the board or anyone else know that the qualifying ownership had ceased? If the member remained on the board, could that invalidate the proceedings of the board retrospectively? There is a problem for the Minister to conjure with.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 19

ADDITIONAL POWERS IN RESPECT OF LICENSING AND REGULATION OF SALMON DEALING

Mr. John MacKay: I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 18, line 25, at end insert

'but not so as to enable these powers to be exercised in any dwellinghouse or any yard, garden, outhouses and pertinents belonging thereto or usually enjoyed therewith'.

As the House knows, some misgivings have been expressed about the possible extent of the powers of search and entry that may be given to water bailiffs under dealer licensing. We had a long debate on the subject in Committee. I have reflected on it and am conscious of the continuing worry on the matter, and I think that it would be desirable to carry the undertaking that I gave in Committee into the Bill. I hope that the House will welcome the amendment.

Mr. Home Robertson: It was an understatement for the Minister to say that there are misgivings about this matter. I stress that the Opposition support the principle of dealer licensing and we are glad that it has been beefed up during the passage of the Bill, because it would have been absurd if, as the Government originally suggested, dealer licensing had applied only to Scotland. To be effective it must be a national scheme.

However, I am very worried that the Government have jettisoned several fundamental civil liberties to make it easier to enforce the dealer licensing system. In Committee we discussed bailiffs and their powers of search and entry, and we welcome the concession in the amendment, which will at least prevent bailiffs from entering and searching people's homes and gardens.

The Minister knows that we are profoundly worried about the way in which bailiffs are selected, appointed and controlled and governed. Obviously we need people to enforce the regulations—that is what bailiffs are meant to do—but the Bill gives wide powers to people who are, in effect, the appointees of the proprietors and do not have to be vetted by the police or have formal training. Indeed, I understand that some foreigners have been appointed as temporary bailiffs. People from South Africa and goodness knows where else have been taking on such jobs.

I acknowledge that the vast majority of bailiffs are honest and conscientious people who do an important job responsibly, but we have all heard the horror stories, and we related some of them in Committee. We heard a lot about what was happening on the Grimersta estate in the Western Isles. More recently I heard that a bailiff on the North Harris estate broke somebody's jaw in the course of carrying out his duties. In another case, another bailiff on the same estate threatened to "shoot like a seal", as he put it, somebody who he found swimming in the loch in that area. There are some hair-raising bailiffs going around, and something ought to be done about the way in which such people are trained, vetted and governed.

There is a need for better provisions for governing bailiffs, and it would be intolerable for such people to go into people's homes. We are certainly thankful for small mercies and welcome the significant concession made by the Minister. He has at least made it clear that such people will not be allowed to enter people's homes and gardens and buildings around their homes in the course of their investigations.

11.15 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I welcome the Minister's amendment. I was entranced by the prospect of South Africans wielding sjamboks while patrolling our rivers, but the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) was right to spell out some of the nasty incidents that have taken place. One of the objections that many had to the original provisions was the idea that water bailiffs could have powers that would not necessarily be held by the police. Even if they were held by the police, they should never be conferred on people without qualifications or training in the work that they are doing. The amendment is useful for the protection of civil liberties and on that basis I agree with it.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. John MacKay: I beg to move amendment No. 17, in page 18, line 26, leave out subsection (2).

Members of the Committee will remember that this amendment was tabled by Opposition Members who expressed some doubts about this clause. Their doubts centred on possible loopholes and I said at the time that I understood the difficulties. With some trepidation, I am now doing that which I was asked to do. I hope that that does not mean that we are to have a long debate about it, as happened on the last amendment. I understand the difficulties and the best way to resolve them is to remove subsection (2) so that nothing is pre-empted. In the order introducing the dealer licensing scheme we will specify the class or classes of salmon or dealings in salmon that are to be excluded from the scheme. I am doing what the Committee asked me to do, and I hope that will be welcomed.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 21

OFFENCE OF POSSESSING SALMON WHICH HAVE BEEN ILLEGALLY TAKEN KILLED OR LANDED

Mr. Wilson: I beg to move, in page 19, line 29, leave out from '*(a)*' to 'is' in line 30.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 19, in page 19, line 29, leave out from 'believes;' to end of line 32.

No. 20, in page 19, line 31, leave out

'it would be reasonable for him to suspect'

and insert

'he had grounds to believe'.

No. 21, in page 20, leave out lines 8 and 9.

No. 30, in clause 31, page 26, line 35, leave out

'it would be reasonable for him to expect that'

and insert

'has grounds to believe'.

Mr. Wilson: I should like to speak also in support of amendment No. 21. The provisions of clause 21 are totally obnoxious. I do not know from which legal code they have been dredged, but any provision in statute which starts from the assumption or presumption of guilt is abhorrent to all of us. No doubt the Minister will be able to provide some precedent, probably an earlier statute, for the wording given in clause 21 7A(1)*(a)*. The wording reads: "is in possession of salmon and believes".

I have never come across a clause couched in such subjective language. How can one prove that somebody believes something without exposing that person to some kind of drug or hallucinatory interrogation to find out what they may or may not believe? It is not practicable, nor is it capable of being proved in court. Clause 21 7A(1) *(a)* is unnecessary and undesirable and should be removed.

That would still leave paragraph *(b)* relating to being in possession of salmon. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has tabled an amendment on that point. The offence that the Government want on the statute book is, I presume, a rewording of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Protection) (Scotland) Act 1951. Certainly the offence of being

"in possession of salmon and believes"

would be a legal minefield when interpreted by the courts.

My views on the purpose of amendment No. 21 are even stronger than on amendment No. 18. I have already stated my dislike of the presumption of guilt that is a central part of the clause. We should especially consider subsection (3), which I want excised. It states:

"It shall be lawful to convict a person charged under this section on the evidence of one witness."

That flies wholly against the evidentiary requirements of the law of Scotland, under which a person should be presumed to be innocent until proved guilty. The burden of proof lies with the Crown, and that is enforced by higher standards than apply to civil law and must be beyond all reasonable doubt.

It is worth reminding the House that in the Slater case in 1928 Lord Clyde said that the innocence requirement was

"fundamental to the whole system of criminal prosecution. It applies to every person charged with a criminal offence in precisely the same way and it can be overcome only by evidence relevant to prove the crime with commission of which he is charged."

I suspect that a charge of being in possession of salmon would be as important to the accused person as would be the charge for someone accused of murder, robbery, rape or whatever. In other words, the same standards should be applied to each and every criminal charge.

An essential part of the criminal law of Scotland is the corroboration of evidence. I am well aware that where someone is in possession of property that has been proved to have been stolen the accused can be under an obligation to explain the circumstances by which he acquired it. The Crown does not have to prove dishonest intent. However, in all cases it is essential that the Crown proves both possession and that the goods were stolen. The onus is on the Crown to do that by corroboration.

Other than that provision, under Scottish law no one can be convicted on his own confession without corroborating evidence or evidence acceptable to the court that not only stands on its own legs but is supported by additional information. For example, there could be corroboration by two or more witnesses or by one witness who can be supported by facts and circumstances giving rise to that corroboration. In this instance we are running counter to the basic rules of justice.

I do not know why this has found its way into the legislation. It may simply be because in the past the landed interests had an exceptional amount of power, almost feudal power, and were able to impose their will. Crimes against property or thefts of large sums of money sometimes, even today in the courts, seem to be penalised more severely than cases of murder. Human life is sometimes seen to be less sacrosanct than property.

[Mr. Wilson]

It is a minority who own salmon fisheries and they are given exceptional powers of protection under this legislation. I earlier welcomed the amendment moved by the Minister to prevent water bailiffs from being able to go into private houses. However, that still leaves us with the unfortunate situation, outlined by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), whereby water bailiffs, without any training, will be able to give evidence to the courts and the evidence upon which conviction can take place is that of one witness or one water bailiff.

The reason why, in the past, courts have insisted on corroboration is that it is wrong to trust human nature. Indeed, there may be a temptation for a water bailiff to tell lies or, if he bears a grudge against an alleged poacher or knows somebody has been poaching but there is no evidence, to plant a salmon. It may well be that the poacher or person dealing in salmon could be correctly dealt with under criminal law and have truly committed the offence, but it may be that an innocent person is found guilty. Even with the laws of corroboration, there are still people who have been convicted by the courts and who are subsequently pardoned because the fallibility of justice has been shown to exist. The exercise of justice is a human matter and all of us are subject to error.

In cases of the possession of salmon, I would prefer the judgment to be made by the courts in the light of the general criminal law of the country and on the laws of evidence as they apply to all other crimes, instead of giving special rights to fishery owners. In its present form this is very primitive. It is the sort of thing that may come up in legal systems that are still in the course of development but which in more civilised times would have been altered so as to provide fairness.

I do not know where the law has come from. I am not sure whether the law of corroboration is the same in England as in Scotland. However, it is generally accepted in Scotland that nobody can be convicted without evidence which is not only credible but corroborated. I suggest to the House that it would perpetuate bad law if we provided rules of evidence for the possession of salmon which we are not prepared to allow in connection with other offences, both serious and minor. It is the duty of the House to remove bad law when it comes across it; otherwise, if one goes back to some of the rules that existed, especially in England, with regard to poaching offences for game or salmon, the lopping off of hands or transportation might still be appropriate punishments. We got rid of those punishments years ago and I suggest that now is the time to remove this relic of the poaching or game laws.

We are not talking of a minor offence. The penalty on summary conviction can be three months' imprisonment or a maximum fine. I am not sure what the maximum fine is these days — it is jacked up all the time to meet inflation — but it can be three months or perhaps something in excess of £1,000 as a fine, or both. If somebody is taken on indictment, it can mean two years' imprisonment or an unlimited fine, or both. That should not be visited on any citizen of any country on the unsupported testimony of one witness.

11.30 pm

Mr. Home Robertson: Amendment No. 18 had me a little baffled, because it takes out the only justified paragraph in the clause — the one that provides that those who know that they have committed an offence can be prosecuted. I support the second amendment of the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson), amendment No. 21—he may have noticed that I put my name to it —which concerns corroboration. This issue was debated fully in Committee, and we voted against the situation in which somebody could be convicted of possessing salmon simply on the evidence of a single bailiff, when in all probability the bailiff was the employee of the water proprietor in question. As the hon. Member for Dundee, East said, it would be far too easy for somebody to plant evidence and lie to the court. It would be outrageous if somebody were to be convicted under those circumstances. It would invite the court to convict on unsafe grounds, and Parliament should not pass such sloppy and potentially dangerous legislation. It is our duty to protect the innocent, and that should never be superseded by our enthusiasm to punish the guilty.

Amendment No. 19 and amendments Nos. 28 and 30 in the name of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) are intended to restrict the scope of the prosecution under the clause to those who have knowingly committed an offence. They cover the point about the presumption of innocence being brought into this procedure rather than the abhorrent principle of the assumption of guilt, about which we should all become worried.

As drafted, the Bill will make it possible to convict people who should have known that they were committing an offence. Who should have known and who should not have known whether they were committing an offence when they were purchasing salmon? The world may be full of nasty suspicious people such as the Minister and me, who always assume that others have the worst possible motives, but just because we spend our lives in the company of politicians we should not overlook the fact that there are some honest, decent simple and straightforward people elsewhere in the country. If somebody were to come up to the Minister or to me and offer a fresh salmon at a reasonable price, we might be suspicious about where it had come from. Let us take somebody like yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I were to offer you a fresh salmon, you might accept it from me in all innocence. Under clause 71, it would be possible for you to be convicted of possessing an illegally taken salmon on the ground that you ought to have suspected that I was dealing in poached salmon.

There may be grounds for allowing courts to prosecute in such circumstances, and to crack down on some particularly heinous crime such as drug trafficking, but such a breach of an important principle of Scots law cannot be justified to convict people who did not know that they were doing anything wrong, just to protect salmon. As the hon. Member for Dundee, East said, this can lead to heavy fines, terms of imprisonment and criminal records hanging over people for the rest of their lives. It is wrong that Parliament should allow courts to convict in such circumstances, and the Minister must take these points on board.

Mr. Beith: With a Scottish solicitor and a Scottish advocate sitting beside me on the Liberal Bench, I shall concentrate my remarks on the English amendment of the two standing in my name. Amendment No. 20 is worded

in almost the same way as the other two amendments. They address the terms by which someone can be convicted, namely, if

"it would be reasonable for him to suspect"

that a relevant offence has been committed. I argue that there should be grounds for a person to believe that an offence has been committed. The words that I have quoted have to be seen in conjunction with subsection (3) of clause 31 which states:

"It shall be immaterial for the purposes of subsection (1) above that a person's belief or the grounds for suspicion—"

that is, the grounds that he ought to have had—

"relate neither specifically to a particular offence that has been committed nor exclusively to a relevant offence or to relevant offences;"

The only qualification that the clause continues to offer is that

"it shall be a defence in proceedings . . . to show that no relevant offence had in fact been committed in relation to the salmon in question."

If a person can prove that the salmon had not been poached he has demonstrated his innocence by disproving the assumptions of guilt which the two parts of the clause taken together impute.

In Committee we were regaled at length by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) about the "poor wee crofter woman." She became a favoured figure on the Committee. A salmon was placed at her door and she came forthwith to the conclusion that it was a gift from God. It was indeed such a gift. Other agents may have participated in this heavenly donation but it was a gift from God. The woman was guilty because it would have been reasonable for her to suspect that the person who laid the salmon at her door would have come to the front door and knocked and charged her for it had he been a legitimate salmon trader who had obtained the salmon legally. The poor crofter woman has to be found guilty because it would have been reasonable for her to suspect that a relevant offence had been committed.

We must, however, consider other characters as well as the crofter woman. Let us suppose that the Minister had bought a raffle ticket for a worthy cause and that the first prize was a fresh salmon. Suppose the fresh salmon was presented to him as a result of his success in the raffle. However, it would have been reasonable for him to suspect that a relevant offence had been committed in relation to that salmon because it was known that poaching took place in the locality in which the raffle ticket was bought, and it was known that among the supporters of the worthy cause there were people who, at some time, had been found guilty of poaching. It could be argued that it was reasonable for the Minister, in those circumstances, to have suspected that a relevant offence had been committed.

Dr. Godman: As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is something of a legal expert, I hope that he can answer a question that is puzzling me. If the "wee wifey" had been presented with a salmon that had been gutted — or headed as it is called — and filleted, would she then have faced criminal charges?

Mr. Beith: Yes; it would have made no difference. She would have been presented with a salmon even though some bits were missing from it. No doubt my hon. Friends would be able to sustain a case for days, nay weeks, on the question of whether a gutted salmon was a whole salmon or whether a half or a third of a salmon was a salmon. Let me disclaim any suggestion that I am a legal expert. Far from it. If I were, I would be as well endowed as some of my hon. Friends who have pursued the law to such lengths.

There is obviously endless scope for legal argument. However, an individual has the imputation of guilt posed against him because it would have been reasonable for him to suspect that an offence had been committed. He may have had no such suspicion in his mind. He may be an unsuspecting soul and he may not have drawn the conclusions which the court thinks that he ought to have drawn from circumstances in his area. He may not be able to disprove the prosecution case by demostrating that he had no such belief. The absence of that belief is not a defence. He must prove that it would not even have been reasonable for him to suspect.

This seems to place the onus of proof of innocence on the individual in a quite unreasonable way. It is a way of framing the law that has not been entertained in respect of far more serious offences involving far greater dangers. There are well-known difficulties about obtaining prosecutions for salmon offences, but they have not stopped a great many people from being successfully prosecuted in the courts in my constituency and in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). There have been many prosecutions of late.

Even if there are difficulties, we must pause and think before writing into the law this presumption of guilt which has not been found necessary in relation to much more serious offences.

Mr. John MacKay: Let me first, Mr. Deputy Speaker, set your mind at rest in case the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) presents you with a salmon. I think you would have a very reasonable defence if you said that the hon. Gentleman was a large estate owner on the banks of the River Tweed. Therefore, if he does present you with a salmon you can take it without much fear — *[Interruption.]* My right hon. friend the Minister of State tells me that he thinks he will take the risk of the raffle prize.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): No doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you did have knowledge. At least you have now been told that the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) is a large riparian owner. What if someone did not know that? What situation would he be in?

Mr. MacKay: I do not want to go into all the details, but I just gave Mr. Deputy Speaker the defence that he would have in these circumstances. One must look to the particular circumstance.

One of the Bill's major aims is to provide effective measures against the poaching, taking, selling and distribution of illegal salmon. A lot of pressure from all the outside bodies has been on us to strengthen the law. In fact, many people do not think that the Government have gone nearly far enough, but I fully appreciate that if I had gone that far in relation to the onus of proof, some of the points made by hon. Members would be valid. That is why I have not gone as far as many other people wished me to go.

What I have done is reasonable and precedented. In Scotland the alternative of proving suspicious circumstances is contained in section 7 of the Salmon and

[Mr. MacKay]

Freshwater Fisheries (Protection) (Scotland) Act 1951. For example, a court may convict for an offence under section 15 or sections 18 to 24 of the Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1868 on the evidence of one witness. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) wanted precedents, and I would have thought that those were good ones. The position is maintained in clause 29. There is also section 7 of the 1951 Act and section 25 of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1959.

In all those areas, as in this one, the nature of the offences creates difficulties for enforcement officers and in my mind justifies the relaxation of the requirement for corroborative evidence. That was part and parcel of a long discussion that we had in Committee, when hon. Members put their points, and in each case their points were defeated when pressed to a Division.

Mr. Wilson: The precedents that the Minister has given come from salmon and game laws. What other precedents can he find in the general criminal law? Why should we relax these provisions for poachers and those in possession of salmon when we are not prepared to do so in cases of murder, rape and so on?

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Gentleman should talk to some of the people who are interested in the conservation of salmon and the prevention of poaching. He will then realise that many of the offences take place at the back of beyond, at night and in circumstances where life is not easy for the bailiffs and police.

11.45 pm

The prosecutor must show that the accused believed that the salmon in his possession had been taken illegally, by an admission of guilt by the accused. It has been argued that that will be knocked out by one of the amendments. Alternatively, the prosecutor may need evidence to show that the circumstances in which the accused had salmon in his possession were such that he ought to have suspected that the salmon had been illegally taken.

I am merely trying to explain what the words mean. We had long debates in Committee on this matter and, frankly, I believe that enforcement is a genuine problem. Opposition Members have said how keen they are to conserve salmon, and how keen they are to eliminate poaching, yet when it comes to doing something about it they wish to leave the law as powerless as it is at present.

Mr. Home Robertson *rose*——

Mr. MacKay: We believe that enforcement is a great problem.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister is right in saying that attempting to prosecute people is difficult in these circumstances. Surely he will acknowledge that there is an even greater problem in prosecuting serious crimes, such as drug trafficking. Do the Government intend to introduce similar draconian measures for other offences?

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Gentleman should stick to what we are discussing—salmon and the associated problems.

All the amendments under discussion would weaken the clause. They would weaken the stand that we are taking against poachers and other illegal fishermen. I believe that the courts will look sensibly at the evidence —after all, that is their job—and judge. The clause will improve and strengthen the law. Those who wish to water it down and who offer no alternatives for reforming the law are hypocritical about salmon conservation and protection. I hope that they will have the decency to keep their mouths shut when it comes to preventing poaching and preserving salmon.

Mr. Wallace: I have listened with interest and care to the Minister's point that the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) is known—to Members of this House—to be a riparian land owner. I am in no way casting blame in his direction because of that fact.

If the hon. Member for East Lothian presented me with a salmon there would be no reasonable grounds to suppose that it was an illegal salmon. On the other hand, if an innocent member of the public were presented with a free salmon from a Labour Member he would never dream for one moment that that hon. Member was a large landowner on the banks of the Tweed. In such circumstances it may be said that he had reasonable grounds to suspect that the salmon was illegal.

My hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) gave the example of a prize-winning raffle ticket. The Minister dismissed that suggestion, but a court might decide that such a prize fell within the ambit of this clause. It is all very well for us to know what we do not mean by legislation but unless that is stated on the statute book the court will pay no regard to it.

The courts would not be aware that the raffle ticket scenario was laughed out of the House. The wording of the statute may allow the courts to put any construction on a case. When we create offences, it is incumbent on the House to make sure that they are defined strictly to ensure that wider interpretation is not possible. It is one of the cardinal principles of criminal law that the citizen accused should know, with some precision, what does and does not constitute an offence. As it stands, the clause is too wide. The amendment limits it and makes it more precise.

Corroboration is a very important part of the law of Scotland. It is an important evidential requirement—not on every point but on the cardinal points that constitute the crime. The Minister has given some precedents. However, the law of corroboration has been built up over many centuries and is a fundamental part of Scottish law.

It is all very well for the Minister to say that today we are discussing salmon, not drugs, but it is not unfair to make that comparison. He said that one must remember the difficulties that have to be faced when trying to prove a crime and obtain a conviction. However, the smuggling of drugs does not take place in the open. Those who are trying to put an end to the smuggling of drugs are faced with problems when trying to obtain proof. Scottish policemen travel around in twos, so why should bailiffs not go around in twos if that is a corroboration requirement of Scottish law?

When precedents are set we are treading on dangerous ground. The Minister is a great person for precedents. Those hon. Members who have sat on other Committees with him know that when a clause is challenged as a novel departure he will reel off precedents. Tonight we are providing yet another precedent. If he wants to use it in connection with other parts of the law of Scotland to erode the evidential law of corroboration that has been built up over many years, he will cite it as a precedent. By that means, bit by bit, eventually we shall find that the bulwarks of Scottish law that are there for a very good reason have been slowly eroded away.

The Minister has not provided us with a convincing reason why offences relating to salmon should be treated in a different way from more serious crimes, and if the mover of the amendment thinks fit to press it to a Division I shall be prepared to support him.

Mr. Wilson: I have heard some weak arguments from the Dispatch Box over the years, but this is one of the weakest. But it is not the weakness of the argument to which I object; it is its sheer immorality.

To return to the absence of precedent, the Minister was unable to find any precedent outside the game and fishing laws of the 19th century. He had the utter gall to bring that to our attention, as though that were a justification in itself. I have already said that this is bad law and that it is completely at variance with the rest of the law of Scotland, in terms of evidential requirements.

The Minister would fit more happily into the role of a prosecutor than into the role of ensuring that justice is done in Scottish courts. It is axiomatic that 10 guilty men should go unpunished rather than that one innocent man should be wrongfully convicted. If the Minister had kept that as his objective, he would not have strayed from the path.

The attitude adopted by the Minister and the Government is horrifying. However, the Conservative party has always been the party of landed interests. When it comes to the rights of the citizen and the estate landlord, we know on whose side it will come down. I wish, therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to put amendment No. 21 to the vote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The debate has taken place on amendment No. 18. If the hon. Gentleman would prefer there to be a vote on amendment No. 21, that would be in order. In that case, does he wish to withdraw amendment No. 18?

Mr. Wilson: I beg to ask leave to withdraw amendment No. 18.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment proposed, No. 21, in page 20, leave out lines 8 and 9.—*[Mr. Wilson.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes, 12, Noes 70.

Division No. 295] **[11.55 pm**

AYES

Beith, A. J.
Canavan, Dennis
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Home Robertson, John
Kirkwood, Archy
Livsey, Richard
McWilliam, John
Pike, Peter
Randall, Stuart
Rowlands, Ted
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gordon Wilson and
Dr. Norman A. Godman.

NOES

Amess, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Brinton, Tim
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Hayes, J.
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Raffan, Keith
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Spencer, Derek
Stern, Michael
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gerald Malone and
Mr. Richard Ryder.

Amendment accordingly negatived.

Mr. Home Robertson: I beg to move amendment No. 22, in page 21, line 5, leave out paragraph *(b)*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It will be convenient to discuss at the same time Government amendment No. 23.

Mr. Home Robertson: When considering amendment No. 16 we debated the question of the power to enter and search private dwellings in relation to dealer licensing. We now come to the same point in relation to powers of search and entry without a warrant to secure evidence of possession of poached salmon.

Parliament should think carefully before allowing bailiffs or constables to gain entry to people's property without a warrant. There is concern about the possible shortcomings of bailiffs—an issue that we have already discussed. I am not the only one to suggest that there should be better provision governing the quality, vetting and training of bailiffs. Many hon. Members have received representations from the superintendent of the Forth District Salmon Fishery Board. Serious misgivings have been expressed, by people experienced in these matters, about the qualifications of bailiffs.

There may be a case for this type of infringement of civil liberties — letting bailiffs or constables enter people's dwelling houses—to make it easier to deal with serious crime, but I have grave doubts whether that can be justified in the quest for evidence of salmon poaching.

It has been said that an Englishman's home is his castle. I suggest that Scots also have rights in their own homes, including the right to protection against over-zealous bailiffs kicking people's doors down to search for contraband salmon. I therefore welcome the Government's concession in amendment No. 23, which will at least exclude people's dwelling houses and gardens from this right to enter and search without a warrant. The Minister should be ashamed of himself for ever having suggested that such powers should be included in the Bill in the first place. But we are grateful to him for listening for once to our arguments in Committee.

Mr. John MacKay: The point that the hon. Member makes was discussed at length in Committee. Having given

[Mr. John MacKay]

careful thought to the matter, I have tabled amendment No. 23. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw his amendment and that the House will accept mine.

Mr. Home Robertson: I had intended to make that clear. In view of the terms of the Minister's amendment, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 23, in page 21, line 11, after 'premises', insert

'(other than a dwelling house or any yard, garden, outhouses and pertinents belonging thereto or usually enjoyed therewith)'.—*[Mr. John MacKay.]*

Clause 30

Dealer licensing in England and Wales

Mr. Rowlands: I beg to move amendment No. 24, in page 25, line 30, leave out 'may' and insert

'shall, within six months after the coming into force of this section of this Act'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I suggest that it would be convenient for the House to discuss at the same time the following amendments: No. 25, in page 25, line 30, after 'may' insert

'after consulting representatives of such interests as appear to him to be affected'.

No. 26, in page 25, line 35, leave out

'such person as may be so specified'

and insert 'a water authority'.

No. 27, in page 26, line 15, at end insert 'by a water authority'.

Mr. Rowlands: The amendment stands in the names of a large number of hon. Members, including many who represent Welsh constituencies. It has been an advantage to have had a Scottish period, so to speak, in debating the amendments; we began with Welsh affairs and now we return to those matters. In the interim, those of us who represent Welsh constituencies have had time to reflect on the Minister's arguments in rejecting our new clauses 4, 5 and 6.

The Minister spoke of what he regarded as a series of practical problems against tagging. In his view, licensed dealers will help conservation. The Minister clearly reached that view as he proceeded along the road to conversion. We, too, believe in salvation, and if licensed dealing is the salvation of the nation's salmon stocks, that salvation should come as quickly as possible, and the amendment would ensure that the scheme commenced within six months. Perhaps we should adopt the form of words that the Minister used earlier and say that the scheme should begin "prior to the next season". To what time scale is he working for the introduction of the licensed dealer system?

Secondly, who will be responsible for the licensing? The amendment recommends that the responsibility should lie with the water authorities for England and Wales, and it would not make much sense for a Welsh local authority to be the licensing or enforcement authority. Bearing in mind the experience, professionalism and knowledge of the water authorities, I hope that the Minister will accept the principle of the amendment. Surely it would be unimaginable to vest responsibility for such a licensing system in a Welsh district authority or county council. Counties and districts are not uneager to accept powers in our communities, but in this instance I do not think that they would contend that they would be the appropriate bodies to accept the licensing responsibility. I speak chiefly for the Principality, and I believe that the Welsh water authority would be the obvious body to undertake licensing and enforcement responsibilities.

I should like to know how the proposed system will be financed. What sort of expenditure is envisaged or expected following the introduction of the licensing system? I hope that the Minister will tell us rather more of the Department's thinking about the system of payment apart from enforcement, licensing and the proposed timescale.

The Minister has argued that the tagging system that we propose would involve many practical difficulties. We are discussing anti-poaching measures that are vital to conservation, and any new system will be difficult to implement. We know the sophistication, scale and character of poaching, and when I listened to the Minister I thought that an accommodation could be reached by substituting "licensed dealing" for "tagging". In any event, how will a licensed dealer identify whether the fish that he is being sold has been caught legally or illegally? That is a simple question and I hope that the Minister will respond with a simple answer. Tagging offers at least a possibility or probability of some identification of legality or legitimacy of the catch. Will the dealer be expected to ask whether the seller is an authorised dealer? What sort of documentation will a seller have to present?

Mr. Onslow *rose*——

Mr. Rowlands: We support the licensed dealer system and we are grateful that the system will apply in England and Wales. The Bill would be entirely Scottish if that were not the position. I have no reason to wish to undermine confidence in the licensed dealer system. However, as the Minister has argued strenuously against the scheme that we proposed, which was complementary to licensed dealing, we are entitled to pose a series of genuine queries and questions on behalf of the many anglers and others who are interested in the conservation of salmon in the Principality.

Mr. Onslow: It would be helpful to have an answer to another question. Let us suppose that someone is fortunate enough to catch a big salmon in a Welsh river, he brings it to London and sells it to a restaurant in the Kings road. Must he have a licence to buy and sell salmon? Where will the restaurant get its licence and how will the proceeds go back to where they belong — the water authority?

12.15 am

Mr. Rowlands: I look forward to an answer to that question.

When we press the Minister it is not in a spirit of trying to undermine the proposed system. We want to make it work. I believe that the water authority will be able to make it work. We want a practical answer to the question. This is our salvation. Let us operate the system as quickly as possible.

Mr. Beith: I am in favour of the extension of dealer licensing to England and Wales. I understand why in July the Minister was unable to say in Committee who would operate the system in England and Wales and why he was

unable to put the details in the Bill as they were set out for Scotland. For Scotland the powers are given to local authorities under existing legislation.

It is not satisfactory, however, that at this stage we still do not know to whom the powers are to be entrusted. One of the amendments argues that the powers should be given specifically to the water authorities. I believe that the water authorities should have the powers, but that would not remain my view if the water authorities were privatised. I am relieved that the Government have had to abandon their intention to privatise the water authorities. If they were privatised they would not be appropriate bodies to operate the dealer licensing scheme, any more than some of the other functions ascribed to them under the Bill which involve a public body regulating who shall be allowed to carry out certain activities. That is not a suitable power for a private organisation.

The Minister should by now be able to say to which public body these functions are to be given. Because he has been unable to decide, the Bill contains enabling provisions which give him the opportunity to implement his decision later. He is given wide powers. Partly because of that I tabled an amendment to force him to consult relevant interests. But my concern goes wider than consultation. An amendment in the next group involves criminal offences.

I hope that the Minister can tell us who will carry out the dealer licensing and how quickly the scheme can be introduced.

Mr. Gummer: The water authorities will be asked to carry out these requirements. I hope that the House will not find it necessary to press the amendment to that effect because if at some future time the constitution of the water authorities becomes different, or if it is more sensible that some other body be involved, I should not like to have to change primary legislation. It is more sensible to leave matters as they are, but the House has my assurnace that the water authorities will have the powers.

The cost of the scheme will be paid for by the water authorities from their resources. They will levy licences and the money so raised will help pay for the scheme.

Other matters have to be sorted out and we shall look at the issues raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow). It would be wrong for me to hide from him the fact that in our discussions we shall have to accept that one problem with the water authorities carrying out the responsibilities is that some have a much greater interest in the matter than others. I know that the authorities are keen to find an appropriate system.

My answer to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) is that I hope very much that there will be no delay in the implementation of the dealer licensing scheme. I am committed to it, I was happy to insist on its extension to England and Wales and I was pleased that my colleagues in the Welsh Office agreed to the change. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman has my personal support for the speediest possible introduction of the new scheme.

However, I ask the hon. Gentleman to listen to those who say that there are a number of problems about which we shall need to have considerable discussions. I ask him not to press the argument that we should be bound to a date, because a date would be necessary only if we were unwilling to move as fast as we can and we are willing to move as fast as possible. However, we must make sure that the system will work and, as the hon. Gentleman said, it is not always easy to ensure that. I do not want a system that falls down because we have not prepared it properly. After all, we are giving licences to people who have not hitherto had to have licences, sometimes for anything.

That is the wrong time of night to go through the various ways in which the scheme will be able to be operated satisfactorily, but a licensee will have to ask the sort of questions that will protect him from the change in the law that provides that he can be found guilty if it would have been reasonable for him to believe that salmon that he was buying had been illegally taken.

To take the example quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Woking, the Kings road restaurateur offered a good fat salmon from Wales will have to satisfy himself that the salmon had been properly caught and had not been taken illegally. There will be a number of ways in which he can do that and one will be to satisfy himself that the man had the right to take the salmon. If he is knowledgeable about salmon and there are gill marks on the fish that lead him to believe that it was taken improperly, he will have to take account of that. He will keep records and they could be checked by the water authorities.

I assure the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney that we are making every effort——

Mr. Onslow: Will my right hon. Friend deal with the linked point of how the Thames water authority, which will presumably have sold the dealer's licence to the Kings road restaurant, will be made to remit the proceeds to the Welsh water authority which would have been responsible for producing the salmon?

Mr. Gummer: We shall be discussing that issue with the water authorities which have already discussed it among themselves because they have problems of enforcement. They have pooling arrangements in other areas and no doubt they will be considering such an arrangement in this area.

I assure hon. Members that we intend to get the new system into operation as rapidly as possible. Indeed, we must do so. I have given a number of assurances and the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney is right to say that if we cannot get the system into operation rapidly enough everything else will fall.

Mr. Rowlands: I am grateful to the Minister for his response to our amendments. I am more than happy to accept his personal assurances. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Beith: I beg to move amendment No. 28, in page 26, line 33, at end insert—

'(7) A person guilty of an offence under any Order made under this section shall be liable—

(a) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or to a fine not exceeding the statutory minimum or to both;

(b) on conviction on indictment, to an imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to a fine or to both.'.

One of the consequences of the wide powers given to the Minister in clause 30 is that he can

"create criminal offences consisting in the contravention of, or failure to comply with, provisions made under this section".

I do not believe that Ministers should be given the power to create criminal offences by statutory instrument. Such

[Mr. Beith]

offences should be created by primary legislation. Whatever extenuating circumstances one can produce in any given case, it is bad practice for the House to make criminal offences by statutory instrument. That is why I have tabled an amendment which tries to specify one aspect of the matter—what the punishments for these criminal offences could be.

One of the consequential provisions that the Minister has power to put into effect is to decide what the punishment should be. He has tremendous scope and anything from a small fine to the death penalty seems to be within the range of possibilities open to him. When he has finally made his decision, it comes before the House in a statutory instrument that cannot be amended. All that the House can do is vote to approve or disapprove of it. No other choice is available to the House and that is not a satisfactory way in which to create criminal law or to decide upon penalties. Despite the reasons that can be advanced for doing it in this case, the House should protest whenever it is attempted. My amendment is designed to limit the Minister's ability so to legislate because it is an improper way to create criminal law.

Mr. Gummer: The kind of amounts and the matters that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has put forward are far from the sort of order one is thinking about. I ask him to accept that when one is trying to work out a new system like this in response to the pressures of the Committee, it must be right to try to fix the amounts after the system has been produced. He is right to say that it will have to be presented to the House. Hon. Members can refuse to accept the order and it is unamendable. He is right about those things, but given the arguments that we have heard and the precedents and other examples in the Bill, it is difficult to say that this power is likely to be used in any extraordinary way.

I promise the hon. Gentleman that we will not reintroduce the death penalty for this issue. It is rather overdoing it to suggest that the Executive will suddenly get their heads down and do something appalling. That will not happen. To give us no opportunity to change the punishments when the value of money or the situation changes considerably will only take us back to the point where some of the things that we are amending this time have not been amended since 1862. That is a reasonable argument and I hope that the House will accept it.

Mr. Beith: There is now a system of scale fines which gets over the difficulty of inflation, making fines unnecessary. The principle remains that these offences should be created not by statutory instrument but by primary legislation.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 31

HANDLING SALMON IN SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES

Mr. Randall: I beg to move amendment No. 29, in page 26, line 34, leave out 'subsections (3) and (4)' and insert 'subsection (4)'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 31, in page 27, line 4, leave out subsection (3).

No. 32, in page 27, line 7, leave out from 'committed' to 'but' in line 8.

Mr. Randall: Amendment No. 31 is about the deletion of subsection (3) and amendment No. 29 is a minor consequential amendment arising from that deletion.

Many of the arguments surrounding this amendment have been expressed in relation to other amendments and clauses. The purpose of the amendment is to protect innocent people who did not realise that they were breaking the law by handling salmon. We must have effective protection to overcome the abuse of poaching. I think everybody on the Committee accepted that there would have to be effective measures.

I am in a dilemma. On the one hand, we need tough and effective legislation to make sure that abuse is properly dealt with. On the other hand, this same legislation, because it is comprehensive and strong, creates the risk of convicting somebody who did not know that he was breaking the law. It could be costly in human terms if we were to convict someone who genuinely did not realise that he was breaking the law. Hon. Members have a duty to protect people against such an error. The Bill makes it too easy to convict an innocent person who genuinely did not realise that he was handling illegally obtained fish.

We need tough legislation because we are dealing with a tough problem. However, it is important to recognise that there is an ethical argument that hon. Members must address. That is why we should delete subsection (3).

12.30 am

Mr. Beith: I shall not repeat the arguments about burden of proof that we advanced earlier—the essential principle is the same. During that debate I referred—slightly ahead of myself—to subsection (3). I must ask the Minister what it means. It appears to mean that it is not possible for a person to advance in his own defence that there were no grounds for believing that the person who had sold him the salmon had committed an offence or for believing that anyone had poached any salmon in the area where he bought his salmon. That is all immaterial—he can still be convicted on the basis that he should have had reason to believe that someone, some time, might have poached salmon and that that might be the salmon that had fallen into his hands.

It appears that it is not possible for that person to argue in his defence that, as far as he knew, no one in the locality had committed any offence and that no specific offence had occurred. I cannot think of what else the subsection could mean. Can the Minister tell the House what he thinks it means?

Mr. Gummer: We covered this matter closely in Committee and have tonight returned to the same arguments. At this late hour I shall not go into them in detail because it would be wrong to repeat what we have said so often.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) rather uncharacteristically said on the one hand that he wanted something, but on the other that he was not prepared to pay the price for it.

Mr. Randall: It is a dilemma.

Mr. Gummer: It may be a dilemma, but we cannot solve it by writing into the Bill the action that must be taken and then removing the ability to take that action. That would

be the purpose of the amendment—we would have the offence, because that is what is needed, but would take away the right to prosecute.

Having agonised over creating an offence in a very careful way that does not go so far as to reverse the burden of proof but makes it possible to gain convictions in very difficult areas, it would be wrong for us to negative that by making the changes proposed in the amendment.

The circumstances suggested by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) are very wide of the mark. We have tried to create an offence that would allow us to secure convictions in very difficult circumstances. By its very nature, the sort of evidence that we would like to have of a fish being pulled out of a river, a man standing there with the bailiff beside him and two independent witnesses, does not occur. We must decide how to have an effective conservation policy that means effective enforcement. If we make the changes suggested, they will negative the effectiveness of the creation of an offence.

We have been through a series of debates and this matter has gone backwards and forwards in Committee. On every occasion the Committee decided that it would be right to retain the offence without the changes of this and other kinds that have been put forward by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and his hon. Friends.

Mr. Beith: Will the Minister simply answer the question? What does subsection (3) mean and what would be wrong with the Bill if it were taken out?

Mr. Gummer: The purpose is clear. It is to ensure that the prosecution does not have to show that the buyer believed or suspected that a particular offence had been committed but that, in the circumstances, it would be reasonable for him to think that an offence had been committed. The effect in law is seriously different. In one circumstance it would be almost impossible to prove guilt in cases where there has been an offence and where everybody knows that the person who bought the salmon knew there had been an offence. That is why we have changed it. I know that the hon. Gentleman does not see the difference. I have tried to explain it in various ways. I believe that most people understand the distinction and that is why on every occasion that this was put to the vote the Committee showed that it supported the balanced view which the Government were putting forward.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 33

Introduction of fish into fish farms without consent

Amendment made: No 33, in page 28, line 27, leave out from first 'or' to second 'the' in line 29 and insert

'the inland water is one which consists exclusively of, or part of, a fish farm and which, if it discharges into another inland water, does so only through a conduit constructed or adapted for the purpose.

In this section 'fish farm' has the same meaning as in'.
—*[Mr. Gummer.]*

Clause 36

Byelaws and Sea Fisheries Regulation Act 1966

Mr. Onslow: I beg to move amendment No. 36, in page 30, line 11, leave out 'Subject to subsection (3) below,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 37, in page 30, line 17, at end insert

'and must be exercised if the water auhority whose area for the purposes of functions relating to fisheries includes the whole or any part of the committee's sea fishery district have requested that committee so to do'.

No. 38, in page 30, line 28, leave out '(1) or'.

No. 39, in page 30, line 32, at end insert

'or, such consent having been withheld, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, shall have given his consent.'.

Government amendment No. 40.

Mr. Onslow: My right hon. Friend the Minister will remember that we established in Committee that where their spheres of responsibility meet in a number of important estuarial and coastal waters, the interests of the water authorities and the fisheries committees do not always coincide. It is not the duty of the fisheries committees to promote salmon conservation. I have no wish to stir the pot further tonight. My amendment is simply designed to ensure that fisheries committees do not obstruct salmon conservation by refusing to make the bye-laws that are required for that purpose and so leaving unscrupulous sea fishermen free to catch salmon illegally under the cover of fishing for white fish.

The real answer is to have an integrated policy for the management of in-shore fisheries. We do not have it. If my right hon. Friend can show me that he has a better method of achieving progress towards that end than my amendment I shall be happy to withdraw it. However, I should like to hear what he has to say.

Mr. Beith: I supported the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) in Committee on this point. However, the Northumberland Sea Fisheries Committee says that it does not agree. It takes the view that the amendment proposed would

"remove any element of discretion . . . from the Sea Fisheries Committee inconsistent with and repugnant to the whole concept of the giving by Parliament to Sea Fisheries Committees of powers to make bye-laws."

The view I took in Committee, and the view I still hold, is that where there is an overlapping interest between the fisheries committee and the water authority, cases could arise in which one or other body was not having proper regard to the interests of salmon conservation. It could work either way, which is why my amendment No. 39 is in the same group. That amendment allows the fisheries committees to appeal to the Minister if they have met with objections from the water authority. That quid pro quo might make the proposal of the hon. Member for Woking a little more acceptable. The Minister should consider that if one of the bodies refuses to use the powers available or tries to prevent the powers from being properly used there should be some recourse for them.

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): I realise that there have been considerable debates on this subject. I have received a letter from the North-Eastern Sea Fisheries Committee, and I have talked the matter over with the chairman of that committee. There is a difficulty, but I do not agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow). What we have seen in the way of conservation and protection of the sea fish industry has not convinced me that on this issue the water authorities know better than the local fisheries committees — certainly not in the area that I represent.

[Sir Michael Shaw]

The Bill goes a long way towards ensuring that the fisheries committees cannot produce byelaws unless the local water authority gives its consent. To go further and insist that the local fisheries committees should carry out instructions from the water authority would be unwise. The fisheries committees should be encouraged in the task of conserving salmon in the sea. They are much better qualified to do so, and in many cases the water authorities are concerned with inland waterways rather than with the sea. The fisheries committees would do a far better job if they had complete control of dealing with poaching.

Under another part of the Bill, an advisory committee will look into the matter again, and I hope that it will be looked at with a view to seeing whether the fisheries committees might, in the end, be in charge of this important aspect of conservation.

Mr. Rowlands: It is nice to take off one's tribal hat, and I can do so in this case because there is no such Welsh point. We do not have the problem of conflict of interest, which the amendment seeks to get round, and there is no doubt that there will be a conflict of interest. The hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) spoke about the fisheries committees being enthusiastic about salmon conservation, but the people they represent may not be interested in such an aspect. It is a worry of water authorities that the committees will do nothing to promote the byelaws.

The future of conservation lies in enforcement, as has already been said, and in the need for a proper bailiff system. What manpower do the fisheries committees have to enforce such byelaws? The water authorities have a bailiff system, which we have said we should strengthen and improve, but what sort of manpower will the committees invoke to enforce the agreed byelaws? There is a problem, and the water authorities have every right to say that they are concerned and worried that such byelaws will not be promoted, and will not be properly policed and supervised if they are. The water authorities will have as much interest as the fisheries committees in committing themselves to that task, and so should have the manpower to do it. The hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) has put a valid point, and I shall support his amendment.

Mr. Randall: Like other hon. Members, I have a letter from the Northumberland Sea Fisheries Committee, but it was passed to me by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown). The committee has great reservations about the two amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), particularly amendment No. 36. It feels that, where there is a conflict between the fisheries committees and the water authorities, the Minister should be able to resolve that conflict. The clerk of the committee gave as an example the fixed engines which the committee is desperately anxious to keep, but under this arrangement the water authority could impose its veto and prevent it from doing so. The Northumberland Sea Fisheries committee also made a strong criticism of amendment No. 37. The committee believes that the earlier decisions of Parliament to give powers to the sea fisheries committees to create byelaws would be undermined because water authority permission would have to be sought. I thought that it would be right to put those two points on to the record.

12.45 am

Mr. John Townend: I should like to add my support to my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw). There is great concern among the fishing industry in Bridlington at the possible reduction in the power of the sea fisheries committee. I suggest that my right hon. Friend the Minister does not accept the amendment.

Mr. Gummer: It is obvious from the debate that there is a difference of opinion between two perfectly reasonably constituted bodies. We cannot resolve that problem by granting the kind of powers presented in the amendment. It is increasingly important for the two bodies to work closely together. I should reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) that that is precisely what is happening. The intention of amendment No. 40 is to increase the powers of the sea fisheries committees so that they can do more effectively what they have been excluded from doing. The sea fisheries committees, even when they so wished, were specifically excluded from dealing with salmon and sea trout. Amendment No. 40 will correct that position and I hope will grant the committees that power.

Sea fisheries committees differ, so I cannot give a general statement of their resources. However, many committees have considerable resources for dealing with the regulation of matters apart from their main business which is, of course, the regulation of sea fisheries. Those resources can also be applied, and would be appropriate to be applied, to enforcing the byelaws that we are considering now.

I understand the worry expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Woking about the overlap. However, I do not think that that overlap can be overcome by creating unwilling partners. We must have willing partners. My view which has been supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) and my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) is that in many cases the sea fisheries committees and the water authorities are working more closely and effectively together. We must encourage that rather than get the whole process off to a bad start by changing the position and make the committees feel that powers given to them by Parliament were now going to be downgraded in that area.

If we find in the light of experience that my hon. Friend the Member for Woking has been right and that I have been wrong, we will reconsider the matter, as my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough suggested. However, the outcome may not be as he wished.

Mr. Onslow: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 40, in page 30, line 32, at end insert—

'( ) For the purposes of any byelaws made by virtue of this section the references to sea fish in sections 10(2)*(c)* and 12 of the said Act of 1966 (which include provision with respect to the seizure of, and searches for, sea fish taken in contravention of byelaws) shall be deemed to include references to salmon.'.—*[Mr. John MacKay.]*

Clause 38

INTERPRETATION

Mr. John MacKay: I beg to move amendment No. 45, in page 32, line 32, leave out 'all'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient also to consider Government amendment No. 46.

Mr. MacKay: Amendments Nos. 45 and 46 clear up an ambiguity and put the meaning of the clause beyond doubt.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 46, in page 32, line 35, leave out 'all'.—*[Mr. John MacKay.]*

Clause 41

CITATION, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendments made: No. 49, in page 33, line 33, after 'enactments', insert

'except section *(Disclosure of information furnished under the Diseases of Fish Act 1983)*'.

No. 50, in page 33, line 35, after '36', insert

'and section *(Disclosure of information furnished under the Diseases of Fish Act 1983)*'.

No. 51, in page 33, line 38, leave out 'sections 26, 27 and' and insert 'section'.—*[Mr. John MacKay.]*

Schedule 4

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment made: No. 52, in page 42, line 16, at end insert—

'*Diseases of Fish Act 1937 (c. 33)*

. In subsection (3) of section 8 of the Diseases of Fish Act 1937 (penalties and legal proceedings), for the words after "be" there shall be substituted the words "proceeded against and punished in Scotland".'.—*[Mr. John MacKay.]*

Title

Amendments made: No. 53, in line 8, leave out 'and'.

No. 54, in line 9, after '1966', insert

'and section 9 of the Diseases of Fish Act 1983'.—*[Mr. John MacKay.]*

Order for Third Reading read.—

[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

12.50 am

Mr. John Townend: I do not wish to detain the House for long at this time of night, but I would like to put it on record that the Bill, as finally amended, will cause some concern to the fishing industry in Bridlington, particularly to the fishermen who operate fixed nets.

There is a feeling that too much power has been given to the water authorities. For example, clause 36 states that:

"A local fisheries committee shall not make byelaws for any purpose mentioned in subsection (1) and (2) above unless the water authority . . . have consented to byelaws being made".

Clause 32 extends the controls to include not only fixed nets for salmon fishing but also for other fishing in tidal waters. This gives the water authority power to control the fishing of cod and sole by fixed nets. I am not sure whether that was the original intention. This is a vital part of the livelihood of the coble owners in Bridlington and it would mean that the water authority, if so inclined, could restrict that type of fishing.

I am not saying that the water authority would take that action, but I am afraid that from past experience the Bridlington fishermen have very little confidence that the Yorkshire authority would pay adequate regard to the interests of the commercial fishermen.

Clause 35 also introduces a further restriction on the fixed net fishermen — that whenever a salmon or sea trout net is hauled the licensee must be present. While this might be acceptable for drift nets, it will cause great difficulty for the fixed netsmen who set T and J nets which are not nearly as profitable as drift nets. It will make it virtually impossible for them to continue other fishing operations, such as potting, yet these other activities are essential to sustain a living, particularly in the summer months.

There is a strong argument for exempting T and J nets from the regulations but that has not been accepted by the Government, even though only 5 per cent. of the catch is salmon. The remainder is salmon trout and there are adequate stocks in the North sea. There is a feeling in Bridlington that the fishermen's interests have been sacrificed to the salmon lobby, which includes many prominent members of the other place from where the Bill originated.

I hope that my right hon. Friend is aware of these reservations among the fishing community and that, having listened carefully, he will be able to assure our fishermen that their fears are unlikely to be fulfilled.

12.53 am

Mr. Home Robertson: That was a fascinating Second Reading speech. It may read well in the local press in the Bridlington area, but the hon. Gentleman's misgivings and remarks would have been slightly more convincing had he raised them earlier. If he is that unhappy about some of the clauses, I wonder why he did not vote against them.

The Opposition see the Bill as a sad waste of a potentially valuable opportunity to legislate for the future of salmon and freshwater fisheries. We should like to have seen a serious attempt to restructure the administration of these fisheries in a manner that would have achieved the respect of all interested parties. We should like to have seen a sensibly constituted set of salmon fishery boards with the authority and resources to protect and develop salmon fishing in the coming years and, indeed, to conserve stocks. I fear that the Bill fails to measure up to those objectives. It clings to the principle of proprietorial privilege and authority in the constitution of the boards. I suppose that is precisely what one ought to expect from any Tory Government. I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) echo that sentiment.

The Bill also gives some unwarranted powers to the boards and their bailiffs which could lead to even more conflict and even less respect for the law on our rivers and lochs. However, we support the principle of dealer licensing and live in hope that the standing advisory committee on salmon conservation will get the personnel, resources and attention that it deserves. When in due course they are appointed by the Ministry, we wish Professor Dunnet and his colleagues well in their deliberations.

[Mr. Home Robertson]

The dealer licensing scheme and the advisory committee are two potentially useful factors. We welcome those redeeming features in an otherwise sad piece of legislation.

Mr. Beith: I share some of the misgivings of the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), but I agree that he should have expressed them at an earlier stage in our proceedings. He could have helped in getting some of the clauses changed and could have tabled some amendments for the Report stage of the Bill. Unfortunately, he has already left the Chamber.

With regard to the Bill, I take a more sanguine view than does the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). There is much good in the Bill and it contains a number of useful provisions. I regret the fact that much of it is concerned with enabling powers and that Ministers will be left to decide, by order, important questions.

It is good that the Minister has ensured a balance between the interests of those who draw their livelihoods from salmon and conservation fishing. He has resisted the attempts of a few to hijack the Bill for a vindictive attack on one group of fishermen and their attempts to deprive these fishermen of their livelihoods. I appreciate the responsible action of the Minister.

Mr. MacKay: This is an important Bill on an important subject. It will be of great benefit to the conservation of salmon species and will benefit future salmon angling.

We have attempted to keep a balance between netting and angling and that is right and proper. I assure the House that my right hon. Friend and I will try, as quickly as possible, to implement the Bill so that it can soon benefit salmon fishing. I indulge in a little salmon angling and I look forward to the benefits which will accrue to me and to other anglers in the years ahead.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

Diabetics (Equipment)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

12.56 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I now turn to a different subject. I must declare an interest in this subject as I am the parent of a diabetic child. I am in the fortunate position, like other hon. Members of the House who have diabetic children, that I can afford to buy the supplies which are the subject of this debate.

Experience has given me a vivid understanding of the problems of those who find it difficult to pay for these things. I am on record as having raised this matter as far back as 1976 before I found myself personally involved as a parent.

I will be interested to hear the response of the Minister. It may be her first reply to an Adjournment debate, in which case I hope that she will take the opportunity to give a most positive reply and set a good precedent for the future.

Diabetes mellitus, or sugar diabetes, affects more than 1 per cent. of the population of the United Kingdom and the incidence is increasing. It can develop in childhood or at any stage and almost invariably remains with a person for the rest of his life. Over 150,000 diabetics in England and Wales are dependent on injections of insulin, usually twice a day. They must also monitor their blood sugar level constantly through blood and urine tests. They must also follow a careful diet.

When the Minister is tempted to make controversial comments about healthy eating, she should remember that there is one group of people whose lives depend on healthy eating and who watch their diet very carefully — the diabetics. Because sugar-free jams and other items are often expensive and because they need to eat at frequent intervals—they often have to buy a snack when out in the middle of the morning or the afternoon when someone else would wait until lunch or dinner—they face higher costs for food.

It is therefore very important that they should not also have to face costs for essential medical requirements, but at present they do, because neither plastic syringes nor blood glucose monitoring strips are available on prescription from family doctors. At present the only syringe which GPs can prescribe is the cumbersome glass syringe, which has to be sterilised each time it is used.

The disposable plastic syringe is a far better alternative. It is much easier to handle and carry, and does not require sterilisation. In my experience it is extremely difficult to inject a small child with a glass syringe. Both hands are needed to hold the glass syringe and the plunger is apt to slip. If, however, one is holding and trying to reassure a child, one needs a spare hand for at least some of the time.

It is much easier for a child with small hands to use a plastic syringe for his or her own injections. We want to encourage children to do their own injections. The teenager is able to lead a much more normal life if he can carry with him a plastic syringe instead of all the equipment that is associated with the glass syringe. It is also much easier to obtain accuracy over small doses with plastic syringes. That is vital for control, which has become much more important since the introduction of the U100 insulin, where the marks to which one works are often very small.

Given all the advantages of plastic syringes for many diabetics, they find it difficult to understand why the Government insist that their general practitioner should prescribe for them only the glass syringe. Could it be that an enormous cost is involved? The evidence suggests otherwise. There is now considerable experience which suggests that it may be cheaper to issue disposable syringes. A study in Southampton, reported in the *British Medical Journal* of 28 June 1986, put the cost of plastic syringes at less than half that for glass syringes and reported direct savings to the health authority as a result of issuing plastic syringes. Other work, by Dr. Arnold Bloom at Wittington hospital and Dr. N. R. Waugh at Dundee, also questions the Government's cost figures.

Several factors have to be borne in mind in assessing the cost of glass syringes, including the amount of insulin that is wasted in them because of "dead" space—insulin that is not used and that is washed out when the syringe is cleaned. However, there is one reason, above all, for the disparity between the Government's figures and those which are accepted by the medical profession. It is now accepted professionally that disposable syringes can be used more than once, and most of the diabetics who use them say that they use them several times. There is no evidence, if the syringes are kept in proper conditions—which usually means just putting them in the fridge—that this poses any risk of infection. Indeed, there is thought to be a greater risk from the use of glass syringes. However, the Department of Health and Social Security refuses to admit that re-use is acceptable, and it assumes that diabetics wish to be supplied with two new plastic syringes per day. They might like such a facility, but they are realistic enough to welcome a more limited supply of syringes that can be re-used.

This extraordinary obstinacy by the Department, in the face of overwhelming medical opinion, is causing real hardship to many diabetics. I plead with the Minister to bring about a change of attitude. If she is still worried about the cost and the number of syringes to be issued, there is one way out. She could allow diabetics to be issued with a voucher that is equivalent to the present cost of prescribing glass syringes. Then diabetics could choose for themselves whether to spend it on a glass syringe or on disposable syringes. At least they would be able to make that choice for themselves, with the advice of their doctor, at no extra cost to the Government.

There is another item of essential equipment that the family doctor cannot prescribe—blood glucose monitoring strips. If a diabetic is to avoid appalling complications, such as blindness, kidney failure or amputations, strict control is essential, and the only reliable way to achieve strict control is through blood testing. Urine testing is useful but it is not so reliable, because the time lapse is much greater. Many diabetics, therefore, are expected to take samples of their blood for testing, perhaps several times a day; yet we also expect them to pay for the privilege of undergoing these very uncomfortable tests by buying their own testing strips at a retail cost of about £15 for a tube of 50 strips. The Government could make these strips available on prescription at a cost of less than £5 million a year.

If more diabetics carried out more frequent blood tests, there is no doubt that complications and hospital admissions could be greatly reduced. The cost of the admission of diabetics is about £90 million a year and the cost of treating complications is about £62 million a year. I emphasise that control prevents hospital admissions. A well-controlled diabetic will be admitted to hospital much less often and the likelihood of complications will be much less great. Five million pounds is a tiny figure to set against a massive potential reduction in human misery and in cost to the National Health Service.

The Minister will no doubt point out that it is possible for both disposable syringes and testing strips to be supplied free by hospital consultants to their patients, even though general practitioners cannot prescribe them. But that is not an adequate alternative. Many diabetics are not under hospital care, and it is the Government's policy that care of patients with chronic diseases should be increasingly undertaken by family doctors who are able to see patients more frequently and deal with all aspects of their health. I support that policy. I think that it is sensible in many cases. The family doctor should be entrusted with the regular week-by-week supervision of the chronically ill patient. It would relieve the hospital clinics of a great deal of pressure and, for many patients, it is the best way to receive care. Improving the standards of GP training and retraining make it a more satisfactory alternative.

However, it will not be possible to maintain that policy if there is a two-tier standard of service under which a consultant can prescribe what the diabetic patient needs but a general practitioner cannot. The patient, once he realises that he can get the supplies he needs by remaining under hospital care, will prefer to do so rather than transfer to the GP who he knows is restricted from prescribing what he needs.

Hospitals are under such pressure that the ability of consultants to make syringes and testing strips available to their patients may be under threat. It has been reported to me that in some areas, not my own, that difficulty is beginning to arise.

I urge the Minister to press the case as hard as she can with her colleagues, including her Treasury colleagues, who I understand are considering the specific issue. A number of hon. Members contacted Ministers, including Treasury Ministers, earlier this year. I have before me a reply from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) in which the Chief Secretary said that he is aware of the case for making both blood test strips and plastic insulin syringes for diabetics available under the family practitioner service. He said:

> "Nevertheless, there are resource implications which both we and the DHSS have to consider—and set against other major demands on resources under the NHS. There could also be knock-on effects for other patients . . . the growing lobby in favour of issue of free syringes to drug abusers to help combat the spread of AIDS".

I might say in passing that diabetics simply would not understand it and would find it extraordinary if the Government were to decide that syringes should be made available to drug abusers because of the AIDS problem but not made available to diabetics. That would be a terrible slap in the face for people who have struggled so hard over the years to control a condition. The Chief Secretary continued:

> "Norman Fowler and I will be considering this issue when we come to the Public Expenditure Survey in the autumn. I obviously cannot at this stage comment on the likely outcome; but I will certainly bear in mind your representations."

I hope that that process of consideration is going ahead favourably and that the Minister, who has recently come to office, will add her voice to the pressure on Treasury

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

Ministers to be helpful, especially regarding glucose monitoring strips. The British Medical Association has made representations to her Department, as have Government and Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) has asked me to make known his support for that, as well as for the issue of plastic syringes. The costs involved are small. The resultant savings in treatment costs are potentially large. The Minister could bring great relief to thousands of diabetics who seek, by rigorous self-control, to lead full, active, long and healthy lives. They deserve the Government's support.

1.7 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) on his success in the ballot and on his diligence in raising this important subject. I suspect that I share with him a degree of disappointment that we are debating it so late at night when many other hon. Members have expressed interest in and support for the points he made. I recognise also that he made his points from personal experience, having a diabetic child. He may not be aware that diabetes is also present in my own family—on my father's side. I took a close interest in the subject before I became a Minister.

As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, the condition diabetes mellitus is found in 1 to 2 per cent. of the population. With proper treatment, diabetic patients can be kept fit and in full productive work. Over the past 40 years, great progress has been made in the management of patients with diabetes and its complications. We have seen significant improvements in understanding the disease and its effects, in the development and evaluation of new forms of detection and treatment, and in enabling sufferers and their families to live their lives with the minimum of disruption and anxiety.

As the hon. Gentleman said, diabetics need to control their blood sugar level. Most can do that through diet or tablets. However, 150,000 to 200,000 diabetics in England and Wales need injections of insulin to manage their condition effectively. We have the greatest sympathy and indeed admiration for those people, especially children and their families. They must exercise self-discipline, monitor their condition, follow a controlled diet, and give themselves daily injections of insulin.

I shall deal in turn with each of the commodities that we have been discussing, the first of which is blood test strips. Personal blood glucose monitoring is an integral part of modern diabetic care. The urine tests which are available on the Health Service are adequate for diabetics whose condition is controlled by diet or tablets, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree. They are quick and easy to use. For insulin-using diabetics, urine tests allow some measure of control and have been standard and available for many years. More recently, it has been recognised that blood testing has advantages over urine tests. First, they give an accurate and direct reading of blood sugar level at the time of the test and, secondly, that fact allows the patient to take action to keep blood sugar within normal levels immediately, if necessary.

That is extremely important, since too low a blood sugar level—hypoglycaemia—can lead to unconsciousness, even death, and too high a blood sugar level—hyperglycaemia—for a prolonged period increases the potential risk of long-term complications such as blindness and kidney failure. However, blood testing is not particularly pleasant. It involves pricking the finger, and some people will undoubtedly prefer urine testing, perhaps particularly for children.

I have some syringes with me. It is claimed that plastic disposable syringes are more comfortable. The needles are thinner and are lubricated. It is claimed that they are more convenient than re-usable glass syringes. We understand why many patients, especially children, prefer them. In some cases consultants may arrange for them to be provided under the hospital service because they are medically necessary, but in most cases they offer no medical advantage over glass and metal syringes and re-usable needles, which GPs can prescribe, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will admit.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, both blood glucose testing strips and disposable syringes are available on the Health Service through hospitals when they are medically necessary. That is where a consultant thinks it advisable. The hon. Gentleman may say that that is not good enough, but that is a matter of fact. For some years we have seen sustained pressure from patients, doctors, hon. Members and all those interested for these items to be available on GP prescription.

The effort became more notable last year when the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association and the British Diabetic Association joined forces in making representations to the Department. That culminated in a meeting last November with officials of my Department and I shall return to what was said at that meeting.

Early-day motion No. 1070 attracted before the recess 38 signatures of hon. Members. A deputation of hon. Members came and saw my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe), who was then the Minister for Health, on 15 July. Since August we have received more than 300 letters from hon. Members on both sides of the House. Many constituents were undoubtedly encouraged to write by an article in the August edition of "Balance" magazine, which is published by the BDA, and which gave precise and accurate advice on how to lobby Members of Parliament.

I shall now turn to the drug tariff list of prescribable appliances, about which we are talking. I hope that it is obvious that the Government have considerable sympathy with the case put forward by the hon. Gentleman and other colleagues. So why are blood glucose testing strips and disposable syringes not prescribable by general practitioners? There has always been an approved list of dressings and appliances which a general practitioner may prescribe. The intention of that list was to ensure that the range of dressings and appliances commonly used in general practice were readily available through retail chemists. The list was never intended to be comprehensive. It would not be practicable or cost-effective to include all items which may be supplied through the hospital service.

It is also important to keep that list up to date. Changes are made in consultation with the medical and pharmaceutical professions in the light of the changing needs of general practice, the extent of demand, the availability and the cost. There is relatively little problem where new products are cheaper, or at least no more expensive, than products for a similar purpose already on the list. I hope that we keep the list up to date with more

modern methods and materials. However, where the products have a high price they must be considered alongside competing priorities for the NHS.

I have some detailed figures which I hope will be of assistance to the hon. Gentleman. The comparable product for blood test strips is urine test strips. The family practitioner services currently spend over £2 million a year on urine testing. The drug tariff price for urine test strips is about £1·50 for 50, or about 3p each. A mail order company is advertising blood test strips in "Balance" magazine at £9·15 for 50, or 18p each, while another company is selling them at £13·50 for 50, which is 27p each. That is 27p compared with 3p, so we are talking about nine times the cost. Retail prices can be even higher.

Even assuming that we could arrange supplies at a substantially reduced cost, we estimate that the additional cost to the family practitioner services could be up to £10 million a year. There is the question of offsetting the saving, but at present we have insufficient information to estimate the saving to the hospital service from a reduction in the issue of blood test strips or the saving from reduced in-patient admissions resulting from better control of the condition. However, I am aware of the case that is being made.

The question of syringes is more complicated. Disposable syringes are a lot cheaper than re-usable glass ones. The most widely used brand advertised in "Balance" costs £1·17 for 10, or 12p each. The drug tariff price for glass and metal syringes is £6·25. Needles are about 16p each and the carrying case for the syringes and needles costs £1·75.

Glass syringes and the needles that go with them can, of course, be used many times, but one does not need to be a mathematical genius to work out that they cost 50 times as much, or perhaps even more.

We are currently spending about £1·2 million a year on these re-usable syringes and needles. A simple calculation based on the number of times an average diabetic will use insulin and the number of diabetics who are likely to use these syringes shows that it would cost at least £8 million to supply disposable syringes to all insulin-dependent diabetics for use on this basis.

We accept that many diabetics who buy their own disposable syringes use them more than once, but there is a wide variation in the pattern of use. It is difficult to predict what would happen if disposable syringes were provided free, bearing in mind that diabetics do not pay prescription charges and would have no incentive therefore to re-use them.

The equipment is also supplied sterile and is not intended to be resterilised. It is clearly intended for single use. Manufacturers, bearing in mind product liability, make it clear that syringes are intended for single use. The packet that I have with me, imported from the United States, has "Single use" printed twice on the packet. It has "Use once and destroy" printed clearly on the packet, and that is printed on every syringe. The Department could be in a difficult legal position, we are advised, if we instructed people to ignore that advice, and something went wrong. It is also clear from our correspondence that many diabetics use them only once and discard them.

Mr. Beith: Will the Minister consider the matter again? Will she take account of the strong, professionally qualified medical opinion that re-use is not only safe but is probably safer than the glass syringe? The Department really should find a way through these technical and legal difficulties.

Mrs. Currie: As I said earlier, the Department is discussing closely and in great detail with the medical advisers and representatives of the British Diabetic Association. Many more of these goods are becoming available on the market, and perhaps that makes our life a little easier than it might have been some time ago.

Like diabetics, other patients, such as drug misusers, may get disposable syringe on the National Health Service through the hospital service. GPs may not prescribe them. Drug misusers attending special NHS drug dependence centres may get single use syringes for use with prescribed drugs. Doctors prescribe treatment in individual cases. The recommended practice in most cases is to prescribe an oral preparation for a short weaning-off period. Nevertheless, I take seriously the hon. Gentleman's argument.

Even record levels of spending on the National Health Service do not mean that we can afford to do everything that we would like. We take seriously, however, the issues that the hon. Gentleman has raised and those taken up by all other correspondents. We must bear in mind that testing strips and disposable syringes are available on the Health Service through hospitals when they are medically necessary. Provision may vary somewhat according to individual clinical decisions, and that would apply if general practitioners were to prescribe. It varies to some extent also according to health authorities' different views on spending priorities. We understand the arguments for supply on GPs' prescriptions.

I have taken further advice on which of the two different pieces of equipment we would regard as having the higher priority. I recognise that many patients would prefer to see syringes given a higher priority because of the comfort and convenience of use, but as a matter of simple fact the medical advice that has been received is that it would be the glucose blood testing strips that would be regarded medically as the higher priority. That course would enable an improvement to be made in the quality of information to the diabetic. The disposable syringes, while presenting more comfort, would make no medical change in the condition of the patient. This was accepted by the general medical services committee and the British Diabetic Association when they met the Department's officials in November.

I am unable to make the promises that the hon. Gentleman wants on making blood testing strips available on GP prescription, but that provision will have a high priority if and when resources become available. Price is an important factor, and the strips will not be made available unless a satisfactory price can be negotiated.

Disposable syringes are not likely to be available on GP prescription just at present. We are, however, keeping the comparative costs of disposable and re-usable syringes under close scrutiny. The BDA tells us that it intends to put proposals to the Department for a voucher scheme for hypodermic equipment along the lines that the hon. Gentleman has suggested, and this is a proposal that we shall consider carefully.

I know that the hon. Gentleman may not find my response wholly satisfactory, and I am sorry about that.

[Mrs. Currie]

I hope I have assured him, however, of our concern to ensure that all the necessary medical items are available to diabetics and other patients through the NHS.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 24 October 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Deacons (Ordination of Women)

9.35am

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, and that of the House, I beg leave to present a petition from the deaconesses of the Church of England. In accordance with the customs and procedures of the House, I shall be brief. The petition, which has been signed by 601 deaconesses, states that

whereas they already fulfil the historic and distinctive role of deaconesses within the Church, they remain in law members of laity

The petitioners pray

this honourable House will support the Deacons (Ordination of Women) Measure, currently before Parliament, in order that deaconesses may be accepted into the historic ministry of the Church as deacons.

I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Isle of Sheppey (Access)

9.36 am

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, and that of the House, I beg leave to present a petition from his worshipful the mayor of Swale, Councillor Kenneth Ingleton. I wholeheartedly endorse the petition, as I believe do all the residents and industrialists on the Isle of Sheppey. The petition seeks to remind the House that the Isle of Sheppey, which has a population of 34,000, which doubles at times of the year, is limited to one access on or off the island, which is a lifting access bridge that is raised frequently. The petitioners pray that

the House of Commons will urgently examine the best method of improving this access to cope with existing and future traffic and give a clear indication of the timescale within which such improved access should be commenced.

I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

PUBLIC TRUSTEE AND ADMINISTRATION OF FUNDS BILL *[LORDS] [MONEY]*

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Public Trustee and Administration of Funds Bill [*Lords*], it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act;

(2) the payment into or out of the Consolidated Fund of sums or increased sums falling to be so paid by virtue of any provisions of that Act amending section 39 of the Administration of Justice Act 1982.

—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Orders of the Day

PUBLIC TRUSTEE AND ADMINISTRATION OF FUNDS BILL *[LORDS]*

Considered in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 6

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendment made: No. 1, in page 4, line 31, leave out subsection (4).—*[Solicitor-General.]*

Clause, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment; as amended, considered; read the Third time and passed, with an amendment.

Family Law Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

9.40 am

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second Time.

My short speech will not reflect the diversity of family law matters that are covered in the four parts of the Bill, the first three of which deal with separate Law Commission reports. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude, which I am sure is shared by the whole House, to both the English and Scottish Law Commissions for all their hard and magnificent work, which is ably illustrated by parts I to III in respect of law reform.

Part I gives effect to the recommendation of both commissions that is contained in the report entitled "Custody of Children — Jurisdiction and Enforcement within the United Kingdom". This part, by providing uniform jurisdictional rules for the determination of custody disputes and the procedural means whereby a custody order may be recognised, registered and enforced throughout the United Kingdom, will deal with the internal United Kingdom problem of child abduction.

Part II gives effect, with modification, to another joint report entitled "Recognition of Foreign Nullity Decrees and Related Matters". This is a technical law reform matter and is designed to assimilate the grounds for the recognition of foreign nullity decrees to those grounds, which are also modified by part II, for the recognition of divorces and legal separations that are contained in the Recognition of Divorces and Legal Separations Act of 1971.

Part III carries out the recommendation of the English Law Commission that is contained in its report entitled "Declarations in Family Matters". This part provides a new code for England and Wales for the granting of declaratory relief in matters of matrimonial status, legitimacy, legitimation and adoption.

Lastly, clause 64, in part IV, which relates to miscellaneous matters, enlarges the rule-making powers of the Matrimonial Causes Rule Committee to enable that committee to make costs rules which distinguish between legally aided and privately funded cases. Only with these wider powers can scales of costs be prescribed separately for legally aided cases as the legal profession desires. The clause was amended in another place and I understand that both branches of the legal profession are now content with this provision. Clauses 65 to 67 make technical amendments to other legislation dealing with international and criminal aspects of child abduction that will make them more effective.

9.42 am

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The Solicitor-General's Second Reading speech struck a nice balance between general explanation and detail, and there is a considerable amount of detail in this technical and complicated measure. The Bill is welcome and I have no intention of trying to delay its passage through the House, at least not unduly.

I shall take this opportunity to say a few words about family law, including matters that are in the Bill and others that are not and perhaps should be. The Bill's title may raise hopes in some quarters which its contents will fail to meet. For example, the Law Commission has recently

reported on illegitimacy. In summary, it recommends that the legal consequences of illegitimacy, as they affect the non-marital child, should be removed from the law. I support that recommendation. In a written answer of 4 June the right hon. and learned Attorney-General promised that legislation would be introduced "at the earliest possible opportunity", in response to the recommendation. That legislation does not appear in the Bill, but perhaps that is something that we shall be debating in the next Session, perhaps when dealing with a family law reform Bill. At a later stage we may consolidate such a measure with this Bill.

Equally disappointed will be the supporters of the family courts campaign. The Bill does not have anything to do with family courts either, but there are good reasons for initiating family courts. Such a system would unify and thereby simplify various jurisdictions for family affairs. It would provide a vehicle to introduce simpler and quicker procedures which emphasise conciliation and the desirability of agreement between the parties. It would be possible to provide adequate conciliatory and welfare services and to remove family matters from courts that are accustomed traditionally to dealing with contested matters, and, in the case of magistrates courts, criminal matters.

A family court system would reflect the increasingly sympathetic approach to divorce which takes such matters beyond those which are normally considered by courts of law. Family courts exist and function successfully in Australia, New Zealand and some parts of the United States of America. Our present system creates more bitterness than is necessary and encourages people to spend money, sometimes public money, via the legal aid scheme on lawyers. I an not convinced that good always comes of spending money on lawyers, and certainly not in the realm of family law. However, the Bill does not deal with family courts.

The Bill is based on the work of the English and Scottish Law Commissions and I associate myself with the Solicitor-General's remarks about his gratitude to both commissions for the work. In 1981, in its 15th annual report to Parliament, the commission stated:

"It becomes very difficult for us to plan our work if the Government does not express a view on recommendations made by ourselves and others within a reasonable time after delivery of the reports containing them."

It continued:

"A number of important law reform proposals made by other bodies during the past 10 years or so have not been implemented. In some instances it is not even known whether they are accepted by the Government in principle."

Things have not improved. In its most recent report, the 20th, the commission lists a further 15 reports, two of which go back to 1981, which have not resulted in Government action.

The House recently debated the Lord Chancellor's salary increase. Whatever that substantial rise was based on, it was not productivity.

The Solicitor-General *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Brown: The Solicitor-General seems to object to the idea of productivity improvements in the Lord Chancellor's Department, which should certainly take place in the higher echelons. I cannot understand why he takes such a view.

The main argument that is usually advanced for delaying the recommendations of the commission—some of them are highly technical but non-controversial—is that parliamentary time cannot be found. This excuse is advanced by a Government who intend to take the Bill through all its stages in this place this morning. The House does not delay any non-controversial legislation that is based on the work of the commission. Nor has such legislation been unreasonably treated in another place. It is the Government's failure to bring such matters to Parliament which is the major obstruction to law reform.

The Bill is highly technical and perhaps it needs to be. I feel, however, that it makes heavy weather of some fairly simple matters. Would it not have been possible in some way to treat the separate jurisdictions in the United Kingdom as different contracting countries for the purposes of the Child Abduction and Custody Act 1985? The Solicitor-General will recall that I moved an amendment to that measure when it was in Committee and that the Attorney-General said that there was a technical objection to it. He said that it contained a "fatal flaw" and claimed that it was inconsistent with section 25(1)*(b)* of the 1985 Act

"because once the United Kingdom custody order has been registered, that clause would cancel it. That is a technical reason".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee F,* Tuesday 9 July 1985; c. 4.]

I am not entirely convinced by that argument. I have to say, however, as I did in Committee, that there can be no political objection to taking the route that is outlined in the Bill instead of that set out in my amendment.

The Bill is divided into four separate parts, and part I gives effect to the recommendations of the commissions on the recognition and enforcement of custody orders between separate jurisdictions in the United Kingdom.

The only matter that I wish to raise on part I arises from clause 42(2) and (3). Those provisions mean that, once a child's parents are divorced in one part of the United Kingdom a custody order cannot be obtained in another part of the United Kingdom unless an order as described in this section is first obtained from the court in which the divorce was obtained. Thus, if a child's parents divorce in England or Wales and the child subsequently becomes habitually resident in Scotland it would be necessary to obtain an order from the English or Welsh court. That does not appear to be the case in the converse situation as the exclusion does not apply if the child is either habitually resident in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, or present there and not habitually resident in another part of the United Kingdom. There is no similar provision made in respect of Scotland, so there appears to be a significant difference between the respective jurisdictions.

However, significantly, if the special provision in respect of England, Wales and Northern Ireland is correct, it makes the exclusion redundant. In effect it is saying that, where there is jurisdiction, the exclusion will not apply. In that where there is no jurisdiction the exclusion is superfluous, I find the purpose of that exclusion hard to define. Will the Solicitor-General deai with that point?

Part II deals with the recognition of the validity of divorces, annulments and legal separations. It would not be right not to refer to the one aspect of this part which has occasioned public comment — the issue of the Moslem family law ordnance. Clause 54 states:

"'proceedings' means judicial and other proceedings"

and deals with that. Under the Pakistani Moslem family law ordnance, provision is made for a procedure to replace the talaq in Moslem law. A talaq is a simple

[Mr. Brown]

pronouncement of divorce by the husband. It is not obtained through proceedings, but under the ordnance it is held to be so obtained. A declaration of divorce is made and the wife and a Government official are notified. After notification there follows a period of 90 days in which the official may, but need not, attempt to reconcile the parties. At the end of the period, in the absence of any reconciliation, the parties are considered to be divorced.

The issue is whether that procedure merits recognition on the grounds of the residence, domicile or nationality of only one party to the marriage or whether it should be recognised only if both parties are domiciled in Pakistan and neither is habitually resident in the United Kingdom. The question is not whether we should recognise Pakistani law, but what limits should be placed on the jurisdiction of that law. Should a Pakistani national habitually resident in the United Kingdom and married to a United Kingdom national be able to obtain a divorce in that way? Should a United Kingdom national married to a Pakistani national habitually resident in the United Kingdom by going to Pakistan be able to obtain a divorce in that way? If not, perhaps proceedings should be defined in order to exclude that possibility. The principal objection to a talaq is that it discriminates against women because the procedure is available only to men. If a Moslem woman wants a divorce she must initiate judicial proceedings.

Part III is based closely on the Law Commission's declarations on family matters. I can find nothing objectionable in it, not even clause 61 which must be largely of historical interest.

Part IV is entitled "Miscellaneous and General". Clause 64 deals with the power to make rules of court. It may be thought to be unexceptionable, but it provides:

> "Rules of court made by the rule-making authority . . . may amend or repeal any statutory provision relating to the practice and procedure of the Supreme Court."

Is there any precedent for empowering an extra-parliamentary body to make by amendment or to repeal statute law?

Although the Family Law Bill is tortuous and is a roundabout way of achieving certain objectives, it deals with an important matter and I do not wish to delay its enactment unduly.

9.54 am

The Solicitor-General: I am grateful for the welcome that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) has given the Bill and for his kind words about the Law Commissions. I note his disappointment that the Bill, which is not insubstantial, does not do more in one fell swoop than implement the provisions of three substantial reports of the Law Commissions.

On the reform of the law relating to illegitimacy, he and those whose interests he properly represents will not be long disappointed. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Lord Chancellor's Department has issued a consultation paper on family courts. The period of consultation expires at the end of this month and my right hon. and noble Friend looks forward to considering the representations made during that consultation period. I must reply to the hon. Gentleman's friendly criticism of the Lord Chancellor's productivity. The House will accept that he has been the most vigorously law reforming Lord Chancellor this century.

The hon. Gentleman raised many detailed questions and he will not expect very detailed replies. On his point about clause 42(2) and (3), which relates to custody orders, I must say that Scottish law, from which we have learned, adapted and adopted so much, is different and imposes technical requirements which have had a significant role in the formulation of clause 42.

On part II, the hon. Gentleman rightly drew attention to the discriminatory effect of the talaq and other informal divorces against women. These are complicated and difficult matters. The Bill's policy is to take a more restrictive approach in respect of divorces obtained other than by judicial or other proceedings. It takes as its basis the present law of recognition of such informal divorces contained in section 6 of the Recognition of Divorces and Legal Separations Act 1971, but it is more restrictive than that. Informal divorces will be recognised only if granted in the country where both parties to the marriage were domiciled or where a party to the marriage was domiciled and the other party was domiciled in a country under whose law the divorce, annulment or legal separation is recognised as valid. No such decree will be recognised if one party or both partes have been habitually resident in the United Kingdom for at least a year before the divorce was obtained.

In addition, clause 51 provides grounds on which the court may refuse to recognise informal divorces because there is no official certificate certifying that the divorce is effective in the country in which it was obtained or where one of the parties was domiciled in another country, but there is a certificate that the divorce is recognised as valid under the law of that country. The Bill's policy is the necessity and desirability to have some objective certification or assurance of the validity of the relevant divorce.

Lastly, under clause 64, the hon. Gentleman asked whether there is precedent for the formulation that gives to the Rules Committee power to amend statutory rules in the terms that the hon. Gentleman accurately quoted. The answer to his question is yes. The matter was gone into at considerable length in another place. There is precedent, which is very tightly controlled and restricted in this Bill. Nevertheless, it is desirable. The alternative is that main legislation would be required whenever minor amendments needed to be made.

I hope that I have dealt adequately with these matters and that we may now proceed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, That the Bill be now read the Third time *[Queen's Consent, on behalf of The Crown, signified.]*

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed, without amendment.

Parliamentary Constituencies Bill *[Lords]*

10.3 am

Order for Second Reading read.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill consolidates the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Acts from 1949 to 1979, together with a small number of related enactments. It brings together the law relating to the establishment of parliamentary constituencies and the process of reviewing the distribution of seats undertaken by the Boundary Commissions for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Bill, which was prepared by the Law Commission, has been passed in another place where, in the usual way, it was referred to the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills. That Committee reported to both Houses on 25 June that the Bill is pure consolidation. No change in the present law will be effected.

Our thanks are due once again to the Law Commission and the Joint Committee for their work on this useful contribution to the continuous process of keeping the statute book in easily accessible form.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The Bill is pure consolidation, and on that basis it is acceptable. I add my thanks to those of the Solicitor-General to both the Law Commission and the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills for their valuable work. It is right that we should thank them when consolidation Bills come before the House.

The purpose of consolidation Bills is to make life easier for practitioners and those who have to refer frequently to our legislation. I am not sure how frequently this Bill will need to be referred to—not very often, I should have thought. It is pure consolidation, and I see no reason at all why the passage of the Bill should be delayed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Food Protection

10.5 am

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): I beg to move,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (England) (No. 2) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1689), dated 29th September 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th September, be approved.

With permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I suggest that it would be convenient to take this and the other orders on the Order Paper together.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): If that is agreeable to the House, so be it.

Mr. Gummer: On Saturday 26 April 1986 the very serious accident at Chernobyl occurred. However, it was not until Monday 28 April that the detection of increased levels of radioactivity by the Swedish authorities alerted the West. On the day after, Tuesday, the Ministry of Agriculture initiated daily testing of milk and obtained meteorological forecasts of wind movements. The air current carrying the radioactive material went in a wide arc over Europe in the course of the next few days. On Friday, an increase in radioactivity was detected by the Ministry's Lowestoft laboratory. Arrangements for more extensive monitoring were immediately put in hand, with particular attention being paid to those foodstuffs that were most immediately affected — milk and leaf vegetables.

Although the House is not exactly full this morning, the details of how we dealt with this problem are important to have on the record simply because we had not expected that the powers that were given under an Act that had been passed only a year before would be so early used. One might say that public confidence is illustrated by the fact that vast numbers of angry, shouting Members of Parliament are not here to complain that the public were not properly looked after. Public confidence depends upon the public feeling that there is an adequate system to deal with even such horrific accidents as this. Therefore, I hope that the House will allow me to sketch quickly those measures that were taken so that if Opposition Members wish to raise particular points about what was done they will do so against a logical background that will be on the record.

It was quickly apparent that the major radionuclides were iodine and caesium and that, of these, radio-iodine was initially the most important. It will be recalled that these radionuclides work according to different time scales. Therefore, one was able to concentrate upon the one rather than the other. However, we also appreciated that radiocaesium would build up over a longer period.

On the Sunday, at 2 pm, the Ministry opened its operations room to enable those who until then had been in constant telephonic communication to co-ordinate their assessment and monitoring results and to handle inquiries from the general public centrally. My right hon. Friend and I have laid down a clear policy that the public should be fully informed of matters of concern such as this. All relevant detail is provided so that the public can rely fully on our statements. However, this policy opens the way for some to add unfounded fears and speculation to very real concerns. To put the figures into context, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculuture, Fisheries and Food made a number of television and radio appearances over

[Mr. Gummer]

the bank holiday weekend to reassure the public that radiation levels in food did not present a hazard to health and that there was no need for anyone to change their normal consumption patterns of milk and other fresh foodstuffs.

Our monitoring over the bank holiday weekend showed that levels of radioactive iodine in milk had peaked. Levels in cows' milk generally did not exceed a few per cent. of the derived emergency reference levels—I am sorry that one has to use such phrases but there is no other way to be accurate and if we are not accurate the technical press will soon pick it up—for radio-iodine recommended by the National Radiological Protection Board in line with the recommendations of the International Commission on National Radiological Protection. I think that we can accept that as being a reasonable level against which to measure our concern. Peak levels on individual farms in the areas of highest rainfall did not exceed 20 per cent. of that level.

We made a distinction between giving all the information necessary and not giving particular information about a particular farm. If a farm is tested, but not its neighbour, it would not add to anybody's information and it would certainly increase the difficulties in getting the testing done. We averaged the results and gave the top, bottom and middle levels. We felt that that was the best way and I think that that has been generally accepted.

Activating our existing contingency plans, we set in train one of the most extensive monitoring operations of foodstuffs ever undertaken. As the monitoring of food was only part of a full-scale monitoring of water, air and the environment generally, it was agreed that the composite data would be made available through another of those curious organisations, the co-ordinating technical information centre at the Department of the Environment, and that such data should be available for consultation in London. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food made food data available at the Ministry's regional offices. Attention was drawn to that in the daily press bulletins put out by the TIC on 10 and 15 May. When the TIC was stood down in the middle of May, my Department continued to issue results of monitoring in press notices.

Our monitoring showed that levels of radioactivity in milk and vegetables declined. However, it was recognised that radiocaesium, being a longer-term problem, would need continued monitoring as it built up in the muscle of animals grazing contaminated pasture. From about the middle of May levels of radiocaesium in young unfinished lambs not then ready for slaughter in areas of high rainfall over the bank holiday weekend showed such levels building up. We immediately intensified our monitoring to identify the exact locations where radiocaesium levels in sheepmeat might cause concern.

We also commissioned the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology to undertake more detailed surveys of deposition patterns across the country to identify the precise areas likely to be affected. That information was available early in June and, with the monitoring results which we had built up, identified areas where levels in sheepmeat were likely to be high.

Since most early lamb comes from lowland areas it was there that action had to be considered most urgently and it became clear by mid-June that we would not be able to guarantee that radiocaesium in all sheep would fall to acceptable levels before some animals from those areas went for slaughter. Although our acceptable levels have a wide range of safety built into them it is still important to keep them as the clear levels by which we work.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I therefore decided to use, for the first time, powers available under part 1 of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 and an order was made on 20 June placing restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep for 21 days in certain areas of Cumbria and north Wales. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland introduced similar controls in parts of Scotland on 24 June. The purpose of those controls was primarily to ensure that no animals with levels of radiocaesium above the internationally recommended action level of 1,000 bq/kg would reach the consumer and also to enable us to monitor closely the levels of radioactivity in those areas.

Soon after the imposition of controls, monitoring showed that radiocaesium levels in parts of the designated areas had fallen to an extent which allowed those parts to be released from restriction. However, levels above 1,000 bq/kg continued to be found, particularly in upland areas where the greatest deposition occurred, and made it necessary to continue restrictions after the expiry of the original 21 days. Therefore, further orders had to be made on 3 and 8 July continuing the restrictions in areas of Cumbria, north Wales and Scotland for a further period of 21 days. Restrictions were lifted progressively as monitoring showed that it was safe to do so.

I am pleased to say that our models were right in predicting falling levels in most areas. However, no model is perfect and in the upland areas we encountered a number of special factors arising from the terrain and grazing habits of upland sheep. We must be clear about the remarkable achievements of the scientists who carry out the preparatory work in the event of an accident such as this. Their models proved to be successful.

However, there are particular elements in upland areas which we have discovered as a result of this accident. I think that hon. Members will agree that it is inconceivable that in making such predictions we would get everything right. We have learnt a good deal, about the effect of the deposition of radioactive material from rain of which we previously had little experience. One factor is the effect of different kinds of soil and the pattern of growth of grass.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): When the Minister began by saying how accurate his model had been I was worried that the Government were becoming complacent. It is mainly the upland areas that are affected by sheep restrictions and those are the very areas where he has admitted that things are going wrong. On 24 July the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson), said that there had been alarmist reports that restrictions might be necessary for another six months. It is now clear that the restrictions have not only gone on for six months but are likely to go on for a further six months. Does the Minister now admit that there is a danger that the restrictions could continue for another six or nine months in those areas?

Mr. Gummer: We want to be as accurate as possible. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales was referring to alarmist views that large areas of the

Principality, Cumbria and Scotland would continue to have restrictions. In fact, restrictions have already been removed from large parts of those areas. Having lived through that time and having been involved from day to day in considering how we dealt with the problem, I can say that one of the difficulties of being open, as we have been, at every point with the information that we had is that there are those who constantly want to pretend that there is something that they have not been told. We were trying to say that we were giving all the available information and acting on it. Widespread restrictions have not gone on for a long time, but that was just one of the predictions with which we had to deal at the time.

Our models are based upon a series of different possibilities. One would have been that the rain fell over the lowland areas at a particular time. Another would have been that the cloud was blown in a different direction. All I am saying is that all our models show clearly what would happen. The only areas in which we had difficulties were in the precise prediction of the effect of radiocaesium in a particular mixture in particular circumstances. We have learnt a good deal, but the action that we took was right in protecting the public's health in the circumstances.

I did not want to go through my speech without paying tribute to those who have done such a good job in preparation for such an accident merely because we are bound to concentrate on those things from which we have learnt for the future. That is not complacency. A bit of gratitude, given the hours that those people have worked and their input, is necessary.

The restrictions were lifted progressively. We were able to lift the restrictions in some areas in time for farmers to proceed normally, but in some other areas we could not do that. To meet the problem we introduced a scheme which would allow sheep marked on the head and neck with long-lasting paint to be moved out of the designated areas. Restrictions on the slaughter of such sheep remained in operation.

Since some parts of the designated areas were known to be likely to be ready for release earlier than others, the designated areas were divided into higher and lower deposition areas, depending upon the extent of contamination by radiocaesium. Sheep released from the higher deposition areas had to be marked with blue paint and those from the lower deposition areas with green paint. Restrictions on slaughter were to be removed only when all restrictions in similar areas in the United Kingdom had been lifted.

I am glad to say that it was possible to release green marked sheep from all restrictions from 30 September. The mark and release scheme was extended on 15 September to permit, under consent, the sale and movement of breeding animals inside and outside the designated areas. Such sheep were marked on the head and neck with red paint. I assure hon. Members that none of the colours had any political significance.

All this caused losses to the farmers and from the outset the Government pledged to compensate them. Throughout, we were determined that our schemes would be tailored to real needs rather than to producing speedy solutions which would have turned out to be inappropriate.

Our conversations with the farming unions proved how complex it was to try to find a system which met particular needs. One cannot have a prejudged system to meet such compensation needs. The farming unions were faced with the same problems in that the situation was changing rapidly and it was not easy to know what their members would need. As the conversations proceeded, the farmers' priorities changed as they saw the effects of the scheme on the ground.

Our first compensation scheme was designed to help producers of those finished lambs which, through being held back by the restrictions, were subsequently rejected for variable premium on the ground of overfatness when their areas were released from the restrictions. Later we introduced a second scheme to compensate producers for their market price losses on marked sheep which were released from the designated areas and presented at store markets and sales, as well as liveweight certification centres. Our third scheme, announced last month, provides assistance towards the direct costs incurred by producers of finished lambs and cast ewes.

This brief account of the principles on which we have based our compensation understandably does not go into the considerable detail of the methods of assessing the market price losses, the "price blight" attaching to marked animals and our headage payments for direct losses sustained on certain sheep enterprises. In trying to work those out, we discovered that the details were complex. The complexity was necessary because the simpler solutions which we sought would not have met farmers' needs.

When one examines how the rest of Europe dealt with the problem it is noticeable that we were the most clearly prepared and that we provided the most carefully worked out and comprehensive compensation scheme. Some countries imposed restrictions on farmers but did not compensate them. Others imposed no restrictions and did not pay compensation. Some imposed restrictions and provided some compensation. No country went to the lengths that we did to ensure that the farmers were properly looked after.

The compensation that we gave to producers was provided as soon as we were able to establish and fully meet the real needs of the situation. Our compensation took account of marketing and sales patterns, already disrupted by the late spring, and poor finishing conditions. Detailed discussions with all the farmers' unions involved have, of course, been necessary. This has been hard work for all concerned. Ministry of Agriculture staff worked all hours. They and the people with whom they dealt in the farmers' unions should be congratulated.

We believe that the totality of compensation arrangements that we have now agreed—we are giving priority to paying out the sums as quickly as possible—represents a fair and balanced response to the needs of producers.

Looking ahead, I am aware that many farmers are anxious to know how long the controls will continue in force and I should like to say a few words about that. The restrictions introduced on 20 June imposed controls on more than 4 million sheep in Great Britian. I hope that that is remembered by those who suggested that there was an easy way of putting all the sheep under cover. Such people obviously never understood the figures or the details.

Today fewer than 300,000 sheep remain under restriction and many would not normally leave the upland areas before the spring. Progress has therefore been excellent, but radiation levels in sheep in some upland areas have not been falling as fast as in lowland areas.

[Mr. Gummer]

There is a combination of factors at work and our research has been greatly assisted by the recent development of new instruments by British instrument manufacturers — sometimes good comes out of ill — which were encouraged by the Ministry. They enable us to live-monitor sheep under field conditions.

One of the biggest problems was that there was no accurate way of dealing adequately with live animals. The animals had to be slaughtered and this was followed by a long period of testing. That was a problem which was foreseen but we had to be more restrictive. We had to assume that any one sample was a general sample.

Two factors appear to be contributing to the persistance of radiocaesium in the upland areas: first, the dietary and grazing habits of the animals, both of which are significantly different from animals with unimpeded access to relatively fast growing lowland pasture grass; secondly, the peaty soil conditions in many parts of the upland areas. It is well established that clay and other mineral soil materials have an affinity for caesium and quickly immobilise it within the soil. In well-drained soils whatever is not immobilised tends to be quickly removed by the surface run-off or seepage away from the rooting zone. The problem in the upland areas is that there are pockets of land poorly drained and in some cases totally devoid of mineral-binding agents.

It is quite clear that the sheep themselves show the same biological characteristics as other sheep when transferred out of the upland areas and radiocaesium levels fall away very rapidly once animals are moved to totally clean pasture. This indicates that once the affected areas return to normal the problem will be resolved.

Two natural processes may be expected to make a significant impact on the situation during the coming months. The first is the effect of winter conditions, including frosts, which will break up the soil and allow enhanced drainage of surface water and the second will be the new plant growth which will be coming through in the spring.

There is now extensive scientific evidence from many countries that deposited radiocaesium rapidly becomes immobilised and unavailable to biological systems. There is no reason to expect the long-term behaviour of Chernobyl to be markedly different. We are, however, looking at various ways to see if we can find action to speed things up. That is difficult because we are talking about very large areas which are often high and isolated. Many different holdings are involved. One can talk about reducing the numbers involved from 4 million to 300,000, but we must remember that 300,000 sheep are spread over large areas, so the ability directly to affect the nature of the land artificially is not easy.

Tests have already been carried out on the use of clay-like materials to absorb radiocaesium, both within soils and within the animals themselves. Preliminary results are encouraging and we shall continue to work in the hope that some simple treatment may be available to ensure the earliest possible return of these hill areas to their full productive potential. A considerable amount of research work is already under way both within my Department and by a number of independent research organisations acting under Ministry funding to ensure that we get the right solution.

In the meantime, we shall do whatever we can to ease the burdens on those farmers affected and will keep the mark-and-release scheme under continuous review. Operation of live monitoring equipment should now reduce to a minimum the number of sheep that need marking. In this way we should be able to ensure that any price blight will be minimised and the marketing pattern for sheep in the area concerned returned to normal as soon as possible.

Finally, I pay tribute to the farmers in Cumbria, Scotland and Wales who have co-operated with the Government on the introduction and implementation of the controls which were brought into effect through no fault of theirs.

I remind the House that we have an absolutely prime duty to care for the health of the nation and it must be in the farmers' own interest to recognise that prime duty. If there were any possibility that the Government had acted in any way which was not putting that duty first, considerably more damage would have been done to farmers and to the production of lambs. It is not easy to draw up regulations, They are the product of many months of work and on them depend the lives and livelihoods of many men and their families. For that reason, the actions taken depended very much on the co-operation of the farmers and the actions were taken in circumstances in which they were bewildered and worried about an accident the like of which we had not had before.

I hope that no one has ever accused me of any kind of complacency. The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) will know that I have Sizewell A and the putative Sizewell B in my constituency and can never be complacent about nuclear power or the possibility of nuclear accidents. The one thing in which we can take a pride is that when the facts were fully expressed and despite the actions of those who wanted to make more of them for all sorts of reasons, we were able to carry on a sensible and rational approach with the support of the farmers. We were able to do that with remarkably little, although some, anxiety and did not have the sort of panic which could so easily have arisen. Throughout, people recognised that food produced and presented on the market was absolutely safe for consumption. They recognised that no one needed to take any special measures about diet and knew that that was because of the action of the Government and the farmers and because of the carefully planned arrangements for monitoring and for taking action. That is a tribute to the large number of people who worked together to make such a situation possible.

We have to learn from this that things may not always turn out as plans predict. Every circumstance will be different. I hope that this sort of thing will never happen again, but we must be prepared for such events. If it did happen again — or if some other kind of accident of a parallel nature happened from a source other than nuclear energy — the shape of the cloud, the movement of the wind, the distribution of rain and the land and soil upon which the fallout took place would all introduce different factors. Even with the experience that we have had, there is no way in which we can predict how best to approach that.

Because we had to go through this difficult period we now know a good deal more. What is more, we have shown that the broad base of the system is satisfactory. What we have done and what we must now do formally is to ensure that all the lessons we can learn are learnt.

That process will go on until the last restriction is lifted and the last alteration is faced. We must learn those lessons so that we can continue to have a society in which by freely admitting the extent of a situation and clearly stating the dangers and the action that we are taking we can ensure that the population can have confidence in the pronouncements of the Government and of scientists. That alone will give people the chance to get through such a difficult period without the sort of panic that some people expected to happen.

10.35 am

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): I should like to thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for taking all these orders together. It has long been one of my ambitions to have a say in Scottish legislation, and your action has enabled me to achieve that ambition. I should like to express my thanks to the technical staff in the Ministry who, as the Minister said, worked long hours unceasingly. The best way in which we can express our gratitude is to make quite sure that the administrative and legislative framework in which they act is as good as possible. That is part of our job in this debate.

Secondly, I express my admiration for the way in which farmers accepted this event and adapted and responded to it. They showed remarkable restraint. I was about to say that farmers adopted a stoical attitude, but that was not always so, as I discovered when I spoke to worried people in Wales. They accepted and adapted to the situation in a remarkable way. We must never forget—the Minister did not, but I do not think sufficient attention was paid to it—that farmers' livelihoods were affected and that at one stage the future of their farms was in the balance. I hope that economic prospects are a bit better for them now, but for a long time they were worried people, not least because they were borrowing at absurd rates of interest which are likely to rise.

Not the least of our problems is the parliamentary procedure for debating this incident and its aftermath. As the Minister fairly said, the orders were made in late June and here we are debating them in late October. I say we are debating them, but that is not strictly true. This week it has not been easy to find out what we were to debate this morning. I first tried the House authorities and drew a blank. I then approached my side of the usual channels, my side being the riparian owners of my side of the usual channels, but they did not know either. They approached the Government side and matters became even more alarming because they did not know which orders were to be debated. It was only when the Ministry was approached that the orders to be debated were specified.

We are not debating the original orders because in many cases they no longer exist. We are debating their grandchildren and great-grandchildren and often much more distant offspring. For example, one of the orders before us, I think it is the Scottish order, is described as the No. 8 order. Orders have come into existence and have been amended and died without the House ever having considered them. It could be said that the reason for that is unfortunate timing. It was close to the Recess and we had a month and the emergency was to deal with other issues. It could be said that that was the main reason, but whatever the reason it has precluded the House from voicing the fears of people who are intimately involved. I recognise that that is far less important than the compensation and the protection for those whose livelihood is affected, but part of that protection is that we scrutinise regulations to test their adequacy. I hope that one of the lessons that we will bear in mind for the future is the importance of the adequacy of the arrangements for parliamentary scrutiny.

As the Minister said, this is not the first time that we have considered at least the framework in which such happenings occur. I was involved in the passage through the House of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985. At that time Ministers were adamant that compensation was completely covered by two factors. The first was the principle that the polluter pays and the second was insurance. At that time we urged the Government to set up a national compensation fund as a fallback. There was a long debate about insurance. I want to give the Minister who opened the debate an easy ride, but I will give the Minister who is winding up the most difficult question. How many of the people affected had insurance or were able to insure against that happening? We were pooh-poohed when we said that it was an uninsurable risk, even though various insurance bodies had said that.

Under international law, surely the country of origin of the incident — in this case the Soviet Union — is responsible for paying compensation. However, there appears to be no prospect of it doing so. I want to predicate an event that I hope will never occur and which must be avoided by all means. What would happen if a French nuclear power station had an incident similar to that at Chernobyl? Would the Government take the view that farmers should sue France in the international court? Would the Government sue France? Would the Government once again provide compensation for farmers?

After the incident at Chernobyl, the fine principle about the polluter having to pay came to nothing and the Government had to set up their own compensation fund. I am glad that they did so, but I want to be quite clear on how much of the philosophy of the 1985 Act must now be jettisoned. An agreement should be established now, so that in any future incident either the principle that the polluter must pay is applied or a compensation fund is made available.

Is there not a case for an international agreement, as wide as possible, to cover such contingencies? Should it not establish the responsibility of national Governments to provide compensation when incidents within their countries contaminate other countries? Are the Government pressing for such an agreement, or is Britain's susceptibility and tenderness on the question of acid rain precluding that?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman's last comment is certainly not true. We are currently discussing these matters with all of the countries involved. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that one important matter is the original notification and details of any accident. The Soviet Union is a closed regime where there is no real public opinion and no real ability to question. Therefore, there is no questioning of the initial placing of a nuclear power station, its building or its safety mechanisms. There are no regular articles in *The Guardian* discussing how these matters should be handled; there are no Friends of the Earth arguing whether there should even be nuclear power plants.

That is why I made the distinction about the date of the accident and the date when we picked up the information

[Mr. Gummer]

—we picked it up; we were not told. Our primary concern has been to ensure that a better vehicle for information is established. The Soviet Union has moved some considerable way to meet that objective—as it has had to do under international pressure.

The other issues all predicate upon one point. We have reserved our position on whether the Soviet Union will be required—as it should be if the case is proved—to pay compensation. Whatever comes out of the discussions, whether or not the Soviet Union pays up and whether we have an international agreement, the crucial point for the British farmer is that he knows that compensation is not dependent upon long-winded international discussions. After Chernobyl, the farmers needed to know that compensation would be dealt with immediately.

Mr. John: I entirely accept the right hon. Gentleman's last point. It is a pity that the excessively theoretical approach of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 about relying on the polluter paying plus any insurance proved to be the source of a great deal of worry —even in advance of Chernobyl.

Like the Minister, I hope that the Soviet regime—which is showing a more refreshing openness about incidents that previously would have been kept hidden from the international gaze—will feel able to release information on disasters promptly and widely. The sinking of the nuclear submarine is an example of its change of heart, and I hope that that continues. Nevertheless, we need a framework of compensation for the future. The current scheme, although it is comprehensive, is ad hoc. I hope that we and other countries will together consider what can be done for the future.

Although I concede that in the latter stages of the incident the position very much improved, I do not think that the Minister's description of everything having run smoothly at Government level from the start is a fair reflection of what happened. The Government were caught on the hop and there was considerable confusion and chaos. Many lessons were learnt and we must ensure that they are applied in future——

Mr. Gummer *rose*——

Mr. John: I shall not give way. The right hon. Gentleman made a three-minute intervention in my speech, having already spoken for well over half an hour. He must listen occasionally. He cannot have the last word, the last but one word and the word before that. If he listens he may pick up a scintilla of information that he does not already possess and that might be helpful to him.

The Minister did not take part in the debate on the 1985 Act, so I can tell him that it proceeded very much on the basis that we were discussing a domestic nuclear incident. We discussed areas of land close to nuclear power stations that would be affected. As the Minister conceded, Chernobyl threw up a different position because the contamination came from outside Britain and initially was not specific to any area. The Department of the Environment, which was originally nominated as the lead department, did not handle matters well. One problem was that it did not have the same familiarity as MAFF with procedures for communicating with farmers. I am actually giving the Minister a plug for his Department, so I do not know why he is looking so choleric. When MAFF became the lead Department the position improved. When something happens for the first time, it is a learning process for the future. We are now assessing what happened. Several Departments, along with the National Radiological Protection Board, had unclear remits. In future we must avoid such contradictory and confusing information.

The Government have launched an internal review of procedures that is due to report before the end of the month. Indeed, it may even be on Ministers' desks already. I urge the Minister to publish the report in some suitable form so that the whole country will know the lessons that have been learnt and what we propose for the future. The European Commission recently proposed common European procedures to deal with nuclear accidents. That is superficially attractive, but I do not know whether it is just a pious hope rather than a worked-out scheme. The Government do not appear to be too receptive to the proposal. Will the Minister address himself to that point when he replies and inform us of the Government's attitude to the European proposal?

We have to deal with the time scale. I understand the question of the radiocaesium and the time scale that affects it as opposed to that which affects iodine. However, the contamination reached us on 2 and 3 May, but the order was made on 20 June. That seems a long delay, particularly as there were stories in the press about high radiation levels for about three or four weeks before the order was made. Therefore, we have to ask whether the restrictions could have been made sooner. I assume that the Ministry is satisfied that no contaminated lamb got into the food chain, but nevertheless if restrictions are to be made, the sooner the better in such incidents.

With hindsight, we realise that it would also have been better if the Government had been more frank with the industry when the restrictions were imposed. The idea was given that this was a short-term matter and the situation would soon be back to normal. It would have helped farmers had they known the length of time that the restrictions might have been in effect, because they would have been able to make arrangements to cope better.

The point raised by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) about how long the order will last is important, and needs to be dealt with. In certain areas, levels are dropping more slowly than had been anticipated, as the Minister said. A number of people have been given a voice by the hon. Member for Caernarfon. They feel that these restrictions will be in existence in some areas well into 1987. The Minister did not answer the question about how long the restrictions would be in place. One always hopes that such restrictions will be short-term and that there will be more amending orders and more farms being taken out of the restriction zones as quickly as possible. We must know whether it is likely that another three, four, five or six months may be involved.

What plans do the Government have if such areas are to remain under restriction for next year? Do they plan anything about the sheep and the effect on grazing areas? There will come a time when the Government will be invited to cut their losses and slaughter and dispose of sheep that are still above the safety limit. Those questions must be answered frankly if we are to know what the future holds. What advice are the Government to give farmers about grazing?

Despite the Minister's talk of alarmism, I must raise what reputable agriculturalists such as Professor John

Bryn Owen of Bangor have been raising about the long-term possible genetic effects on sheep. I do not know the truth of this. I was excluded even from O-level classes in biology, never mind the rarified levels in which these debates are conducted. Serious problems are being raised, and the *Farmers Weekly* carried an item about them recently. I should like the Government to assure me that they will monitor the long-term effects of this kind so that we shall know whether there have been effects. The Minister did not concede that in his encomium of openness. Nothing will be gained by hiding long-term genetic defects and I hope that monitoring will continue.

Contamination of silage affects cattle rather than sheep. Again, the Government have given reassurances that it can safely be fed to animals. I presume from that that the Government are satisfied that no risk is involved. Again, a continuing monitoring process would be helpful.

Compensation is dealt with in three different ways—the original fat lamb scheme, the compensation associated with market release and, now, agreed only on 7 October, compensation for direct losses. The farmers' unions to which I have spoken are reasonably happy with the final package, although on the third element, being paid on a headage basis will mean rough-and-ready justice. It is justified because individual assessment on a farm-by-farm basis would be a difficult and lengthy process.

However, the farmers' unions are critical about the way in which the Ministry has dragged its feet about these matters. First, there was a reluctance to accept that compensation was justified, and then the principle of compensation for direct losses took a long time to agree. As the restrictions impinged on the commercial activities of farmers, and they readily accepted it, should not the Government have responded in the same spirit by offering a realistic compensation package at an earlier stage? I hope that a Government compensation scheme will be clearly in place, and will leave no one in any doubt that, should, unfortunately, people be affected by another such instance, they will be financially indemnified from the consequences.

For how long will compensation provisions continue? Can the Minister give us an assurance that, as long as farmers continue to suffer indentifiable losses as a result of the Chernobyl disaster, they will be compensated for those losses? For example, if it turns out that there are long-term genetic effects, or a loss of fertility, will compensation be paid? That is important.

I hope my speech has not criticised in a partisan way or carped about the deficiencies, but the job of the House is to learn from experience so that the future is better safeguarded. If the Minister answers my questions, we shall have taken some steps towards doing that.

10.57 am

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): I am sure that the House will wish to thank my right hon. Friend the Minister for his exposition. I wish to associate myself with his remarks and those made by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) in thanking not only the staff for dealing with the emergency when it arose but the farmers who had to bear the brunt. I also express the thanks of the House to consumers, who had a deal to contend with, partly as a result of the campaign in the media which tended towards hysteria, particularly in those portions of the press which rely more on pictures than on words for appeal. The people responded in a placid manner, and that is to be welcomed. Consumers have a voice in this debate and as I represent no farmers I shall speak for them.

I associate myself with many of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Pontypridd, but I rather parted company with him when he referred to chaos and the Government being caught on the hop, and made other remarks that nearly brought my right hon. Friend the Minister to his feet, but he was pushed back. That is not a fair reflection on the way in which the matter was dealt with. The speed with which the Government responded to an emergency that they could never have predicted, far away in the Soviet Union, is a remarkable achievement.

The order relating to England speaks specifically about Cumbria. I want my right hon. Friend the Minister to make it clear that the reason for the place of Cumbria in the order has nothing to do with Sellafield. I mentioned the media's attitude to these matters. Unfortunately, there has been a tendency to hint that the presence of Sellafield in the part of Cumbria which is affected by this order may be the reason for its continuation as a restricted area. That is an unfortunate suggestion, and I hope that the Minister will make it abundantly clear that this order relates only to the after-effects of the Chernobyl disaster, not to any activities by British Nuclear Fuels plc at Sellafield. It has its own problems, and it is right that those problems are clearly dissociated from the problems that we are discussing today.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): I assure my hon. Friend that that is precisely the case. These orders are limited to the after-effects of Chernobyl.

Mr. Coombs: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for that assurance. It is important that that should be put on the record, because some people will still insist that the opposite is the case. Only by continuing to state that fact can we hope to give the lie to remarks that are sometimes made outside the House.

Mr. Wigley: Do the hon. Gentleman and the Minister accept that we should monitor the total radiation that affects animals? To the extent that radiation from civil nuclear power stations may contribute to that total radiation, as has been shown in the case of the fish in Trawsfynydd lake, it must be taken into account together with anything that comes from Chernobyl.

Mr. Coombs: I am not sure whether my hon. Friend would wish to take responsibility for dealing with that question, which lies well outside his brief, but from my experience and knowledge of the matter, I assure the hon. Member for Caernarfon that that is indeed the case. There is continual monitoring in the area around Sellafield. Indeed, it has been established that if a man were to eat 50 tonnes of whelks from Morecambe bay in one year, he might be slightly ill, but it is hard to say whether it would be as a result of radioactivity or as a result of overeating.

My hon. Friend the Minister has dealt with my first point, and I need not press him for any further comments when he replies to the debate.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State did not say, when he opened the debate, whether there had been any prosecutions under the orders which are supplanted by those before the House today. It might be helpful to know whether the proposals in the previous orders have had to be put into effect by way of prosecution.

[Mr. Coombs]

I wish to reinforce the remarks of the hon. Member for Pontypridd on compensation and the maintenance by the Government of their efforts to ensure that compensation is considered as an international matter. It cannot be right that the British taxpayer should shoulder the burden for an affair which is in no sense the responsibility of the British Government or people. I am sure that my hon. friend the Minister will give that assurance to the House when he replies to the debate and that the Government will be unceasing in their efforts to ensure that there is adequate compensation, as a matter of international agreement, when this affair comes to an end.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State said that 4 million sheep were initially affected by the orders, and that the figure is now down to 300,000 sheep. That is to be welcomed, but it would be wrong for the Government to be tempted to remove the restrictions a moment sooner than was safe for the British people, especially in relation to the lamb which they might eat at a later stage. I entirely sympathise with hon. Members who represent the areas seriously affected by the orders, and for their sake I can only hope that the restrictions will be lifted soon. But at a time when it is clear that the orders must continue, at least for the foreseeable future, it would be wrong for hon. Members to press for a commitment which might put the Government in an invidious position later. We are debating public health. Public health must be the paramount consideration for the Government and the House.

It is probably too early to go too deeply into the lessons that can be learnt from the affair, but I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say whether he believes that lessons can be learnt about the position of lowland areas. Clearly, we shall learn much about the biological impact on the uplands, which will be extremely valuable, but it is important to those of us who represent the bulk of the United Kingdom to know whether similar lessons can be learnt from Chernobyl. I hope that my hon. Friend will comment on that when he replies.

11.5 am

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I am glad that this debate is taking place. We have had far too little debate on this serious issue, which has been especially serious in the county of Gwynedd, which is home to a large proportion of the sheep that are still restricted. It is unfortunate that we do not have a larger attendance in the House this morning. I should have though that such a subject would dictate the presence of more than 10 hon. Members, but I am glad that at least one Member from each of the four parties in Wales is in the Chamber, and I am glad that the Under-Secretary of State for Wales will respond to the debate.

I make it clear at the outset that I have not criticised and I do not criticise the Government for introducing the orders. It was necessary to give complete confidence to domestic consumers and those abroad, who are an important part of the sheep market, that the Government would take all the steps necessary to maintain safety for the general public. I also underline the congratulations and thanks that have been given to those who have undertaken considerable hard work over long hours in this matter.

The Minister of State should have given even greater thanks to the farmers than he did, because farmers have abided by the restrictions in a remarkable way, despite the great difficulties that many of them have faced. Not one instance has been reported of a farmer infringing the restrictions. That is something for which they deserve considerable thanks and congratulations. In that context, perhaps they were justified in wanting to know more about what was going on and wanting more coherent information at an earlier date. Although the compensation package is now broadly acceptable — some details still cause problems — even as late as 18 September the National Farmers Union issued a press statement entitled

"Government sheep scheme a shambles."

That shows the uncertainty that existed for several months after the problems arose.

There is also a question about the degree of safety since the Chernobyl disaster. We must not only monitor what has happened at Chernobyl, but must keep a close eye on what happens in our nuclear industry. Some people with a scientific background who are in a position to know suggest that dangers arise from our nuclear industry. We should always bear that in mind.

I am not sure whether we should take the line that the Soviet Union should be taken to court and made to pay compensation. I disagree with hon. Members on both sides of the House about that. The Russian people have suffered enough and have had to pay an enormous price for their suffering. If we continued to say that those who caused the disaster should pay for it and we take the Soviet Union to court, where would we stand in relation to the difficulties that we have caused to the Scandinavian countries because of our contribution to the acid rain problem? I would advise caution on that.

Mr. John: I was merely seeking to point out the inadequacy of the principle that the polluter must pay. I was not advocating a court action. My two points were that there should be Government compensation and an international agreement.

Mr. Wigley: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is difficult to enforce the principle that the polluter must pay and we need greater international co-operation on pollution matters, particularly those relating to radioactive pollution. The conference in Vienna on 25 August was satisfactory and open. The delegates from Wales were impressed by the openness shown by the Soviet Union at that conference. We must build on that for the future.

We should not be too complacent about how public health could have been affected by the Chernobyl incident and we ought to note the comments of some people on the scientific side. A *New Scientist* article entitled "How Ministers misled Britain about Chernobyl", written by Mr. David Webster, who has been an adviser to our Select Committee on the Environment, aroused considerable attention and led to a leading article in the magazine. The leader said:

"While the National Radiological Protection Board was advising the government on the likely health effects of the accident, ministers were making misleading statements to the public . . . Kenneth Baker, the environment secretary, claimed that there would be no risk to health in Britain. Perhaps Mr. Baker does not count 'a few tens' of deaths, the NRPB's first estimates, as a health risk.

When ministers make such stupid statements, is it any wonder that people do not believe them when they claim that it is safe to build nuclear power stations?"

That needs to be put on the record. We should not be alarmist, but nothing will be lost if we admit openly that

when there is an increase in radiation there will be greater risks and some people will suffer. That is unfortunate, but it is a matter of fact and we should not try to hide from it.

The NFU briefing to hon. Members on today's debate says:

"the Government must now make clear that the high levels of radio activity measured are exclusively the result of the Chernobyl accident, and not linked to nuclear power stations in the area."

In view of the radioactivity levels in fish to which I referred in an intervention, we need to monitor and identify, as far as we can, what radioactivity is directly associated with the Chernobyl accident and how much is general background radioactivity. If some radioactivity is identified with our nuclear power stations programme that should also be identified. Such a breakdown of information would make it easier for us to have confidence.

The Government clearly did not expect the restrictions to last for so long. I quoted in another intervention the comments of the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson), who suggested that I had made alarmist comments in the debate on 24 July when I referred to reports that the restrictions might have to continue for another six months. In fact, there is every likelihood that the restrictions will continue for another six or nine months. It would be useful if the Government acknowledged that that could be so in some areas.

Figures on radioactivity levels have been published, and the Government figures for Gwynedd a couple of weeks ago referred to 2,200 bq/kg of caesium in lamb. One farmer in my constituency said that he had a level of 4,000 bq/kg on his farm. If it takes 70 to 90 days for radioactivity to halve its intensity, it will take nearly three months for the level on that man's farm to fall to 2,000 bq/kg, another three months to halve to 1,000 bq/kg and nearly another three months to fall to 600 bq/kg, which is the safe level that the Government look for to clear areas. If that is the case, let us be open about it and admit that a limited number of people may be in that position. It would have been much more satisfactory if that had been done at the start.

There have been criticisms about the delays that occurred in the testing for radioactivity. We must avoid that mistake at all costs. We are on new ground and there have been helpful technological developments so that if, God forbid, a similar accident happened in the future, we would be in a stronger position.

There also appear to have been delays in communications between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Welsh Office in May. Following replies to correspondence after the debate on 24 July, I am far from satisfied, that we were ready to act as quickly as we should have acted in Wales. I do not believe for one moment that the public have been endangered, but we need to examine how we can act more quickly.

I underline, as I do every time that I speak on this subject, that I do not believe that there is any danger to people who eat lamb. Steps have been taken and there is confidence. I encourage the public not to be misled by alarmist stories that suggest that there are dangers in the lamb in shops. I do not believe that.

We need machinery for monitoring live sheep as quickly as possible. If that had been done this year we could have reacted quickly to move animals without causing great difficulties for farmers. There have been difficulties. Some farmers have moved their sheep just before the restrictions were introduced. Some sheep were moved in preparation for being taken to market and I know one farmer who moved his sheep a few miles inland. Those sheep were locked in for weeks.

The traditional pattern in agriculture in Wales is that sheep spend the summer on the high land and come down to the low land in the winter. The Minister of State gave the impression that sheep would remain on the high ground throughout the winter. Many sheep would have been moved for the winter and the fact that that could not be done involved farmers in considerable costs. Many do not believe that they have been adequately compensated for their loss.

Farmers who did not take their lambs to market within three weeks of the ending of the ban are suffering. Many just did not know what to do at that time. They were afraid that markets would be flooded with a glut of animals and were unsure about how things would work out. Some were under other agricultural pressures and did not realise that the three-week period would be critical. It would be unfair if they missed out on compensation.

The Farmers Union of Wales suggested that a buy-up and relocation policy would have prevented many of the problems that occurred. Under such a policy the Government would have bought store lambs from the affected areas, taken them to graze in areas where radiation levels were lower and recouped the money spent on buying lambs and paying for grazing by selling the animals. The Government should have considered adopting that policy. I hope that it will be on the agenda if similar problems arise in the future.

The fat lamb compensation appears to be adequate. The mark and release scheme was introduced to release pressure in other areas, but between 19 and 25 August the system was a shambles. Farmers experienced considerable difficulties. It was 11 September before the situation was put right, following discussions with the Secretary of State for Wales and no compensation has been paid to farmers who suffered from the confusion that arose. That point should be looked into.

I turn to the direct losses. The headage payment had to be accepted not because it was the best way of paying compensation but because assessing the compensation due on an individual basis, which would have been much fairer, would have taken a year to 18 months, and there would have been cash flow difficulties. Thus, there was an element of rough justice, and some people may have missed out.

There is also the allied question of compensation for those farmers who have suffered from the effects of radiation on their silage. The topic was raised earlier, and is obviously directly relevant. The situation has been highly unsatisfactory. Bryn farm in my constituency, three miles from Caernarfon, is farmed by Mr. Peter Sturrock. In late July and early August the level of radiation in the silage was found to be 563 bq/kg. That silage was to be fed to dairy cows which would consume between 40 and 50 kg per day, amounting to between 20,000 and 25,000 bq per head. The farm was initially told that the safety level was 5,000 bq per head per day. In other words, that silage would have contained five times the safe level of radiation. Obviously, the silage was not used to feed the cows. Indeed, a consultant was taken on who worked for five days and who advised the farmer on how to cope.

[Mr. Wigley]

Eventually, about six weeks later, the Welsh Office told the farmer that apparently, as a result of tests done in Germany, the silage was safe and could be used without diluting it by one part in five, as previously advised. But when it was asked whether it was safe to feed dairy cows the silage and to drink the milk there on the farm, as the farmer's familly normally did, there was some hesitancy as to whether it would be safe, undiluted.

Such confusion does not add to confidence. Perhaps the Minister will clarify the situation relating to silage. Why has such uncertainty persisted? A few weeks after saying that the level of radiation was five times too high, how could it be said to be perfectly all right to use? Will the Minister also clarify the reports that employees at the Trawscoed agricultural research centre in Aberystwyth have refused to work with soil because of the level of radiation? Such reports lead to great uncertainty and dissatisfaction, and that does not help anyone.

We must draw lessons from the disaster, so that if there is any difficulty with our nuclear power stations or with those of other countries, we can deal with it more coherently, fairly and quickly. Although a reasonable compensation scheme has been arrived at, we must ensure that those who have missed out because of the rough justice meted out are shown some flexibility. That is necessary if confidence is to be maintained in the industry.

Welsh lamb, in particular, is close to my heart, and I hope that the Government will help to project Welsh lamb and will help the marketing programmes for it so that after this year's hiccups, farmers can look forward to a more confident future, and so put this chapter behind them.

11.23 am

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I support what has been said by the other Opposition Members about the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, but I must first congratulate officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and from the Welsh Office on having worked so hard to establish the facts. A tremendous amount of work was done. Farmers have suffered greviously, but they have adopted a very responsible attitude. They have suffered severely financially and in many other ways, and so they, too, are to be congratulated.

Understandably, farmers have shown great concern from time to time, but we can learn from mistakes in the past so that they do not happen again. When the emergency first arose, officials seemed to be unsure about the working of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985. They were somewhat muddled in their approach at the beginning. In some parts of north Wales the first three days of restrictions were busy days, because lamb is marketed on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Sometimes vehicles were not stopped. Indeed, I refute the suggestion that there was no confusion. There certainly was confusion, and there is some evidence that, as a result of the uncertainty about invoking the Act, problems arose.

Many farmers are unhappy about how the boundaries were drawn for restricted areas. The boundaries did not always follow farm boundaries, but often followed roads and streams instead. As a result, holdings were sometimes split in two. On one farm, half of a flock of sheep was inside the restricted area, while the other half was not. Thus, the Welsh Office did not conduct a very confidence-inspiring operation in that regard.

Some farmers have still not received the results of animals slaughtered as long ago as last May or June. That is a very unsatisfactory state of affairs. There is also some evidence that in the initial period there was not very good communication between the Welsh Office and the county emergency planning officers. As time went on, that problem was ironed out, but once again, a lesson can be drawn.

The frontiers of the restrictions on the movement of lamb and sheep were gradually moved back, and that is understandable. But it led to very slow movement and caused some uncertainty. In future, we should be more precise about announcing what is to happen. I know that that is difficult when one is waiting for the results of tests on lambs, but perhaps a more formal method could be worked out for the future.

There is evidence of price reductions of up to 20p per kg for some lamb sold in parts of north Wales. That means a £3 loss per head for a 15 kg lamb. The marking of lambs has also caused problems. I agree with the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) that on the whole the fat lamb compensation scheme is not too bad but the situation affecting marked lambs, and particularly blue marked lambs, gives rise to concern. They are being held until January, and there is some evidence that farmers with cash flow problems have been forced to sell to dealers, even though the lambs cannot be marketed until January. Some of those buying blue marked lambs will make a tremendous profit, because farmers have had to sell them at very low prices. That is unhealthy, as the money should clearly have gone to the primary producers.

There is still a feeling that compensation should have been paid on a weekly basis. The arguments have been exercised as to why, on an individual farm basis, that would have taken a long time to sort out. Perhaps the element of rough justice that has been mentioned must stand in this case.

I ask the Minister whether any lambs were tested in the areas affected before the disaster occurred in early May. If any lambs were tested as a matter of routine, are results available with which we can compare post-Chernobyl results? I do not know whether such work has been done, but it would be useful to know whether it was and whether any information is available.

We in Wales are concerned about the problems of marketing and, in more recent times, the collapse of Welsh Quality Lamb, which was a sad case. There is no doubt that the delay in the marketing of lambs in north Wales must have been a contributory factor in the collapse of Welsh Quality Lamb. Obviously it is difficult to put one's finger precisely on how the disaster affected that organisation, but clearly it did. There may have been a case for the Welsh Office giving direct support to Welsh Quality Lamb to keep it going through a difficult period. The difficulties that exist between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment have been mentioned.

The orders before us relate to lamb. However, I shall make some general comments as I feel that we have some lessons to learn for the future. I believe that access to information should be automatic and accessible from the start of any like emergency. From some of the comments made this morning, that was not the case in this instance.

There are problems of regional differences and inconsistencies. I believe that tests should take place in all areas —perhaps that was done in this case, but it was not always made clear—and the results should be published over the period of the emergency for all areas so that we can have a factual discussion and some confidence in the results regarding the production of food in unaffected areas. The information published was not clear enough. There needs to be better communication in the form of leaflets as well as the press information that was given out at the time.

I believe that there should be uniform standards throughout the EEC, and perhaps over wider areas than that. There is no doubt that there is evidence that this country's standards are inadequate for measuring radioactivity compared with those of other EEC countries. That needs to be sorted out. On some occasions, co-ordination with local authorities on market restrictions on a regional basis could have been better so that inconsistencies could have been ironed out a little better. Advice for consumers and producers must be concise and informative from the beginning. I have already mentioned the publication of leaflets.

I and many other people are worried about the omission of certain livestock which might be expected to show increased radioactive caesium concentration. For example, at a late stage, fish stocks were identified as a problem area. Perhaps those results were known earlier, but certainly they were not published. That is a worrying matter. Some of the radioactivity levels in fish in the River Conwy were extremely high. I ask whether there have been results from other herbivores in the wild; in other words, were rabbits or hares tested? Clearly, they were also affected by the incident. I am sure that grass samples were tested. They should have been tested — perhaps they were, but we do not know — at different heights of growth, in grazing areas and in grassland.

Mention has been made of the testing of forage and the unknown factors, especially in silage, and even hay, although hay was not badly affected. However, we need better information on silage. Obviously, testing took place on water supplies. That needs to be monitored carefully in future. Milk is well catered for regarding testing, but what about butter, cheese and other milk products made from the milk tested? It was difficult to get blanket testing in this case. We must not forget imports of dairy products from Europe.

There are many lessons to be learnt from the Chernobyl disaster. The farming community has been tolerant. It has suffered seriously financially. Certainly, in terms of cash flow, the incident has been a disaster. There have been problems from a marketing angle. I congratulate those consumers who have stood by lamb as a product and have continued to consume it. They have shown a great deal of sense, and they need our congratulations.

There are many unanswered questions about the incident. We can learn a great deal from it. I hope that in future we shall have a better ordered investigation. I hope that such an incident does not occur again, but we must be prepared for whatever may confront us in future. We must use information wisely and go on our way with confidence.

11.37 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): We have had a constructive debate. Hon. Members from all parties have taken part in debating an issue that has been of great concern to three specific parts of the United Kingdom for many months. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, in opening the debate, gave a detailed background of the chain of events that led to the tabling of the orders. I shall not attempt to repeat that chronological account or to deal with it in terms of the Welsh position except to say that all the steps that he illustrated have been undertaken with equal determination in both Wales and Scotland. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland — the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) — is present for today's debate.

When the ban on movement and slaughter of sheep in north Wales was first imposed on 20 June, it affected 5,100 holdings and 2·1 million sheep throughout north Wales. With the most recent lifting of restrictions on 16 October, around 323 holdings and 143,000 sheep are still affected — less than 10 per cent. of the original total. Throughout that difficult period we moved to lift restrictions as soon as we were in a position to do so. As my right hon. Friend said in opening, we will not keep areas still covered by these orders restricted for a moment longer than necessary.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and others have asked how long the restrictions will continue, and the hon. Gentleman referred to my remarks in the debate that took place on sheep radioactivity on 24 July. The press reports that were flying around at that time were alarmist and suggested that wide restrictions were likely to remain in force for a long time to come, but the events of the summer have shown that those reports were inaccurate. I would not want, however, to say precisely when the final restrictions will be lifted. We are in the business of safety and not that of gazing into crystal balls. As the hon. Member for Caernarfon said, safety has been paramount in the decision to impose restrictions.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) spoke about the procedures of the House. Far be it from me to comment on that, but it would be a sad state of affairs if lengthy procedures were to prevent restrictions being lifted the moment that we were in a position to take that course. Throughout the summer recess we have made announcements that restrictions would be lifted as soon as possible. That has been our response at all times—hence the real change that has taken place since July.

I associate myself with all the tributes that have been paid to the farming community and the farmers' unions, specifically in Wales. They have been involved throughout in consultation processes in respect of compensation and they have done whatever they can to help allay confusion and uncertainty. It is inevitable that both confusion and uncertainty will arise when we find ourselves in the uncharted waters that the Chernobyl incident has produced. The hon. Member for Pontypridd and others have talked about polluters, an issue which I think my right hon. Friend covered in his comments. It is worth reporting that the United Kingdom has reserved its rights in respect of any compensation claims that it might consider making to the Soviet Union. These issues are better discussed in wider international forums so that international agreements can be reached to cover such events in future and more certainty can be introduced than is currently the position.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) emphasised the responsible way in which the

[Mr. Mark Robinson]

farming community reacted at a time of great difficulty. It was important to allay confusion as quickly and constructively as we could. There is no point, however, in jumping the gun and providing incorrect information, which only results in making things worse. I can assure my hon. Friend that we shall be examining the lessons learnt from this unfortunate incident. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will take note of the suggestion that we should consider publishing a report of the conclusions when they are ready.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd said that he was reserving the difficult questions for me. He asked a specific question about insurance and asked me to produce figures. I suspect that he knew that I would not be in a position to produce them. Such insurance policies, if they exist, would inevitably be in the hands of private firms and the statistics would not necessarily be easily available. It is unlikely that farmers took out such insurance, even if they knew of its existence. If they had done so in any numbers, we would not have faced the requirement to provide compensation with which we were confronted. That illustrates that the Chernobyl incident resulted from what insurers like to describe as an "act of God", although the Chernobyl instance was perhaps an act of man.

It has been said that there is a need for openness. I can say categorically that in the aftermath of the Chernobyl incident the Government have done everything possible to provide information to the public. I have a weighty folder with me containing all the information that has been presented over the past months to those concerned in Wales, and this information will continue to be presented.

It has been suggested that incidents such as the Chernobyl disaster are seen in isolation, but that is not so. Our regular monitoring processes were in operation before Chernobyl, and the moment that there were readings showing higher levels of radiocaesium in Wales, we intensified the monitoring activities. Those activities will continue and all the information that is gleaned will be analysed so that comparisons can be made post-Chernobyl with pre-Chernobyl and the time of the disaster.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Can the Minister say whether lamb consumption is back to normal in Wales and in Britain generally?

Mr. Robinson: The figures show that lamb consumption is at a healthy level, especially when compared with consumption last year. One of the reasons for this is that the Government acted swiftly to reassure the market. Ministers have been at pains in all debates and discussions following the Chernobyl incident to emphasise the importance of convincing the public that Welsh lamb and other lamb is safe to eat and is safe in the food chain. The figures show that that has been a successful exercise.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon referred to a paper by Dr. Webster. The paper is based on some fundamental misunderstandings and serious factual errors. The result is unnecessary alarm. The National Radiological Protection Board has already rebutted publicly the arguments that are advanced in the paper and has issued statements that milk is entirely safe to drink. Our tests show that even peak value levels of radioactivity are well below those at which appropriate action should be taken.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) referred to the monitoring of other products, and we have continued the monitoring of agricultural products throughout the recess. The programme has been undertaken throughout the United Kingdom and has not been limited to the areas where we imposed restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep on 20 June. The produce tested includes milk and milk products, cereals, vegetables, fruit, game birds and other meats, and the results confirm that all the foodstuffs produced in the United Kingdom are perfectly safe to eat. In accordance with our policy, we have already published and will continue to publish the results of this monitoring programme.

Various hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor, asked about silage. The issue, which was also raised during the summer was whether any problems were likely to arise from feeding silage with levels of radiocaesium to livestock. That was especially a cause for concern in Wales. As part of the general monitoring programme, agricultural Departments carried out a comprehensive testing of silage, particularly in areas of high deposition, to obtain a full picture of the situation. In north Wales about 400 such tests were made. They confirmed that generally first cut silage produced in the higher deposition areas had been the most affected.

The results have shown some variability between samples with the maximum levels found in silage being 854 bq/kg in north Wales, 302 bq/kg in Cumbria and 454 bq/kg in Scotland. Experimental work carried out by the United Kingdom agriculture Departments, including feeding silage with known levels of radiocaesium to dairy cows to assess the uptake in milk, have confirmed that no problems for human or animal health are likely to arise from feeding silage to livestock and there remains no reason to believe that restrictions will be necessary of the feeding of silage to stock.

Mr. Wigley: Can the Minister clarify whether the Government reconsidered their position during August? If a level of 5,000 bq/kg per head per day was the danger level on 30 July for the farm of Bryn near Caernarfon, why was that regarded as safe by early September? Did new information become available?

Mr. Robinson: Throughout the whole Chernobyl incident we have been constantly reviewing our procedures and ensuring that the information that we were receiving was the information that we needed and that it was accurate. That has been our guiding principle. As every item of public concern has been raised, including this one, we have considered it intensively. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we are satisfied that the results of our research are accurate and that the position is as I have described it in my speech.

Our information is also supported by trials carried out in Germany which involved feeding silage with levels up to 4,000 bq/kg, which is more than four times the levels found in the United Kingdom. The experimental work that we have undertaken and the tests in Germany have shown that, on a daily basis, less than 10 per cent. of the amount of radiocaesium taken in from silage is carried through into milk. The levels of uptake of radiocaesium and radioiodine in milk are well below any level at which any action would need to be considered. The results of our

experimental work will be published in due course. I assure the hon. Member for Caernarfon that reports about silage turning blue are not evidence of radio-iodine.

Chernobyl has focused the public's attention on radiation, and people are rightly concerned for their welfare and for the natural environment in which they live. We wish to do everything possible to meet this concern. That is why we shall continue to publish all the data that we have collected. I am sure that the House welcomed my right hon. Friend's announcement in July that he has arranged for the survey of radiation levels in Wales being carried out by the Atomic Energy Research Establishment to be extended to include data obtained after the Chernobyl accident. This survey, commissioned by the Welsh Office in 1984, was designed to establish a baseline of radioactivity in soil, crops and sewage and the extension will make it possible to assess the impact of the Chernobyl emissions upon these. This is a further example of the Government's responsible approach to the matter.

Mr. Coombs: Before my hon. Friend gets too far into his conclusions, will he deal with the two questions that I put to him? The first is about the number of prosecutions, if any, under the orders previously in existence. The second is about what may be learnt by lowland farmers as opposed to upland farmers from the activities since the Chernobyl disaster.

Mr. Robinson: I was coming to my hon. Friend's first point, but I shall gladly answer him now. There have been no prosecutions. That emphasises the highly responsible way in which farmers throughout the United Kingdom have responded to this difficult situation. Regarding the implications for lowland farmers, we shall monitor all the lessons from the incident and see how they should affect our future policies. In that respect we have heard a great deal about how the Government should have blueprints to deal with these incidents, but any disaster of this scale and nature is bound to produce its own set of circumstances. With the best drafting will in the world it is not possible to cover all the eventualities that may arise.

Our discussions on compensation and why the Government did not do earlier all that they have done rightly formed and important part of the debate. Hon. Members asked why the Government did not produce a comprehensive package instead of announcing three separate stages. The need to provide compensation has evolved as the position has developed. When the initial restrictions were announced nobody knew how long they would last. We have been in constant discussions with the farmers' unions and as a result compensation has been agreed. It is already being claimed and the system is working satisfactorily.

I note the point of the hon. Member for Caernarfon that some farmers may feel that they missed out on compensation because they did not claim it on time. Tremendous publicity has been given to each compensation scheme as and when it has been announced. The farmers' unions have done everything in their power to disseminate information. The schemes are hardship schemes and the reason for time limits on them is to encourage farmers facing genuine hardship to come forward as soon as possible. It is always open to the hon. Gentleman to draw our attention to specific cases in which extra hardship has occurred. If he knows of such cases, I hope that he will write to me about them. Our paramount principle is compensation for direct loss, not incidental loss.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon also mentioned the fears at Trawsgoed. I must point out that they were allayed on the day they were expressed. The advice of the NRPB is that trials undertaken there have posed no hazards to the operators undertaking them.

I remind the House that we faced new problems with the Chernobyl fallout which affected many areas. The Government reacted quickly and restrictions were imposed as soon as there was evidence of radioactivity levels in sheepmeat high enough to cause concern, should they enter the food chain. We have continued to test sheep and other agricultural produce. We have published the results of all the monitoring that has been undertaken and will continue to do so in the future.

That has placed a great strain on civil servants in all the agricultural Departments and I would like to pay my small tribute to all who have worked extra hours to ensure that everything has been implemented as swiftly as possible.

We have adopted a flexible approach to permit farmers in restricted areas to move their sheep, while at the same time ensuring that no sheepmeat enters the food chain until it is absolutely safe to do so. We have introduced fair and equitable compensation schemes for producers affected by the restrictions and we have released areas from restrictions as quickly as it is possible so to do. We shall continue to do that.

In this debate hon. Members have emphasised the importance of monitoring the long-term effects. Once again, I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) that I agree entirely with the sentiments that he has expressed. We are already doing that as we shall publish our conclusions.

The measures that the Government have introduced were necessary, and they remain necessary. I have already said that they have successfully maintained public confidence in the sheepmeat in our shops. After the initial reaction, the demand for lamb has remained buoyant and prices for lamb have remained as steady as one could have expected in the general market conditions. Were it not for the action that the Government have taken and for the wholehearted co-operation of the farmers who were affected, the situation could have been very different. I commend the orders to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibition) (England) (No. 2) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1689), dated 29th September 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th September, be approved.

Resolved,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Wales) (No. 2) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1681), dated 29th September 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 29th September, be approved.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (No. 8) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1574), dated 10th September 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th September, be approved.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Overseas Development

12.1 pm

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): I beg to move,

That the draft International Fund for Agricultural Development (Second Replenishment) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 30th June, be approved.

My I first say how pleased I am to be in a position to move this order today, especially when I had thought that my main appearances at the Dispatch Box this week were going to be during debates on sex education and allied subjects. There is, I am sure, a wise and divine purpose in our affairs. I should also like to say what an honour it is to follow in the footsteps of my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison). He has made, and will continue to make, we all hope, a significant contribution to development matters. He now has a wider canvas for his honest and thoughtful approach to politics.

As the House will know, IFAD is a specialised agency of the United Nations. In several ways it is unique. It was set up following the 1974 world food conference. It began operations in December 1977. Its main objective is to raise more money, on soft terms, to help developing countries to improve their food production systems and related policies and institutions. Its priorities are to increase food production in the poorest food-deficit countries, and to improve as well nutritional standards among the poorest people in these and other countries. It is the only lending body exclusively concerned with these targets. It has specialised in trying to get aid through to peasant communities, and particularly to women, whose role as farmers and traders is so often neglected.

IFAD is unique in another way, too. It was founded, and it functions, on the basis of a partnership between three distinct groups of countries. Each of them holds one third of the voting power and one third of the board of directors. Category I consists of OECD countries, category II of OPEC countries, and category III covers the non-oil exporting developing countries. Its president is traditionally an OPEC country national. Only category III members are eligible for assistance from the fund. With modest administrative and financial resources, IFAD has in the short time of its existence already put its stamp on rural projects worldwide. Up to the end of last year, 28 Commonwealth countries had received from it loans and grants worth about $635 million since the beginning of 1978.

Because IFAD is a partnership, it has always received its funding from contributions negotiated jointly between category I and category II. It started off for the period 1977-80 with $1,024 million, on a burden-sharing ratio of 57 per cent. from OECD countries and 43 per cent. from OPEC countries. Category III members made further contributions of $19 million. The Western donors had always believed that each group should make equal contributions, as each held an equal stake in the institution. This was resisted by OPEC members and in the end — a triumph for pragmatism — a compromise was struck.

The first replenishment of the fund was meant to cover the period 1981-83. This had to be extended as its start was delayed. There were again arguments between category I and category II members about the right balance in their relative contributions. These were hard to resolve. Agreement was eventually reached early in 1982 for a replenishment of $1,100 million, in the ratio of 58 per cent. OECD and 42 per cent. OPEC. Category III members contributed $30 million.

Negotiations for the new second replenishment began in July 1983. They were even more difficult and prolonged. Category II members continued to challenge the concept of the comparative levels of contributions. They also argued that their reduced economic circumstances—the price of oil was falling—justified a smaller share of the funding. Category I members held to their original view that funding should be evenly shared between the two groups. The delay meant that IFAD's resources had to be stretched out again to cover a much reduced regular lending programme in 1985 and part of 1986.

In the end, agreement was reached at the fund's annual meeting in January this year for a replenishment of $460 million, of which $276 million will come from OECD countries and $184 million from OPEC, which is a ratio of 60:40. On top of this, category III countries have pledged about $24 million.

The fall in IFAD's core funding has been dramatic and very disappointing, but its effects will be much reduced if donor members ratify their agreement and make payments promptly. The money will then be committed over two years or so, to the end of 1988, instead of over four years. However, it is very clear that things cannot go on like this. All members have therefore agreed, under section IV of the governors' resolution on the second replenishment, that the president should report to the governing council on IFAD's future financial base. The president has set up a high-level expert group to examine all the relevant issues. I understand that its report will be submitted to the next governing council in December. We then expect to give our initial reactions to its proposals and to take part in detailed discussions over the following months.

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): My hon. Friend mentioned the 58 per cent., now 60 per cent., that is contributed by OECD countries. The OPEC countries claimed that, because of the fall in the price of oil, their contribution should be lower. Their claim was successful. During the next round of negotiations, can the House be assured that discussions will take place not only on the OECD and OPEC contributions to IFAD but also on the proposition that they should be regarded as part of the total overseas aid contributions of individual OECD and OPEC countries? That would reassure many people who feel that the OPEC countries should be playing a much greater part in overseas aid generally, if not through IFAD in particular.

Mr. Patten: I am sure that my hon. Friend's point will be raised in future discussions, together with a number of other proposals—for example, the further fragmentation of IFAD's activities, a point to which I hope to be able to return later.

The discussion that will be taking place from next December will be crucial to the future and to whether IFAD can still realise the original vision of its founders.

The draft statutory order authorises the Secretary of State to pay the British contribution to the new replenishment. If Parliament approves this order we shall contribute over £9 million, which is equivalent to over $13 million at the agreed exchange rate. Our share of the total OECD contribution remains the same as for the last

replenishment, that is about 4·8 per cent. We intend to pay in three instalments, by depositing non-interest bearing promissory notes. The first of the notes has to be deposited within 30 days of our instrument of contribution coming into effect, the second on the anniversary of the entry into effect of the replenishment, and the last by 31 December 1987. We expect them to be encashed over a period of years from about January 1989. The arrangements include provision for other countries to modify their contributions pro rata if one or more donors fail to meet their obligations in full.

To help keep IFAD going while we are waiting for ratification by the necessary number of other contributions, I have decided to release our first year's tranche for commitment as an advance contribution under paragraph 7 of the governors' resolution.

IFAD's special programme for Africa was proposed last year, in the wake of the famine, at a time when finalisation of the replenishment itself was still in doubt. But it was only launched formally this January. It is being financed by pledges which are entirely voluntary, rather than negotiated. Although it has a target of $300 million, only $40 million—already contributed—was needed to start it off. It is restricted to the 24 countries most liable to drought and desertification. It is not financing famine relief, but longer-term development, designed to improve the self-reliance of those it helps. In fact, these activities are practically indistinguishable from IFAD's regular programme in such countries.

Special programmes or trust funds of that kind pose dangers, as I am sure the House will understand, to the integrity of the institutions to which they are attached. They encourage the risk of eventual fragmentation into a range of funds contributed for restricted areas, or restricted purposes, distorting the overall priority which each institution or recipient ought to preserve. They are more costly to administer. As time goes on, donors tend to put more and more money into such funds and less and less into core programmes. We have seen this over the last few years, for example, with the United Nations development programme which has not grown nearly as much as special purpose funds in the United Nations development system.

In the case of IFAD, a voluntary fund of this kind and size also poses clear dangers to the whole system of negotiated contributions, on which the institution is founded. So far, though several Western donors have promised contributions, not one OPEC country has made a pledge to the special programme for Africa. Our own policy is therefore to make contributions to such funds only in very exceptional circumstances.

What is more, we have been giving increasing emphasis to agriculture and food production in our own bilateral programme over the past two years. In 1985 our bilateral aid to agriculture and related activities in Africa totalled £92 million, of which some 90 per cent. went to sub-Saharan countries where the need is greatest. Recent allocations include new commitments of £10 million to the western savannah project in Sudan, and £10 million for rural development in Zimbabwe. We also support research into tropical agriculture through the Overseas Development Administration's scientific units, the Plant Breeding Centre and the international agricultural research centres. In our bilateral programme, we are placing increasing emphasis on long-term agricultural development, and, of course, much of the assistance that we provide in this area has for a number of years been in the form of grants, not loans. It is also reasonable to point out that we make substantial contributions to other multilateral programmes for helping Africa and its agriculture. We are committing £75 million to the World Bank's special facility and £800 million to the latest instalment of the European development fund, much of it for Africa, and, of course, much of it going to agriculture.

Nevertheless, IFAD does face exceptional problems. And there is an obvious need to boost what we are all doing to revive African food production — a point widely recognised outside and inside the House—at a time when so many African Governments have pledged themselves to very far-reaching reforms in their agricultural policies and institutions. I have therefore decided, in addition to our replenishment contribution, to offer IFAD £7 million, or some $10 million, towards the African special programme. This amount, which is more or less what Germany and the United States are at present considering making available, is rather more than we should have expected to pay had the special programme been part of the total replenishment. I am sure that that news will be welcome on both sides of the House.

In making our offer we shall reiterate our very strong concern that the special programme should be incorporated into IFAD's core programme again when the third replenishment comes to be put in place, since we do not believe that it ought to be a permanent and separate operation. I hope the decision to contribute to this special programme will be seen, as it should be, as a reaffirmation of our commitment to strengthening the development of agriculture in the Third world, and particularly in Africa —a commitment manifest in our substantial bilateral and multilateral contributions.

I commend the draft order to the House in the conviction that its approval will help IFAD to continue its profoundly important work, with the full support of the British Government and people.

12.8 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): I congratulate the Minister on his appointment to the important post of Minister for Overseas Development. He comes from a good intellectual stable. Indeed, he almost provokes me to make that remark by wearing the badge of it around his neck and having shared it with him it is a pleasure to see him across the Dispatch Box.

I trust that the Minister will be able to make a major contribution to a change in Government policy towards not only agricultural development but other aspects of development policy. Labour Members would be glad to have the assurance that he will be seeing the Prime Minister a little more often than his predecessor did, and that the fight for development, which in one sense he has started today with his contribution to the special fund, will be continued with a challenge to the downward trend of overseas development assistance as a share of the gross domestic product and a reversal of the cuts in the programme which the Government have taken.

It is important that the IFAD special fund should be supported and we are glad that the Government have been able to come into line with the contributions which have been made by other countries such as Japan, West Germany and others. The question is whether the

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resources will be enough and whether they can at this stage, in any meaningful sense, offset the fall which has taken place so far in IFAD's core funding.

The Minister referred to the fact that not one OPEC country was prepared to contribute to the special programme. That is hardly surprising. The fall in the oil price is devastating enough for this Government's economic policy. But this is a diversified developed economy and most of the OPEC countries are not. Therefore, their resources are more constrained by the fall in the oil price than are those of the other OECD donor countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that the negotiations about the replenishment have been going on for some time and began well before the more recent and substantial fall in the price of oil.

Mr. Holland: I recognise that, but in his statement the Minister mentioned the massive fall in the original target for funding. That cut is not offset even by the special fund contributions. We must take that into account in our evaluation of the Minister's statement.

Earlier this year the Foreign Secretary, in his speech to the special session of the General Assembly on the economic situation in East Africa, said:

"For too many years too little attention has been paid to the most basic need, the production of food. Africa needs adequate, reliable and cheap supplies. Africa has the capacity to feed itself. Yet in Africa hunger persists in many places. That should be an affront to our consciences."

The Foreign Secretary claimed that the short-term situation had improved, but in reality it has not. The short-term position has become worse.

Let us examine the underlying trend and consider the growth in per capital food output in the 24 low-income countries in Africa to which IFAD's contribution is most relevant. Only five of those countries have a negative food growth output in the 1960s but now 18 countries have a negative food output. That is three and a half times the 1960s level.

Of the total African countries, only 10 had negative growth in the 1960s whereas today 28 have negative growth. That is a threefold increase. That increase in terms of need is not reflected in the Government's overall strategy to African agriculture.

The point was well put by Shahid Javed Burki, the director of the World Bank's international relations department in a paper which he presented in Harare. He said:

"The reason for pessimism concerns the prospects of the increasing domestic output of food in the more vulnerable parts of Africa."

Mr. Burki does some simple arithmetic, taking the poorest among the poor countries—Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda. Between 1978 and 1980 those countries produced 14 million tonnes of cereal equivalent which was equal to 80 per cent. of the World Health Organisation requirement. At that level of domestic output, mass starvation would have occurred, so the countries imported 500,000 tonnes of food, equivalent to 5 per cent. of their export earnings. Mr. Burki asks what would happen in the 1990s. If the population increases by 3 per cent. per annum and if food output also increases by 3 per cent., in 1990 they will produce a total of 19 million tonnes, leaving an import balance of 6 million tonnes to avoid famine. That level of importation would be equivalent to 50 per cent. of their projected export earnings.

Thus contributions from the special IFAD fund at a reduced level are simply not enough. They do not take account of the underlying facts and the difficulties of agricultural food production within increasing population growth in several of the poorest countries, not only in Africa but in the rest of the world. Nor do they take account of the overall crisis in sub-Saharan Africa caused by increasing interest rates on debt and falling commodity prices.

That argument was well put by Professor Reginald Green, who is now attached to the university of Sussex. He stresses that, in the 1980s,

"sub-Saharan Africa is characterised by low and falling GDP per capita, rising debt service requirements, declining import capacity and current account deficits. This has resulted in Draconian import cuts leading to what can only be described as import strangulation."

During the period, the terms of trade have massively worsened for these agricultural exporting countries. The estimates made by Mr. Aqarwala for the World Bank are of a deterioration in terms of trade of about 10 per cent. Other estimates, which I believe to be more realistic, reckon that the terms of trade have worsened in recent years by as much as 25 per cent. This means a fall in revenue from export earnings for cash food products combined with a rise in interest rates on the debt.

Until we address the question of IFAD's special contributions in that wider context, its measures will be remedial rather than enable African countries to restructure their underlying agricultural problem.

The issues addressed by IFAD, including the role of women in agricultural development, are welcome. One of IFAD's better features is that it takes its involvement in agricultural development seriously and can go beyond the formal provisions in the Lomé convention so that women can apply directly for agricultural development funds.

In East Africa, on average, women work 40 per cent. more than men but are paid 60 per cent. less. That sexual inequality is recognised. Credit should be given where credit is most due — to women and to women's agricultural co-operatives. Co-operative forms of agricultural development should be supported.

Mozambique has recently experienced a political tragedy which has aggravated the crisis in that front-line state. It has horrendous problems with agricultural development. One of the reasons why the United States Administration is not prepared to give full backing to IFAD is because of IFAD's agricultural development programmes as reflected in Mozambique where the strategy is that of communal village projects for agricultural development or of agricultural extension projects. A communal strategy is necessary, not for ideological reasons, as the United States believes, but because it is the way to provide schools and health posts to serve rural populations on a communal basis. The United States has been giving aid to the small private farmers in Mozambique but has been refusing to support the communal development programme. This is the kind of area where IFAD can play an exceptional role. The tragedy is that the role it is playing is offsetting the negation of public intervention in agriculture on the United States' own support programmes.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Can the hon. Gentleman tell us the extent to which the internal political instability in some of these countries is directly related to their problems? Both sides of the House acknowledge that those countries have severe internal intrinsic problems in agriculture and that if they were to address themselves to improving political stability, they could solve a great number of the problems that the hon. Gentleman describes.

Mr. Holland: I am glad that the hon. Member has asked that question, because it enables me to tell him that the political instability in the front-line states is caused minimally by themselves and to the maximum extent by destabilisation from South Africa. That is well seen, even in the question of how the plane carrying Samora Machel fell out of the sky. It has been estimated in the front-line states that the cost to them of destabilisation of their domestic development by South Africa has been running at $2 billion to $3 billion a year. The indirect cost to their own joint economic cooperation through SADCC and the SADCC conference, even assisted by the Nordic countries, has been massive. If the United States were to play the role that it should be playing in relation to South Africa and if the Reagan Administration were to put their weight behind the sort of view that we have recently seen in the United States Congress, we might get more political stability in the region as a whole and have a chance for a real agricultural development.

Another point is implicit in that which the hon. Member for Stafford said. One of the limitations about the World Bank approach is born-again marketeering, which we see not from Burki's international division within the World Bank, but from its economics division. The United States Administration assumes that only market forces can achieve agricultural development. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to get to his feet rather than make his point from a sedentary position. That is the emphasis that is being given.

I shall not detain the House by outlining the emphasis given to it in the Foreign Secretary's statement during the debate in the UN special session. The fact is that agricultural producers are on the margins of existence and cannot possibly hope to cope with falling commodity prices and high interest rates. Farmers in rural areas are being crucified by the higher debt costs to their countries. They cannot sustain their indigenous agricultural development programmes against a background of falling commodity prices.

The whole cash crop export system is in question. We should not be surprised at that because of the problems of drought. But drought alone would not have caused famine in so many African countries if there had been sufficient support programmes in rural areas to sustain many of the farmers over a period of shortage of rain. Several of us in the House are interested in these issues and are well aware that even in a full drought period a tropical rainstorm can occur. It can last several minutes and bring down tonnes of water which rush down the rivers or the wadis and escape into the soil, simply because steps to provide such basic measures as coffer dams and catchment areas have not been taken. These are the most elementary programmes that can be undertaken to retain water over the long term.

Such problems are being addressed by IFAD. The Minister's declaration of his willingness to support the special fund is welcomed by the Opposition. It brings us into line with other OECD countries, but does so at a far lower level of overall finance than should be the case. The Minister spoke about the way in which the Government have supported overall agricultural development in Africa through their rural development assistance programmes. Overall, the aid allocations have declined from £10 million per annum in 1980 to a much lower average level. Of the £95 million emergency food for Africa programme undertaken by the Government for famine relief, only some £9 million was new money.

The Minister tells us that the Government are giving increasing attention to tropical agricultural support and to the tropical seeds research institutes. It is a pity he has been so badly briefed in this matter. If he had been able during the Recess to read some of the debates in the House, he would have seen that there exists on both sides of the House the gravest anxiety about the cuts his predecessor undertook in that area. If he increases programmes which are already down to less than £1 million or £2 million, then in terms of the needs of Africa as a whole, he might as well be multiplying zero by zero.

A further point in the case for supporting IFAD and one which the Minister has not stressed are the benefits that such action gives to British industry and employment. The point was made by Mr. Jazairi when he was in Britain and saw groups of hon. Members and some individual hon.Members. It is clear that more than 70 per cent. of the United Kingdom's global share from dispersements under IFAD projects has been achieved in sub-Saharan African countries and that more than 85 per cent. of this has resulted only from procurement in projects financed in countries selected for the special programme. To put it simply, the United Kingdom gets back £2 in orders for every £1 it puts into IFAD. That parallels the position stressed by the Sport Aid commercial that the BBC would not run—"Bury the debt and not the dead"—whereby Africa is actually paying back £3 to £4 for every £1 that it receives either in capital contributions or through aid programmes.

I wish to raise a specific and concrete issue concerning agricultural development and disease. Following the drought, the Horn of Africa faces a real problem from locusts. On 21 October, the Minister said that the Government were giving £2·5 million of British aid for locust control and spelt out where that would go. We welcome that special contribution, but are not sure that it is enough. There is a special problem in the Horn of Africa and one of the regions most afflicted by drought is Tigré; the Minster must address himself to that.

The locust invasion has come from outside Tigré—from Eritrea, Sudan and the Arabian peninsula. However, there is an extensive breeding area for the rest of the Horn of Africa now in eastern Tigré, especially in the Danakil plains. The swarms have now reached the hopper stage and are doing extreme damage to pasture lands and crops in the area. Once they begin swarming, they will do untold damage to pasture lands and crops throughout Tigré, Wollo, the rest of Ethiopia ad Eritrea and could also spread to the Sudan.

Because of the political position in Ethiopia—I am sure that the Minister is following my argument closely—the reality is that the Dergue is not allowing the spraying of crops in Tigré in line with the spraying programmes taking place elsewhere. The only weapons at the disposal of the Relief Society of Tigré are sticks and

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branches. It has no pesticides or equipment to launch its own protection operation. The society has made a statement to me, in which it says:

"If no measures are taken within this month the consequences will be worse than the recent famine. People and animals will again start dying within a few months, as they ave no reserves whatsoever to fall back on. Those who survive will once more trek in their hundreds of thousands to Sudan."

What the society asks is what we ask — that the Government will make the strongest possible representations to the Dergue in Ethiopia that such a spraying programme be undertaken. Given the urgency of the matter, I hope that the Minister will make that commitment from the Dispatch Box today. If the spraying programme is undertaken, the Relief Society of Tigré has given an assurance that it will

"co-operate with any measure taken to save crops and lives."

If the Minister ignores this matter, he may find that it hangs around his neck for the remainder of the relatively short time that he holds his office — *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) may laugh, but this is precisely the sort of advance warning of a real tragedy and pest problem in the Horn of Africa that was given to the House about drought during the past two or three years. We had advance warning that, unless this Government, with other Governments, did something through multilateral action about the railway from Port Sudan to Darfur province, the railway would break down and the relief could not get through. The hon. Gentleman does not do himself justice. If this House does not address such issues, it is not fulfilling its role.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I made a speech in the House about the railway. I am not laughing about the serious problem of locusts in the Horn of Africa. I wrote to my hon. Friend the Minister two months ago to ask what we could do, and he will no doubt tell us the figures to show how we have contributed to try to offset those difficulties. However, I am laughing at the hon. Gentleman's suggestions that the Dergue Government and Ethiopia will take any notice of a letter written by my hon. Friend. I suspect the Dergue Government of using the locust and food problems in Tigré to starve those wretched people into submission. I am laughing at the futility of writing that letter. I am also laughing at the suggestion that my hon. Friend will not be long in his office. I hope he is there for a long time, because overseas development will benefit enormously.

Mr. Holland: That intervention is depressing. It means that, faced with such a tragedy, the Government cannot take the multilateral action that the Minister says is the best action in such circumstances. If the hon. Gentleman is right, all we have is talk, talk, and talk again when what we need is action to offset the drought, deprivation, crop disease and death afflicting the Horn of Africa. Will the Minister rise to the challenge? He has been told that he has been sent to the salt mines and, quite rightly, he rejected that. Those of us concerned with development do not consider ourselves to be either in the salt mines or the Siberian power station. We are in the potential power station for global development. What greater challenge can any Minister wish?

However, how will the Minister face up to the challenge and how will he deliver? In the case of the Sudanese railway, which collapsed with such disastrous consequences, putting so many lives at risk, the Minister's predecessor said that we had to work through multilateral agencies and bring our EEC partners with us, because these things take time. However, were this Minister to make available light aircraft flown by our pilots to spray the crops it would be relatively difficult for the Dergue Government to oppose such an operation, certainly with the kind of aircraft it has at its disposal, which are baroque, over-developed technology MiG fighters flying at high altitudes that could have difficulty swatting a light plane.

Why does not the Minister use his imagination? I said that to his predecessor in the case of the Sudan debt crisis. I told him not to play around with the multilateral agencies and that if he wanted to make a mark on behalf of not only his party but the House and the British people, he should cut the Gordian knot and, instead of waiting for multilateral pressure, do something himself. I pointed out that we are a shipping and oil-producing nation, while the Sudan has tremendous problems with fuel and its distribution. I suggested that he should commission a tanker, fill it with fuel and send it to Port Sudan, and then send the bill to the EEC Commission. In the case of the locust crisis in the Horn of Africa, why does not the Minister immediately get on to the Ministry of Defence and ask about the technical feasibility of getting our light aircraft there? They could easily be transported from Port Sudan and start proper spraying.

Mr. Cash: Has not my hon. Friend the Minister, in the short time that he has been in the Ministry, already taken a significant initiative in relation to the European Community? I speak as one who is on the Select Committee on European Legislation, who has noticed this. My hon. Friend's initiative was extremely important, having regard to the utter condemnation by the Court of Auditors about the way in which the EEC Commission operated as regards the food crisis in Africa last year and the year before. My hon. Friend has already taken a significant initiative and deserves congratulations, not strictures.

Mr. Holland: The hon. Gentleman mistook my opening remarks. I have a high regard for this Minister. I saw him when he came to university, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, to start his undergraduate course. It was an excellent intellectual stable, and I am only sorry that the Minister left by the wrong political door. I am challenging, encouraging and urging the Minister to be serious about this.

Such action has been taken before in the drought crisis of the early 1970s, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart), who was then Minister for Overseas Development, got conflicting reports about the nature of the drought in sub-Saharan Africa in Chad, Niger, Mali and Upper Volta, as it then was. She sent me out to see what was going on and make a recommendation in a report. We came back with a simple finding. We needed four-wheel-drive, five to 15-tonne vehicles to get the food out to the areas where the drought was biting hardest and to avoid people having to come to main distribution centres to get the food.

The Minister will have difficulties if he tries to replicate what my right hon. Friend did. No such four-wheel-drive vehicle was to be had on the market. My right hon. Friend got on to the Ministry of Defence and said, "Can you let

me have those vehicles?" The Ministry said, "We cannot spare them." She said, "I will buy them from you at face value. I will replace them if you will let me have them." The result was that, within a few days, those vehicles were being driven across the Sahara to help with the food aid problem.

That is the sort of challenge which the Minister faces in relation to the locust problem in the Horn of Africa. I hope that he will fulfil the promise that he has shown and our high expectations of the role that he can play for development. I hope, especially, that he will start not only with the good measure which he has taken in terms of the contribution to the special fund for IFAD, but by tackling the problem of locusts and crop disease in the Horn of Africa.

12.45 pm

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): I, too, warmly welcome my hon. Friend the Minister to his new Department. I am sure that he will live up to the high expectations held by hon. Members on both sides of the House. If his tenure is short-lived, I hope that that will be due to promotion to the Cabinet in the not-too-distant future, to which he would bring the great advantage of experience of overseas development. That could only be for the good.

I also welcome my hon. Friend's initiatives to date, especially on the special fund. It is vital that we do more for agriculture in our bilateral assistance and our multilateral programmes. To date, I regret that we have been lax on this. To that extent, I agree with the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland). About 24 per cent. of the amount that we give to multilateral agencies goes to agriculture while, as the excellent report written last year by the all-party parliamentary group on overseas development shows, aid to agriculture represents marginally less than 30 per cent. of our total bilateral assistance. That is far too small a proportion when the main challenge in development is assisting recipient countries to develop suitable agriculture — not high technology taken off shelves from western Europe, but suitable technology for them to develop the agriculture best suited to their development programmes and needs.

To that end, I hope that the Minister realises the importance of increasing, not decreasing, United Kingdom manpower to assist in agriculture, especially in Africa. Regrettably, over the years, there has been a major reduction in manpower aid to agriculture in Africa and, indeed, to Africa as a whole. The figures speak for themselves — from 7,402 in 1972 to 4,242 in 1977 and down again to only 1,782 people in 1982. We must reverse that trend to assist the development of agriculture in Africa.

I am delighted that, through the special fund, we shall have an opportunity to increase the proportion of money that we disburse to agriculture, because that sector provides one of our biggest challenges. I am sorry that this has not been mentioned in more depth so far. What we give in aid with one hand we are massively taking away with the other through iniquitous agricultural protection by industrialised countries. Many developing countries have internal political problems that are to the detriment of development, but in developing countries that do not have internal political crisis, development programmes are put in jeopardy as a result of agricultural protectionism in the industrialised world.

Many of these countries are involved in sugar production. Although it is not relevant, perhaps I should declare an interest as I have had a long association with Tate and Lyle. European Community farmers received 18 cents a pound for sugar in 1985. That sugar was dumped on the world market at 5 cents a pound, but the Community continued to buy imported sugar at 18 cents a pound. That sort of subsidy is iniquitous because there is a marginal and comparative advantage for countries in the developing world to produce cane sugar. The United States Government give massive subsidies for irrigation and land clearance projects and then pay farmers not to grow crops on that land. That is another example of subsidisation.

IFAD is in many respects the equivalent of the World Bank's International Development Agency, which works for the poorest countries in the world. The IFAD works in agriculture for the poorest nations and, particularly through its special programmes, for the countries most affected by the sub-Saharan famine.

I hope that the challenge of agricultural problems in sub-Saharan Africa will be taken up following the replenishment and that IFAD will go from strength to strength. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest birth rate in the world, at 3·2 per cent. The population will double in 22 years and quadrauple in 44 years. The population of Ethiopia in 1950 was 18 million; by 2025 it will be 106 million. The population of Nigeria was 40·6 million in 1950; by 2025 it will be 295 million. The population of sub-Saharan Africa, where the special fund will be most important, is 363 million; by 2025 it will be 1·2 billion.

Even the most optimistic growth rate for agricultural development in sub-Saharan Africa — 2·5 per cent. per annum over the next two decades — will not keep up with the projected population increase. That means that there will be even more malnutrition and that the punishing years of famine will become even more frequent unless we take up the challenge of assisting in these areas of development. Those are the facts and the challenges that IFAD must face.

As I said in a sedentary intervention during the speech of the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland), I see more care and attention, not less, being given by IFAD and the World Bank to, among other things, the solutions that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. During part of the summer recess, I worked as a consultant to the World Bank, concentrating on the medium-term economic growth programme for Bolivia, a country with which IFAD is closely involved, and examining its development problems. Much more emphasis is being placed on women in development programmes. That is a vital area which has been overlooked in the past, not least in Africa where women do most agricultural work but take up too few of the training places in colleges. Back in the fields they are much more significant than the ratio of men and women in the colleges would suggest.

Mr. Stuart Holland: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman is pleased that he is giving advice to Bolivia. I trust that the Bolivians are just as pleased.

In terms of the World Bank's economic philosophy and what it is doing, it is not simply a matter of reading the most recent World Bank report, which is a paean of praise for market forces from beginning to end and is one of the most disreputable documents ever published by the World Bank. We must also consider the role played by the Anne

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Kriegels and the Lals of the economic division, who are born-again marketeers. They advocate market solutions for countries where they are irrelevant. They export the south-east Asian model to sub-Saharan Africa, which is about as relevant to the needs of the real world as astrology is to astrophysics. The World Bank should not be operating like that. I trust that the hon. Gentleman has remedied the situation in Bolivia, but it would be a good idea if the World Bank changed its approach too.

Mr. Moynihan: I strongly disagree with the hon. Gentleman and would love to have a lively debate on that point, but I cannot do so now. The economics division has projected market forces as an important concomitant to the sort of approach that I have been pursuing and considerable attention is being given to it in the projects department. It represents appropriate technology and is working well in the agriculture sector in respect of colonisation programmes, as they are called in south America, smallholder schemes, and so on. Such work, along with credit programmes for rural farmers, is important. I am delighted to report that it is now being actively pursued by the World Bank. I hope that more will be done, as it represents an important part-solution to the problems of agriculture in the developing world.

Perhaps I can underpin my remarks by explaining why I believe IFAD is an appropriate vehicle for development. Before I became a Member of Parliament, I worked with that body and I know at first hand just how efficient it is in the implementation of programmes and in its operations. It is not a fat and over-bureaucratised organisation, as some might argue that UNESCO is. Thus, it is inappropriate to say that it is inefficient or in need of modernisation. It is a very efficient tool.

IFAD also addresses the medium and long-term processes of structural reform in agriculture. It recognises that the productive capacity of smallholders must be rehabilitated. The question is how that is to be achieved. It is argued by IFAD that extension services should have a greater role and that their credibility should be enhanced. It is also argued that credit services should be allowed to work with and through the private sector, and that much more emphasis should be placed on traditional agricultural production. In other words, one should be looking for market opportunities for such products of sub-Saharan Africa as cassava, millet, sorghum, and yam. It is argued that they should be developed, rather than concentrating—as other bilateral donors have done—on crops that are primarily geared to export, such as wheat, rice and maize.

Thus IFAD is looking at traditional agricultural production. As it is one of the few agencies to concentrate on that, we should support it. But it has also turned its attention to small-scale irrigation schemes which are appropriate in sub-Saharan Africa. That is important, because world-wide there are too many examples of very large-scale irrigation projects that have not necessarily benefited their recipients. Small-scale irrigation projects, including the provision of wells, are an important feature. I am glad that IFAD has concentrated on them, as they are conducive to agricultural development.

I am also pleased that IFAD has concentrated on soil conservation and on the problems of soil fragility and of conservation-based agriculture. Every year, the world loses a billion trees. Consequently, it is important that we should have at least one major international lending agency that concentrates on conservation-based agricultural policies. IFAD does that, and I welcome it.

One of the great advantages of the Minister's decision to support the special fund is that it will act as a snowball and countries sitting on the fence regarding possible donations to the special fund will come forward and support it as strongly as it should be supported. Unless decisions have overtaken my knowledge, I understand that Australia, New Zealand and Canada have been hesitant about joining the fund. Now that the message has gone out from this House on the special fund, I hope that it will receive further support from those countries and others that have yet to make a decision. In that sense, today's announcement is especially important and appropriate.

In conclusion, I shall give an example of one project that I know well and on which IFAD has concentrated in Bolivia. It is an innovative project. It is recognised that in agricultural extension it is important for the beneficiaries actively to participate in the implementation and planning of projects. Too many projects around the world are imposed on communities without involving them in the initial decision making, planning and project preparation. I welcome the fact that IFAD has taken that initiative and has set up a model project in Bolivia which has had quite remarkable success.

The dispersal of agricultural credit to beneficiaries has already exceeded the original target. A total of 130,000 new plants are growing in an afforestation effort. I mentioned earlier the importance attached to afforestation projects by IFAD. More than 50 fish breeding ponds are in operation. Similar increases in Bolivia have resulted in crops, and incomes have resulted from many other projects of a similar nature in other countries.

It was seeing that project and the work done in Bolivia during the summer that led me strongly to urge the Government to support the special fund. I am delighted that I have not been put in the embarrassing position, as a PPS who is meant to be rigidly attached to the party line, of arguing strongly for this additional income for the fund. I must say that this was somewhat unexpected when it was announced at the Dispatch Box, but if it is a portent of what is to come from my hon. Friend the Minister, I strongly welcome his presence in the House for such debates and I wish him every success in future.

1.2 pm

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): I congratulate the Minister for Overseas Development on his appointment and the well-deserved tribute he paid to his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison). However, I thought that the tribute was a rather back-handed criticism of his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for sacking someone with such an honest and thoughtful approach to politics.

I draw the Minister's attention to a minor error in the draft order. It is an error that rankles with me and, I hope, all hon. Members. There is a spelling error in the draft order which is unforgivable from any Government Department. The spelling of the adjective in the phrase

"one of Her Majesty's principle Secretaries of State"

is incorrect. It should have read "principal". That should have been changed before the order was laid.

The IFAD position, as the Minister described it, is not at all good. While one welcomes his contributions to the

special fund, one must bear in mind that a vastly reduced amount of money will go to agriculture, especially in Africa, through IFAD as a result of the reduction in contributions by OPEC members. The figures that I have been provided with suggest that the total will be only $460 million compared with $1,100 million previously. Any such reduction in the present state of agriculture, especially in Africa, is to be deplored.

One good thing about the second replenishment for IFAD is that it takes place against a change in perception on the part of Governments in Africa about the importance of agriculture in their economic development and economic growth and the fact that many of the policies pursued in the past have not contributed to the welfare of the rural economy or the growth of agricultural production.

I shall quote briefly from the document which the African countries prepared for the United Nations special session on Africa earlier this year. They stated:

"A substantial raising of the level of productivity in all sectors, particularly in agriculture, is the sine qua non for putting the African economies on the road to development."

They continued:

"In any programme of action for African recovery and development, the rehabilitation and development of agriculture demands the highest priority. There is also an urgent need to take fundamental measures to deal with the problems of drought and desertification".

Another passage reads:

"The satisfaction of food requirements for the African people hinges on the rapid reversal of the declining trends of productivity in the rural areas. The alleviation of the problem of growing mass poverty, the capacity to increase foreign exchange earnings and the subsequent dynamization of internal demand forces also depend largely on the rapid improvement of rural incomes and the revitalization of the rural sector."

This is an important document, which shows that there has been a change of heart by all African Governments.

My final quotation from the document reads:

"IFAD's recently established Special Resources for Sub-Saharan Africa should be strongly supported by the international community, and the future financial strength of the institution should be secured."

I heartily welcome, as I know the whole House has, the Minister's announcement that he is reversing the policy announced by his predecessor. We congratulate him on that.

As the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) said, the dimension of the problem, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, is becoming worse. It is sad that, although international attention is more concentrated on the problem, there seems, according to IFAD, to be fewer resources available in total to deal with the problem. The Food and Agriculture Organisation estimated a short time ago that Africa would have to double its food production in the 1980s to have enough to feed itself. It pointed out that Africa is the only part of the world that now grows less food per head of population than it did in 1960. That is a devastating indictment.

Since 1960, food production in Africa has increased by less than 2 per cent. a year, and the growth rate is now falling. The population, however, has grown by well over 2 per cent. a year, and that rate is rising. From 1960 to 1970, the amount of food available to each person in sub-Saharan Africa increased marginally by about 0·1 per cent. each year. Between 1970 and 1980, it fell annually by 1·2 per cent. a year. That is not the position in any other part of the world, so we need to give special attention to Africa. This is not a matter for IFAD and individual donors alone. The World Bank is playing a major part and it is a welcome sign that it, as well as the IFAD, donor Governments and African Governments, is increasingly regarding agriculture as the crucial sector in development.

The new president of the World Bank, Mr. Barber Conable, in an address to the board of governors in Washington on 30 September, said:

"We will regard agricultural development in the poorest nations as central and critical in the battle against poverty."

In "World Bank News" in May there was a special article on economic development in Africa. The article addressed the population dimension, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Lewisham, East, and focused on the connection between population and the need to increase agriculture production. Part of the article talks of

"the threat rapid population growth poses to the natural resource base"—

it is obviously a considerable one—and says:

"Throughout the African continent, natural support systems are under growing strain."

This is not merely, as my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) said from the Opposition Front Bench, because they are threatened by locusts and civil wars.

The paragraph continues:

"In country after country, sustainable yield thresholds of forests and grasslands are being breached. Soil erosion, the loss of soil organic matter, and the depletion of soil nutrients are diminishing land productivity over much of Africa. Although essentially agrarian, African countries are losing the ability to feed themselves. In 1984, approximately 140 million of its 546 million people were fed entirely with grain from abroad."

That proportion is likely to increase between now and the end of the century.

My final quotation from the World Bank report is taken from a memorial lecture given recently in Washington by Mr. Robert McNamara, the former excellent president of the World Bank. He said:

"Altering the economic policy environment in sub-Saharan Africa more in favor of agriculture would dramatically alter the economic scene. It would apportion scarce economic resources more rationally across the economy. It would improve the international competitiveness of the agricultural sector. It would provide incentives to farmers both to produce more, and to produce more efficiently. And it would stimulate more employment, more exports, and more income-earning opportunities."

If anyone understands the problems of Africa and its agriculture, it is Mr. McNamara who spent 12 years as president of the World Bank and a great deal of time visiting African development projects. We must pay great attention to what he says.

I end as I began, congratulating the Minister, welcoming his announcement and hoping that he can persuade his colleagues, especially the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister, that aid to Africa and its agriculture is vital if we are to avoid further crises in that sad continent. We need more aid and more development, both bilateral and multilateral. The Minister has made a good start. We wish him every success in the battles that he will have in his Government to increase the amount of overseas aid.

1.11 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I join hon. Members in warmly welcoming my hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) to his new post as Minister for Overseas Development and I do so in no routine and

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formal way. We know of his excellent record in ministerial office and other capacities and we welcome the strength, deep understanding and compassion that he will bring to debates about some of the poorest people of the world. We welcome the lead that he will give our nation to help those countries to help themselves. He will build on the programme of his predecessor my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), to whom I wish to pay tribute. He fought the battles in the ODA in an unpromising climate within our Government and largely succeeded in reversing a reduction in the ODA budget.

I wish my hon. Friend the Minister good luck in his first battles, which will be on the size of the ODA budget.

I hope that he will be strengthened by our support in convincing the Treasury that we need a larger budget to accommodate the additional resources that he has announced. In spite of advice and pressure not to do so from his Department, his announcement will make money available for IFAD, the special fund for Africa.

IFAD was promoted by the developing countries to find a way of generating money from the oil-rich countries which had huge surpluses in the mid-1970s. It was founded in 1977 with the objective of using those surpluses for the benefit of the poorest people in the world and we should pay those oil-rich countries tribute for that generosity. However, the position has altered dramatically. I welcome the Minister's announcement that serious consideration will be given to how we can carry on with IFAD, given the relative impoverishment of the oil-rich countries which is undermining the basic idea behind the formation of IFAD.

IFAD has established itself in a special role within the United Nation's system of agencies. It has concentrated on the poorest countries and on peasant farming agriculture. Because of the starvation that we have witnessed in the last few years in sub-Saharan Africa, peasant farming is of the greatest importance. Multilateral agencies have been unable to give the kind of attention to it that IFAD has been able to give to it. There was a gap in the system. Quite often it was filled, although sporadically, by bilateral aid. Now IFAD has stepped in to fill that gap. We must find a way to continue that aid and to provide much better finance for peasant farming.

The drop in IFAD's resources from $1,100 million to a pledge of $460 million for the next three-year period is completely inadequate to meet the expanded challenge that IFAD must now confront. The special fund for Africa has tried to redress that shortfall in the context of the 24 poorest countries in Africa, and IFAD's success deserves my hon. Friend's support.

I am worried by my hon. Friend's account of why the ODA is reluctant to respond to special appeals. He said that the UNDP core budget had been reduced because of the special fund that it has launched for Africa. I ask my hon. Friend to examine that statement with care. The British Government have considerably reduced their contributions to the core budget of the United Nations development programme.

The example set by our Government has been followed by other Governments. Thus, the UNDP core budget has been reduced still further. Like IFAD, it is a voluntary fund. That reduction was justifiable in the circumstances connected with the total ODA budget. To argue that, because the core budget has been reduced and the special fund for Africa is in some way connected with it, and therefore is diminishing the core activity of the organisation, is a thorough non sequitur.

The reason for officials advancing that argument to the Minister is the contraction of the bilateral budget of the ODA, compared with its multilateral contributions. That is a direct result of keeping the ODA budget too small.

Of course we must accommodate the multilateral agencies and make contributions to them. In the case of many of those agencies we have to make contributions; contracts and international treaties have been made and we have to provide our proportionate share. That is particularly true of the European Economic Community's budget for overseas development, to which we are obliged to respond in proportion. That is the major cause of the increase in multilateral contributions. In 1979 we contributed 40 per cent. of our total bilateral budget to multilateral institutions. Now our contribution is approaching 60 per cent.

After a budget has been reduced in real terms and then begins to increase in real terms, the bilateral programme is squeezed. Therefore, we must resist any suggestion that we should provide even more money for multilateral aid. My hon. Friend said that it was argued that this represented a distortion of the core funding, that it distorted overall priorities within the programme and that this is a mere rationalisation, resulting from the nature of the problems that confront his Department. I am delighted that my hon. Friend has overruled those arguments and that he has made a contribution of which we can all be proud. I congratulate him on it.

The amount of money that my hon. Friend has contributed is more than just a token, but let me examine the figure. My hon. Friend announced a contribution of 10 million United States dollars, or £7 million, for the special fund. That is half the amount that I understood, after reading the World Development Movement's brief, would be our proportionate share of any special fund.

In addition, my hon. Friend made no reference to the period over which he would expect to contribute that. As I understand it, the social fund is expected to be drawn down over three years and that would mean that the ODA's contribution would be only about £2·3 million per annum. That is not to be sneezed at, but it is a small sum. It may be proportionate to the contribution of the United States and others, but it is a small figure. I urge my hon. Friend to consider whether this is an adequate response to the needs of the special fund. However, I understand, as I have outlined, why he would have difficulty in arguing for a still larger sum. None the less, it is a small figure to deal with the special difficulties with which IFAD is being asked to deal.

Many of the programmes in our bilateral budget are of immense importance. In particular, I welcome the announcement that my hon. Friend is giving additional money to the research being carried out in western Sudan into sub-Saharan African problems of dry farming. There are some significant developments in that area which could transform it. First, it is clear from the research done so far that the wadi bottoms in the desert are capable of being farmed. They retain sub-surface water which could be tapped and could provide the farming necessary to support the much larger populations about which my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) and the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) are deeply concerned.

Unfortunately, the nutrients in that soil are so limited that it is doubtful whether they will be able to support the necessary crops for any length of time. After one, two or three years the nutrients will be absorbed and will not be renewable, leading to the disastrous type of shifting agriculture that has been the traditional practice in the area over the years.

However, there are developments, to which I hope our money is going, which will provide moisture at the roots of the crops and trees being planted in the area which involve injecting into the soil an absorbent material which retains sufficient moisture for plants to absorb the nutrients in the material and to survive, prosper and provide the food needed. That is the sort of investment in rural development in small areas which our bilateral budget is designed for and is supremely able to give. I am delighted that my hon. Friend has seen fit to contribute in that special way.

I do not want to undermine our bilateral budget because it has worthwhile projects which have become more efficient and better focused over the past seven years or so. We owe a great deal to the ODA and people working in it for the quality of their work. As I have made clear, we should be doing even more.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham and the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) have pointed out that, from the IFAD fund, we gain £2 of procurement for every £1 that we contribute, so there is a self-interested motivation for contributing to the special fund. It probably has not escaped my hon. Friend the Minister's attention that if we had not contributed to the special fund we would not have been able to benefit from the procurement under that fund from which, as I have said, we disproportionately benefit.

I want my hon. Friend the Minister to give serious consideration to a fact that I learnt on a recent visit to Washington with the all-party committee on overseas development. The Japanese Government and the Japanese tenderers tender for every contract put out by the United Nations agencies. One wonders how they can do it. To tender for those contracts is an expensive business which involves research and travel. Indeed, the production of the documents is a costly business. The Japanese Government meet all the costs. The Japanese do not benefit from their contributions on a 2:1 basis as we do; they benefit by 13:1. For every Japanese yen put into the World Bank the Japanese draw out 13.

There is a lesson for us. For many reasons, we should support tenders for UN contracts and put them on a level with the Japanese. That could be a potent source of export orders and therefore a means by which we can reduce unemployment here, particularly in your constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it would be involved. Such a scheme would be of mutual benefit to us and to the countries overseas.

I hope that the Minister will take that suggestion up with the Minister for Trade to whom I have written on the subject. We must support our tenderers. I hope that in future we receive more that £2 of procurement for every £1 that we invest.

A parallel fund is that operated by the IDA. That fund has recently been agreed at $11·5 billion — a major reduction on the IDA-6 in real terms, but an increase on the IDA-7. This is too small an amount. To keep up in real terms with the increased call on its resources by China and India, the fund should amount to $20 billion.

The finance director of the World Bank, Mr. Moeen Quereshi, recently said that many of the African countries would not have been excluded from further IMF support because they could not pay the short-term high-interest loans without balance of payments support if a more generous contribution had been made to IDA-7. That would have assisted productive enterprise and prevented the need to import food. That food could have been grown at home with the help of grants and assistance from the IDA.

The IFAD special fund and the IDA fund are too small. Per capita food production in Africa is declining. There is also a net flow of capital and interest payments out of Africa to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the developed countries. Can the world justify taking resources out of such countries without trying to put back more money?

I welcome the Minister's support for the special fund but I hope that he will be able to persuade the powers that be in our Government and elsewhere to offer more support. The Minister has already made progress with the food aid programme within the EEC. I hope that larger funds will be produced domestically and internationally so that these serious problems can be addressed.

1.29 pm

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) because we were together on the recent visit to Washington by the all-party group on overseas development. I agree with some of his comments about that visit. I congratulate the Minister on his appointment. If I have any regrets, they arise from the remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) who suggested that there might be some Balliol collusion. I hope that no such collusion will exist across the Dispatch Boxes. I speak as one who attended a different but no less illustrious college at the same university.

I agree with a number of things that the Minister said. I agree with the decision that he announced and I think that it has had an almost universal welcome in the House. What he has announced may not be enough but the principle behind the decision to contribute to the special fund of IFAD was the right one to make. When the Minister's predecessor was asked about this subject, he said:

> "I agree that the development of agriculture is a high priority throughout the Third world. IFAD does a good job, but I remind my hon. Friend that the more we put into multilateral agencies such as this, the less is available for our own bilateral programme".—[*Official Report*, 2 December 1985; Vol. 88, c.17]

I am afraid it appears that the consequences of the Minister's action are that to that degree there will be less for our own bilateral programme. As the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) said, we need more money. I understand the anxiety in the Department that an ever larger proportion of our aid budget goes to multilateral agencies and that an increasing proportion of that multilateral budget goes to the disgustingly inefficient European development fund and the programmes that it runs. That is sad, because, like the previous Minister, the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), I agree that our bilateral programme is on the whole well run, especially in agriculture, about which I shall say something

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later. But there is a problem and it will eat further into the bilateral programme that Britain is able to mount in the developing world.

I have no doubts about the value of our contribution and I echo many of the congratulatory remarks that have been made about IFAD and its relevance to the problems of agriculture in the Third world, especially the relevance of the special programme that it recently mounted for Africa. Some hon. Members spoke about water conservation and the importance of forestry. I should mention also the emphasis placed on the importance of seeds, implements and fertilisers and the emphasis that is given to traditional crops such as cassava, sorghum and millet in the more vulnerable areas of the African continent.

The fund quite properly emphasises the importance of production in small units by smallholder farmers. For some years there has been an argument about overseas development and about what is and is not real aid. I have become more and more impatient with this argument. It is as though there was special merit in providing for food production as opposed to crop production for export or in placing emphasis on agriculture rather than on infrastructure developments of one kind or another. In many respects these are false arguments because crop production and the production of food by the farmer and his family are of equal and complementary importance to his standard of living. The road that carries the crops out and is used to carry supplies to rural areas is also important. I approve of the road that Britain provided in the Embu and Maru areas of Kenya. That is an example of a road that opens up an area in which there can be increased production of crops for export, which helps Kenya's balance of payments.

The emphasis on smallholder farming is important where it produces both crops and food for the family. In certain more favourable climes it can often produce a variety of crops so that the very diversity that an individual smallholder produces can, to some extent, shield him against fluctuating commodity prices. That is a powerful case.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the most outstanding examples of that is in Kenya, a country that he knows well, where the smallholder tea and coffee plantations also produce cash crops for the markets, and therefore provide food not only for the family but for the wider population in those areas? Those co-operatives were started by the Commonwealth Development Corporation, which comes within my hon. Friend the Minister's Department but which my hon. Friend may not yet have had an opportunity to see.

Mr. Barnett: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention because I, too, wish strongly to recommend to the Minister that he takes an early opportunity to see the tea and coffee production that was originated by the CDC in Kenya. It is now the responsibility of the Tea Development Authority in Kenya. If the Minister has the opportunity to visit that country, I hope that he will also see the Mumias sugar operation that I saw earlier this year. I did not actually visit the factories, but I saw, at a distance, the enormous change that it has made to the whole terrain. I discovered that farm incomes and the general level of prosperity in western Kenya had been considerably enhanced by that development, which can only be good.

It is important to emphasise that so far I have been talking about the relatively well endowed parts of Africa —areas fortunate enough to receive two crops a year because the rainfall pattern makes that possible and where there is a high level of fertility in the soil so that farmers can reap modestly good incomes even with the sort of difficulties mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall arising from the desperate position in which their Governments find themselves with the fluctuating and often falling commodity prices, although Kenya is relatively fortunate in the way in which tea and coffee prices have moved. Nevertheless, it is possible for many farmers to provide for themselves and also to receive a cash income, which makes their position fairly reasonable.

One of the strong points that came out of the report of the all-party parliamentary group on overseas development published just over a year ago was, alas, that, contrary to what the Minister said, Britain does not seem to figure very well in the more vulnerable areas of Africa. When the Minister's predecessor spoke, quite properly, about the value of the British contribution to agriculture in Africa, he sometimes failed to recognise the degree to which the more vulnerable areas were sometimes neglected. If the Minister has not yet had the opportunity to glance at the report, he may be interested in what it says on pages 20 and 21 which refer to the distribution of British aid. At the bottom of page 20 the report states:

> "Rural development expenditures have remained a very low proportion of total spending. In fact, the figure for allocation — rather than expenditures — shows an even sharper decline from £3·7 million in 1979 and £10 million in 1980 to under £0·2 million in 1984."

Those are the areas about which we need to be concerned. We need to find more money for the more difficult matter of rural development in the vulnerable areas. That is more difficult and it takes longer—it may take five, 10 or 15 years before one is able to restore the position in areas that were vulnerable in the recent famine.

In that connection, I hope that the Minister will look carefully during his first few months in office at what has happened to the old scientific units such as the Tropical Development and Research Institute. That aspect of the Department's activities has been severely cut both in staff and in ability to provide the scientific advice that is badly needed by countries affected by drought, locusts and poor conservation of soil. We have a special contribution to make in that sector, whether through organisations such as IFAD or through bilateral programmes.

We have an enormously important contribution to make. Yesterday I met representatives of the British Consultants Bureau, which has a variety of professional advice available to the Department and international agencies and is unrivalled in the expertise that it can offer. Many hon. Members will be aware of the significant contribution that the water industry is making, in particular through Water Aid, which is practically and voluntarily supported by the staffs of Thames and other water authorities. Those are important contributions and they can be of a special order because of our experience and our tradition as a former colonial power. For instance, the number of people who worked as agricultural officers and the number of institutes in our universities and

research institutes are the inheritance of the institutions set up to back up the work done by the Colonial Office in earlier days.

Mr. Cash: I had the great opportunity of going to Canada with the CPA delegation in July, and heard that that country is thinking about ways of exporting its water. Has the hon. Gentleman heard of this, and does he regard Commonwealth co-operation on such a scale and in such a way as realistic?

Mr. Barnett: There are some occasions when I feel that we would be well advised to export some of our water. However, I suspect that this would be an expensive operation and I prefer the suggestings made by the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford about water conservation. My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall spoke about other forms of water conservation for use during dry periods. We must recognise the fact that in the African continent the rains may fail. A survey that I did many years ago showed that in one area—a particularly well endowed area not far from Lake Victoria — the rains failed on average this century once every three years.

Such experiences are written into many traditional methods that African farmers use, from which we should be learning. Sometimes we are all too apt to go out to Africa and tell the world how to live—I have made this point before — forgetting that many of the traditional methods of African agriculture are born of such experience. Often, we can reinforce what that experience teaches because it is based on the practical experience of African farmers.

I underline my support for IFAD, and for the step that the Minister has taken, which is absolutely right. I hope that it is the forerunner of more pressure by the Minister on his fellow Ministers and, indeed, on the Cabinet. Most hon. Members will be behind him. He will know that a growing and articulate body of public opinion supports him. He has already said that overseas development will be an issue in the next general election. I hope that, both within and outside the House, he will give the subject a higher profile than it has enjoyed in the past.

1.45 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I congratulate the Minister on his appointment and wish him well. I also congratulate him on his announcement this morning of additional support for the International Fund for Agricultural Development's special fund. Our problem is that, in the decade up to 1983, United Kingdom aid to sub-Saharan Africa decreased in real terms. Let us hope that his announcement this morning will reverse that trend, because during that decade, Japan, the United States, Canada and even the OPEC countries increased their contributions. However, from what we heard this morning, OPEC is no longer in a position to increase its contribution.

The hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) mentioned the gap between a 2·5 per cent. increase in food production and a 3 per cent. increase in population in many of the countries which we are discussing. That is one of the most serious statistics with which we must wrestle. Food production cannot catch up with population growth unless we have a crash programme to help the African countries especially to help themselves.

References have been made to the problem of locusts in the Horn of Africa. That is a serious problem that must be tackled immediately. We cannot wait a minute longer. Another unfortunate problem is the war in the Sudan, which is causing tremendous disruption and hardship and increased poverty and starvation among the people of that country. The staff of the college at which I used to lecture — the Welsh agricultural college — are engaged in a programme in the Sudan to try to assist the people there. They are training the trainers so that the people of the Sudan can learn how to help themselves in developing their agriculture, but they have a difficult task because of the present conditions in that country. The low technology development of the innate farming practices in African countries must be encouraged. In that respect, I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett).

The statistics on starvation in the African continent are alarming. In the few years up to 1985, 1 million Ethiopian people died from starvation each year. In the wider context of the Third world, 12 million children under the age of five died in 1978, and recent statistics suggest that the present figure may be 15 million. The World Bank has estimated that 800 million people are starving. No one in any Western country can be proud of those figures. We must tackle the problem urgently and with a great deal of spirit and direction.

The most telling statistic that I have heard is that it costs $400 to transport 1 tonne of grain or wheat to Africa, but that an African can grow 1 tonne of wheat a year for the next 20 years at a cost of just $200. That is an astonishing state of affairs. We must help those countries to help themselves. The Minister's announcement today is a move in the right direction.

We have not met the United Nations target contribution of 0·7 per cent. of GDP in aid for Third world countries. We have been stuck at about 0·35 or 0·36 per cent. of GDP. Knowing the Minister's record, I am sure that he will do something to put that right.

The development of local agriculture is the key. The IFAD has a major role in developing African and Third world agriculture and we must back it. I believe that, with our encouragement, the Minister will show the way.

1.51 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I endorse the sentiments of hon. Members who wish the Minister well in his new job. He has a challenging task and I am sure that he will enjoy his job and will help those who are less fortunate than we are.

Earlier this year I joined hon. Members from both sides of the House on a visit to Somalia. I plead on behalf of the people of Somalia. I have heard hon. Members arguing that solutions must be found to long-term problems such as the development of local agriculture, but I believe that the biggest problems are the short-term problems.

The parliamentary delegation visited the camps in Somalia where millions of people live in hope that their next meal will come from somewhere. I saw women queueing all day for a week's rations. It was a depressing sight. On the other hand, we in the Western world produce so much food, but we leave the surplus in intervention stores for years and then dispose of it at a giveaway price or dump it in the sea. There is something radically wrong with our marketing and distribution system in Europe.

We were invited to see what we were told was a brand new school in northern Somalia. We discovered that the building consisted merely of branches that had been

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pushed into the ground. A few camels had been slaughtered and skinned to provide some cover from the sun. The children had nothing to write on, they could only listen to the teacher. Partitions between the classes were also made of branches. I thought to myself how fortunate we are in the West where we live in prosperous nations.

The President and other members of the Somalian Government told us that they were not interested in loans, because they would never be able to repay them. They were interested in grants and aid from other countries and organisations. We are all morally bound, no matter which party we support, to try to persuade people in power to help such countries.

The countries of the world spend enough on arms in a fortnight—$17·5 billion—to feed, house, educate and look after the health of every individual in Africa for a year.

Some of us believe ourselves to be Christians, and are thus morally bound to try to help those who are less fortunate than we. On their behalf, I urge the Minister to give them more aid. Perhaps he could ask the Agriculture Minister to try and persuade his European counterparts to do something with the surplus food. I know that it would be difficult to persuade them, that it could be sent to other countries, and to Somalia in particular. That country has good roads to the camps and an excellent port which could accept the food.

I hope that my little plea will be heard by someone somewhere, so that those unfortunate people can be better cared for and to live in a better society in the future.

1.55 pm

Mr. Chris Patten: Perhaps it is appropriate that we should be debating this order on United Nations day. Indeed, it may or may not be appropriate that the debate should have been launched by two hon. Members from the same stable—which was not Trinity. However, if the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett) was in the Chamber, I would not want him to think that there was a conspiracy. Indeed, I mean no disrespect to the hon. Members for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) and for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) when I say that if the Liberal party's spokesman on these matters had been in the Chamber, the hon. Member for Greenwich might well have thought that a conspiracy was afoot, as he is also entitled to wear the same halter as I have on today.

I enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland). Last time I heard him speak it was in the Oxford union with, I believe, Richard Crossman. I agree with some of what he said, and about the importance of examining with some urgency the basis of IFAD's future financing. Indeed, I mentioned that at the beginning of the debate. I hope that we shall be able to make substantial progress after December. The hon. Gentleman suggested that the trend of IFAD's activities was insufficient. But if the new replenishment and special programme are committed, as planned, until the end of 1988, IFAD will be providing $300 million or more each year. That is well above the level for every year since 1982. In a sense, no amount can be enough, but IFAD is not the only player on the field.

Mr. Stuart Holland: From the Minister's earlier remarks, I assume that the £7 million involved is spread over a three-year period, and so amounts to about £2·3 million a year. However, the minimum necessary is at least double that amount. The target figure should be at least £5 million a year. I hope that he and his colleagues will work on that point so that IFAD's funding is more in line with real needs.

I also hope that the Minister will deal with the locust problem. It is a matter not simply of whether light aircraft can get into Tigré but of getting backpacks in to spray crops, and so on. The Eritrean Relief Association has made a submission to the Minister, and if he has not received it, we can let him have it. I hope that he will be able to respond to it.

Mr. Patten: I certainly want to consider the contribution that we are making to the special fund, its amount and its proportion in relation to what other countries are doing, and the important question of locusts which the hon. Gentleman mentioned in his speech, but perhaps I could do that in sequence of argument so that my remarks may be easier to follow than they otherwise would be. The hon. Gentleman spoke extremely eloquently about the problems of Africa. However, I did not agree with everything that he said, as I shall make clear later and as I hope to have opportunities of making clear during many similar debates over the next several years.

I remind the House of what we are doing for Africa. We have made and continue to make a substantial contribution to development in that continent. We have provided over £2,000 million of aid through bilateral and multilateral channels to Africa since 1982. A total of £570 million was provided in 1985 alone, when 43 per cent. of all British aid went directly or indirectly to Africa. In terms of bilateral aid, Sudan received over £42 million last year; Kenya, £34 million; Zambia, £26 million; Zimbabwe, £24 million, and the list continues.

We shall continue to provide effective assistance to those African countries which have demonstrated their need for it and their ability to use it to good purpose. Two recent examples underline that commitment. We have offered £25 million in fast spending aid for Tanzania to support economic reforms agreed with the International Monetary Fund. I recognise the courage and the difficulty which some of those reforms will involve. I have just announced £6 million of grant aid for the Gambia in support of its economic recovery programme, which is backed by the fund and the World Bank. Britain has also been ahead of many other donors in converting past aid loans to the poorest countries into grants. I think that we are well up at the top of the field with the Germans. That policy has been worth £1 billion to those countries. Africa alone has benefited to the tune of £260 million.

It is important for OECD countries and those in the developed world to give African and other developing countries the help they need, especially when they adopt policies which are more likely to lay down solid foundations for sustainable development in future. That is especially relevant to agriculture on which we rightly contribute much of our effort.

I listened to what the hon. Member for Vauxhall said. I thought that there was a disjuncture between his remarks and some of the speeches that I read made during the United Nations special session. For example, I thought that there was a disjuncture between what the Senegalese Foreign Minister said at the end of the session and the action programme drawn up largely by the African

countries. An increasing number of African Governments are a great deal more realistic about economic policy than the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Stuart Holland: When the hon. Gentleman has spent more time at the Dispatch Box—he is new to the portfolio—he will realise that Senegal is not among the least developed African countries. It is the main beneficiary from the Lomé programme. Senegal does well out of virtually every programme that goes south of the Mediterranean. A speech by a Senegalese Minister is not exactly definitive proof that we are remedying the problems of sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Patten: I can help the hon. Gentleman by sending him, in addition, a speech made by President Kaunda, that I read the other day. I am not sure whether he would apply the same arguments to President Kaunda, in his position. I should be perfectly happy to go through with him what the Tanzanians have just agreed to do, I think sensibly, and what the Gambians have agreed to do.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall mentioned some names with which I am still too much of a tyro to be acquainted. He referred at some length to what he regards as the World Bank's market-oriented solutions, which he considers not to be relevant to African countries. That argument is refuted by the clear economic revival in Ghana and the great increase in agricultural productivity in Zambia. Both Ghana and Zambia have taken difficult policy decisions, which are decidely market oriented, on World Bank advice.

Mr. Stuart Holland: The reality is, as the Minister will learn if he talks to President Kaunda, that both he and the Tanzanians who talked to me about this matter were made an offer that they were not in a position to refuse. It was a "godfather" offer from the International Monetary Fund that was backed by the British Government. In other words, his predecessor would support a bilateral programme only if Tanzania would agree to IMF conditionality. That was deeply resented by the Tanzanians. Ghana has a debt of $2 billion and it takes 67 per cent. of its export earnings to finance the repayments on that debt. It is a crippling debt. Only two days ago I was talking to those in the Ghanian presidency about this matter and they said that they would like the Minister to do something about it.

Mr. Patten: I am not able yet, though I look forward to being in the position, to drop names in the hon. Gentleman's style, who in time will be a formidable competitor for the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr Healey). He still has some way to go along the road. The hon. Gentleman's experience and his remarks about Africa are not borne out by what has happened or by what has been happening in a number of African countries. I look forward to returning to the Chamber with a great deal more anecdotal experience. I look forward also to trying — I am sure successfully — to move on the hon. Gentleman from the formidable intellectual position which he now occupies. He seems to be stuck in a rather early stage of Tanzanian socialism, which has gone out of fashion everywhere except the National Executive Committee of the Labour party.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall referred in passing to European food surpluses and the situation in Africa. He will know how much importance I attach to that. With respect to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), I do not think that my analysis and his would necessarily tally, but I confess in saying that that I do not represent an agricultural constituency. It is vital for us to reform the European Communities food aid regulations. It took nearly five years for us to get the present entirely inadequate regulations in place and we shall be trying in a matter of months to reform the regulations.

I hope that we shall have the support of organisations such as the World Development Movement, which I understand has organised a petition on the subject throughout Europe. I hope that we shall be able to make significant progress at the next development council meeting in November. Even if we cannot bring off a new food aid regulation from that council, I hope that we shall be able at least to make sufficient progress to see a new regulation introduced as soon thereafter as possible. That is vital because I think that public opinion is increasingly outraged by the cruel paradox of substantial surpluses in Europe and famine and deficit in Africa and elsewhere.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall referred to locusts. We have provided a total of £2·5 million this year for locust and pest control in Africa, over £800,000 of which was recently announced as being available for urgently needed insecticides, spraying equipment and transport in Botswana, the Gambia, Mali, Senegal, the Sahel and Niger. Of the remainder, nearly £1 million has been provided for various forms of pest control in Ethiopia, especially in connection with the drive against armyworm.

I listened with interest and sympathy to what the hon. Gentleman said about Ethiopia. As he will be aware, there are certain difficulties in dealing with sovereign Governments. I do not mean this as pejoratively as it will sound, but an approach which has at least something in common with gunboat diplomacy, however admirable and humanitarian its objectives, is difficult to carry through. However, there is a substantial problem, of which I am aware, with the villagisation and resettlement programme in Ethiopia. We are considering how best we can deal with that now both on our own and through multinational organsiations. I am hoping to send a senior official from the ODA to Ethiopia shortly to see what more we can do in terms of rehabilitation and generally.

At the meeting of the joint assembly of the European Parliament and ACP countries I was able to talk—I am name-dropping again—to the Ethiopian ambassador to the European Community and to an Ethiopian Minister whom I learnt to call Comrade Mersie. I put these points forcibly to them and, as I have said, we are hoping to send a senior official to Ethiopia shortly. I shall ensure that I see the document about the situation in Tigré and Eritrea, to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

I was particularly grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East for welcoming me to the Dispatch Box in this guise. My hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins), whom I know cannot be present for my reply and who had the courtesy to explain that he had a constituency engagement, both referred to population policy and its importance to our multilateral and bilateral aid programme. Population policy will be on the agenda of the development council meeting on 11 November. The Commission has put forward a paper on the subject and I hope that we shall have an interesting and useful discussion. There are considerable sensitivities on the issue. Some of them are

[Mr. Patten]

even greater in donor countries than in recipent countries, if I may make that slightly provocative point. We should attempt to reach a commonly agreed position in the EC next month.

My hon. Friend also referred to women in development — a subject which I was able to discuss with the president of the World Bank on Monday. He made some interesting remarks in his speech to the governors of the World Bank at the end of September, to which the hon. Member for Walthamstow also referred. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) suggested that I should make as many early visits as possible to some international financial institutions and I hope to begin with a visit to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund at the beginning of the new year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford, whose speech reminded me what a tiro I am in these matters, dealt particularly with the relationship between core funds and special programmes. He took me to task ever so nicely, as he is perfectly entitled to do, about what I said. I gathered from his remarks that he thought that what I said had been planted in my mouth by a Department which I have already learnt to respect and enjoy. I am grown up enough to be responsible for anything I do or say these days.

Quite apart from the arguments about the relationship between bilateral and multilateral aid, I am disinclined to accept fragmentation. One consequence of the multiplication of special programmes is that one avoids dealing with basic problems — for example, IFAD's replenishment. Special programmes mean more bureaucracy for the administration of small amounts of money. Special funds are administratively more costly than core operations.

My hon. Friend asked me about the amount of money that we are making available for the special programme. He was right to refer to the time scale. The money will be drawn down over three to four years. I must again emphasise that, proportionately, we shall be contributing more than a number of other countries will be contributing. If OPEC had contributed to the special fund, and had it reached $300 million, our contribution to the programme would have been less. If the programme fetches up without OPEC at substantially less than that amount, our contribution will be above our normal share.

In my judgment, it would be wholly wrong for our contribution to the special programme to exceed our contribution to the replenishment. I understand the importance of obtaining a good share of the procurement which follows on from the work of the fund. I shall take up my hon. Friend's remarks, following his visit to Washington earlier this autumn.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) referred to a number of matters concerning Sudan. I was able to discuss these matters about 10 days ago during the extremely valuable visit to this country of the Prime Minister of Sudan. The hon. Member also referred to the position of children in developing countries. He may know that recently I have announced an additional grant of £1 million in response to a UNICEF appeal for assistance to children in certain African countries, particularly for immunisation. That is over and above our normal grant, which is about £6·5 million.

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett) sugested that our contribution to the special programme would mean that we should have less money to spend elsewhere. I am pleased to say that we are making this contribution from a budget that is now growing in real terms. It will come out of our unallocated reserve. I realise that these terms of art are even more familiar to certain hon. Members than they are to me. Whole books, not to speak of House of Commons Select Committee reports, have been written on such subjects. Nevertheless, I am pleased to be able to say that our contribution to the special programme will not displace any other bilateral programme that may be proposed.

The hon. Member for Greenwich also referred to the Commonwealth Development Corporation. I am looking forward to seeing some of its work. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford also referred to the CDC. Its contribution to developing countries has been impressive. I note also what the hon. Member for Greenwich said about the important role played in the work of the ODA by its scientific units, in particular the Tropical Development and Research Institute. I have heard much about the excellence of its work, particularly in agricultural research. I am looking forward to visiting it soon to see its activities for myself.

Finally, the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) reminded us, with his admirable and characteristic Welsh eloquence, of the objective of our aid programme. I hope that, with other hon. Members, I shall be able to play a small part in helping to achieve that objective and, as a step along the way, I should like to commend again this order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft International Fund for Agricultural Development (Second Replenishment) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 30th June, be approved.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 28th October, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business), if proceedings on the Motion in the name of Sir William van Straubenzee relating to the Deacons (Ordination of Women) Measure have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall at Seven o'clock put the Question thereon.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Structure Plan (Dorset)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

2.19 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I am grateful to have this opportunity to address the House and particularly grateful to so many of my hon. Friends for coming in to listen to this important debate on the future of south-east Dorset. I understand that we may be interrupted by other business in about 10 minutes.

I begin by thanking my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for being present to listen to a matter which is of overriding concern to my constituents. It is customary to try to link one debate with the previous debate. My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development did not mention the excellent work which is being done in the Sudan by British railway locomotive engineers in restoring to working order some of the steam engines there. That gives me the opportunity to apologise —while my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) is on his way to the Chamber, in case my hon. Friend the Minister is wondering why I am discussing this —for the fact that I had to forgo the pleasure today of being in Barry in south Wales to name a 9F locomotive in order to be here to do what I consider to be even more important than that.

I make no apology for raising again an issue which I was able to raise on the Adjournment on 12 June 1985. The future of south-east Dorset's environment is fundamental to my constituents. Since that debate, Dorset county council has produced a first review of the south-east Dorset structure plan. I have to tell my hon. Friend—I hope that it is not his fault — that there is growing disillusion among the people of south-east Dorset about whether their views count for anything in the consultation that takes place from time to time about the future of the environment in which they live.

The chairman of the county council's planning and transportation committee, in her introduction to the document, says:

"Before making any decisions, they"—

that is, the county council—

"will consider fully all views which are expressed to them by those concerned for the future of South East Dorset."

The council may well "consider", but what my constituents want is not consideration of their views but acknowledgment of their views and action in accordance with what they believe they are entitled to expect from the Government and their county council.

My hon. Friend the Minister knows that we are awaiting the result of one of the most controversial and contentious planning applications that has ever been seen in Dorset put forward by the Carroll group. It is contrary to the present structure plan and to the Government's declared green belt policies. It is opposed by all the local authorities — Christchurch, Wimborne and New Forest —as well as by the Dorset county council, and it has outraged local opinion. A great deal of store will be set in Dorset by the Government's final decision on that application.

But the latest threat comes not from an application from a developer but from proposals put forward by the county council itself in the first review of the south-east Dorset structure plan. In the past few weeks my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North and I have been innundated with concern about and objections to the county council's proposals. There is almost numbed shock in our part of Dorset and almost universal opposition to what the county council proposes.

The only friends which the structure plan proposals seem to have are a handful of the county council's officers, a handful of Dorset county councillors and one or two district councillors. But the elected councillors who support the proposals are very shy indeed. I would not mind if elected councillors had the courage to stand up and support what they think should be done, but that, I regret, is not the luxurious position in which we find ourselves.

The fact is that the plan as put forward by the county council is being blamed on the Government. The purpose of this debate today is to probe just how much truth there is in assertions by county council officials that they have put forward a plan that they know to be disliked and unpopular, not because they want it and not because the people want it but because they believe that it is essential in accordance with Government policies emanating from the Department of the Environment.

We in Dorset spent 18 months in long earnest discussion about the structure plan which was finally approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment in 1980. It was a compromise plan but it was accepted locally and by the Department. That plan has been overtaken by events outwith the control of the local authorities most affected.

There are two main causes for the rape of the 1980 structure plan. First, appeals by developers against planning refusals, particularly by Wimborne and Christchurch councils, have overwhelmed the housebuilding levels set down in that plan. We are told constantly by the district councils, particularly Wimborne and Christchurch, that they have lost control over their own environment.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): They have all lost control.

Mr. Adley: We should all take note of the problem. It is serious if local government cannot control its own planning environment.

Secondly, the policy for housing starts in Dorset has been statistically ravaged by Bournemouth's deliberate policy to build, build, build, regardless of the structure plan.

I have statistics relating to the five district councils in south-east Dorset. The five areas are Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, Purbeck and Wimborne. The structure plan proposals for housing starts in 1976-86 were 3,600, 3,200, 8,400, 1,200 and 4,600 respectively. The actual completions in Bournemouth, instead of 3,600, were 8,492; for Christchurch, instead of 3,200 they were 3,637; for Poole, instead of 8,400 they were 10,350; for Purbeck, instead of 1,200 they were 1,326; and for Wimborne, instead of 4,600 they were 7,083. The percentage overbuild in those years was 135 per cent. in Bournemouth, 14 per cent. in Christchurch, 23 per cent. in Poole, 11 per cent. in Purbeck and 54 per cent. in Wimborne.

The difference is that Bournemouth has been deliberate whereas the results in other areas are mainly caused by overturning planning refusals.

I shall not weary the House with statistics for the rest of Dorset, but planning overruns on this scale should be

[Mr. Adley]

of concern to us all. The plan is as much the Minister's, since it was approved by his Department, as it is the local authorities'.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), in his eloquent and straightforward manner, has described the proposals in the structure plan review as "an environmental disaster." I echo his words.

Dorset county council claims that it is operating at the behest of the Department of the Environment and in accordance with Government policy requirements. That is why the proposal in the 1980 plan for 35,000 new dwellings has become 62,000 new dwellings.

We need to probe the Government's attitude towards the creation of structure plans by county councils. For that reason I have given my hon. Friend the Minister a list of 10 questions which I propose to ask him this afternoon. It is now 2.29 pm, so before I start to read them out I shall continue to preamble until 2.30 and start again after the Foreign Secretary's statement.

There is irrefutable evidence that Dorset county council is blaming the Government for having to produce thoroughly unpopular and unacceptable proposals. I have given notice of the 10 questions to my hon. Friend the Minister. If they are fully answered they should satisfy those people in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North about where the blame lies for the production of these wholly unwanted and extraordinarily unpopular plans.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Anglo-Syrian Relations

2.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on Anglo-Syrian relations.

The House will be aware that the trial of Nezar Hindawi at the Central Criminal Court ended today. Hindawi was found guilty of attempting to place a bomb on an El Al aircraft at Heathrow on 17 April and was sentenced to 45 years' imprisonment. Hindawi has been convicted of a monstrous and inhumane crime. If he had been successful, hundreds of innocent lives would have been lost. The way in which he deceived his pregnant girl friend into carrying the bomb was particularly wicked and has aroused deep and universal repugnance.

There is conclusive evidence of Syrian official involvement with Hindawi. The House will recall that in May after Hindawi's arrest the Government demanded the withdrawal of three Syrian embassy attachés whose diplomatic immunity the Syrian Government declined to waive so that the police could question them. Evidence at the trial revealed something of the part these attachés played in this affair. The Syrians claim that they dealt with Hindawi throughout as a bona fide journalist. That claim is frankly incredible.

Evidence was produced at the trial that Hindawi spent some time in hotel accommodation reserved for Syrian Arab Airlines crew, and that Hindawi spent the night after the bombing attempt in Syrian embassy accommodation, where his hair clippings and hair dye were found. Certain facts are undisputed. Hindawi travelled on an official Syrian passport in a false name; his visa applications were on two occasions backed by official notes from the Syrian Foreign Ministry; and he met the Syrian ambassador, Dr. Haydar, in his embassy after the discovery of the bomb.

In addition, we have independent evidence that the Syrian ambassador was personally involved several months before the commission of the offence in securing for Hindawi the sponsorship of the Syrian intelligence authorities. We have equally compelling evidence that during his detention Hindawi sought to contact secretly Syrian intelligence officials in Damascus with a request for their assistance in securing his release.

The whole House will be outraged by the Syrian role in this case. It is unacceptable that the ambassador, members of his staff, and the Syrian authorities in Damascus should be involved with a criminal like Hindawi. We have therefore decided to break diplomatic relations with Syria.

Dr. Haydar was informed of this decision this morning and was told to close his embassy and leave the country within 14 days. The British embassy in Damascus will also be closed. We shall seek to make alternative arrangements of the usual kind for the protection of British interests in Syria. We are also tightening the security arrangements surrounding the operations in London of Syrian Arab Airlines by imposing special controls on all Syrian Arab Airlines aircraft and crew, including stricter searches of personnel, passengers and baggage. The House will recall that last June we introduced a tougher and stricter visa regime for Syrians wishing to enter the United Kingdom. We shall maintain and strengthen this regime.

We are taking urgent steps to inform our European partners and other friendly Governments about the details of the case and the measures that we are taking. We are impressing on them the wider security implications of the involvement of the Syrian authorities and are urging them to take appropriate supporting action. We regret that these actions have been forced on us by the unacceptable behaviour of the Syrian authorities. We remain determined to play our full part with moderate Arab states in the search for peaceful settlement of the region's problems, but we remain second to none in our determination to continue the fight to stamp out terrorism in our midst.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The Opposition enthusiastically applaud the sentence of the court upon this evil man, and share the Government's sense of outrage at the role of Syrian officials. If the Foreign Secretary is convinced that the Syrian ambassador was knowingly involved, it is clearly unacceptable that either he or any of his staff involved should remain in this country. The Foreign Secretary will know that in the past the Opposition have always endorsed the strongest action against international terrorism and all efforts to co-ordinate effective international action against it.

Is the Foreign Secretary aware of evidence that Mr. Hindawi, together with his brother, was also involved with the Abu Nidal movement from Syrian bases in the Berlin discotheque bombing? If, as a result of new evidence, that is the case, does it not at least throw some doubt on the justification for the bombing of Libya in response to that outrage?

Is the Foreign Secretary convinced by the evidence that the Syrian Government, at the highest level, were involved in the Hindawi incident?

On the question of our allies, as the Foreign Secretary referred to independent evidence against the ambassador predating this offence, to what extent have our allies already been alerted about the evidence available to us and our likely action in response — quite irrespective of today's jury verdict and the sentence?

In the light of the Tokyo agreement and the EEC declaration on combating terrorism, can we assume that both our EEC partners and our American allies will be fully behind us in preparing a similar and co-ordinated response? As the Soviets have made frequent declarations of their own opposition to international terrorism, should not we at least try to put them to the test with the evidence that is available to us?

It is clear that our own national response will be very much weakened if we do not have the support of our allies, including the USA, in response to this outrage. We believe that a clear message should come from a united House that terrorism, from whatever source, will be met with a speedy, robust and exemplary response.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I begin by thanking the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he has approached the matter and for his plain and outspoken endorsement of the approach adopted by Her Majesty's Government to this serious and difficult matter.

On the Berlin bombing, there is no evidence implicating Syria or any country other than Libya in the bombing of the La Belle discotheque last April. That remains the position.

On the question of the implication of the Syrian Government, I have spelt out the series of matters that show the plain involvement of the Syrian intelligence agency and the Syrian ambassador. Quite frankly, it is absurd and untenable to argue that a Government are not responsible and accountable for the actions of their intelligence services and ambassador. That is the basis on which we have formed our conclusions.

The evidence involved in the case is either, as I have described, evidence given in court, evidence about which there was no dispute in court or evidence in respect of which the Government are in a unique position to make their own judgment on the reliability of the information and about which we are completely satisfied.

There has been a limit to the extent to which we have been able to take action to alert in advance our Community and other allied partners because of the inhibitions properly imposed by the dangers of contempt of court. The hon. Gentleman is right to emphasise the importance of a concerted common response to governmental misconduct of this kind. That is why we have taken such care to promote commitments in Europe, and at the Tokyo summit, to such concerted action.

It must be said, as I said in a speech in Bournemouth the other day, that we have not yet reached the point where a country in the front line in such a situation can look to the scale of unity in response from other countries that we would wish. Certainly, we are doing everything that we can to promote the united action for which the hon. Gentleman has pressed. I shall take into account his suggestion that the Soviet Union should similarly be invited to participate in this case.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the whole House will want to endorse his comments on the sentence passed by the court and that the whole country, in the light of the unassailable evidence available to it and all our allies, will want to welcome the prompt and firm action that the Government have taken?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's observation.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Has it not been apparent since before this vile plot was mercifully foiled that a bloodstained trail has been left by Syrian-sponsored agents in Europe and all over the middle east, and that now that trail has been proved to lead back to the doors of the Syrian embassy? Has not the world preferred to turn a blind eye to Syria and concentrate instead on the activities of Libya? The Foreign Secretary's decision is right and justified, but what else is he considering? If we are to stamp out terrorism, we have to make sacrifices, and must we not look further at actions such as the cessation of Syrian Arab Airlines' flights into this country? Will the Foreign Secretary pursue vigourously the point put by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) about reminding the Soviet Union of its responsibility to use what influence it has over one of its allies and clients?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for underlining, in his last observation, the point made by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). As to the general involvement of Syria, it is not prudent for me to make any broad observations. Suffice it to say that the evidence in this case is clear-cut and beyond doubt. We have had to evaluate that evidence in deciding what action to take against the Syrian

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

Government and in relation to Syrian Arab Airlines. There is clear evidence of the involvement of the airline. accommodation and perhaps of the crew to the extent that I have specified, but there is no evidence to support the allegation made by Hindawi that Syrian Arab Airlines is involved in bringing in firearms, explosives and drugs to the United Kingdom. Therefore, we judged that the evidence in this case does not justify stopping its services. We are taking the firmest possible action to step up the surveillance and control of aircraft, crew and passengers.

Mr. Peter Thomas (Hendon, South): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his prompt statement will receive widespread approval in the country and will be a considerable relief to those of us who have for some time been concerned about the activities of Damascus and its missions overseas in international terrorism? Will he take this opportunity to look again at the activities of PLO representatives in London and ask himself whether something needs to be done about them?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for his endorsement of the action that I have taken. As he says, if we mean what we have said on so many occasions about our commitment to fighting terrorism, we cannot shirk, and must be ready to take, such tough decisions, and we must be ready to take them when the evidence justifies such a conclusion. I shall bear in mind his observations about the PLO, but in each case one is concerned with the evidential quality on which one makes a conclusion.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): I thank the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his positive response to the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) that he pass to the Government of the Soviet Union the information which he is passing to other Governments. Is it not a fact that the Government of the Soviet Union have more influence with the Syrian Government than any other Government have? Is it not also a fact that there are some signs that, in the past year or two, the Soviets have become a bit disillusioned with Syria as an ally, and is there not a possibility, therefore, that the Soviet Union may turn out to be very helpful in this matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: One must proceed with some caution in this area, although it is certainly true that the Soviet Union has been expressing a more significant interest in the need for international co-operation in the fight against terrorism than has been the case in the past. It is also a fact that there has been and still is a relationship between the Soviet Union and Syria which justifies, in general terms, the point made by the hon. Gentleman. But I cannot say how practically effective that link may turn out to be.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that not only the whole House—as is obvious already — but the whole country will applaud the prompt and effective action that he has taken and that all of us share his horror and repugnance for this abominable crime and the Syrian connection with it? Because of the serious implications for all civilised exchanges between nations, is my right hon. and learned Friend in close touch with all our allies as to the next steps that must be taken to deal with Governments who are actively engaged in terrorist activity around the world?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his support. As I said in my statement, we are in touch with other friendly Governments, including moderate Arab Governments, about the way in which to handle this problem in the future as well as up to now. One returns to the central proposition that the principles of our response are not in doubt. We must improve the detailed extent to which we co-operate with each other in the sharing of information, in the preparation of warnings and in the extent to which we support each other by taking the necessary action in proven cases. We shall certainly press for an appropriate response in this case, but I must confess that I am by no means certain that we shall get as universal a response as I would wish. I shall do my best to achieve it.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): The Secretary of State must be commended on the action which he has announced. Is he aware that many of us recognise the even-handed attitude which Her Majesty's Government adopt to middle eastern problems and that the decision which he has announced today could not have been taken lightly? Therefore, it must have rested upon conclusive evidence in the Government's possession. May I also commend to the right hon. and learned Gentleman the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) that the Soviet Union be brought into the matter? The Soviet Union holds the key to the problem which has been shown by Syrian involvement in this matter. Does the Secretary of State agree that the Soviet Union does not wish to be a party to international terrorism and would assist if it was brought into the discussion on this serious matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for endorsing the balanced way in which we have tried to approach this and similar matters. It cannot be made too plain that we remain determined to play our full part, with moderate Arab states and others, in the search for a peaceful settlement to the problems of that region. We are determined to achieve such co-operation as we sensibly can with the Soviet Union in that respect as well.

It is no secret that the attitude of the Soviet Union has been changing in relation to these matters. There has been a well-known connection between the Soviet Union and Libya over many years, but that has not enabled the Soviet Union, if she wished, to achieve the restraint that we would all have wished from Libya. So one must be cautious about expecting too total a conversion, but it is certainly right to take advantage of the renewed willingness of the Soviet Union to address herself to these matters seriously.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Before we allow ourselves to wallow in an orgy of self-congratulation, may I put one or two points to my right hon. and learned Friend? There are some rather odd points about all this and they need to be answered. He talks about controls on airlines, but has he considered the fact that the bomb in the bag was apparently carried through all the checks at Heathrow, which have been particularly stringent of late, and was discovered by members of the El Al staff in the El Al departure lounge? If my right hon. and learned

Friend is thinking of putting controls on an airline, might he not ask himself or the authorities at Heathrow whether something else needs to be done to see that bombs do not get through all the normal checks into a departure lounge, if that is indeed what happened?

My right hon. and learned Friend said that Hindawi went to the Syrian embassy. Are we to believe that part of the plot involved Mr. Hindawi walking through the front door of the Syrian embassy in Belgrave square? If the circumstances are as they have been described to us, I find them slightly unusual.

Finally, I wish to draw a serious matter to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend. On 10 October an article by David Watt appeared in *The Times* under the headline

"What shall we do about Syria?"

It was a straight lift from the prosecution case in the trial and seemed to me quite clearly likely to pervert the jury in what it was trying to do. That was accompanied by the expulsion of six Syrians from this country. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend at least to get the Attorney-General to discuss with *The Times* newspaper whether it is appropriate that such one-sided articles should appear in the middle of a trial when they could undoubtedly do nothing but affect the jury.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that the House can often look with confidence to my hon. Friend to prevent us from indulging in an orgy of self-congratulation. A number of the points that he has raised deserve to be considered by the appropriate authorities. His first point about the control and surveillance of luggage at London airport will no doubt be considered in the light of all the evidence in the case.

My hon. Friend asked about Hindawi's access to the Syrian embassy and whether he passed through the front door, but I am not in a position to answer that question precisely. My hon. Friend is certainly right to say that there are a number of slightly unusual features about this case.

The article by Mr. David Watt in *The Times* was only one of a number of articles that have been written during the trial, some of them quite recently, speculating on what would be the appropriate reaction by the Government if a conviction were recorded. In so far as those had or may have had any bearing on the conduct of the trial, one would normally expect that point to be directed to the attention of the court either by the very experienced trial judge or by the very experienced defence counsel. As far as I know, that did not happen in this case.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Has the Foreign Secretary any evidence or suspicion that diplomatic bags were used to smuggle terrorist items into the Syrian embassy? Even if it does not apply in this case, following the departure of the Syrian people, are there not grounds for reopening the discussion about whether diplomatic bags should be searched as a matter of routine? The documents in the bags would not be read and would be kept confidential, but such searches should be carried out, possibly in the presence of representatives of the embassies to which the bags were sent.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As far as I know, there is no evidence in this case bearing on that problem. In a sense, that highlights the importance of the point put by the hon. Gentleman. He will recall that the question was carefully considered by the Foreign Affairs Committee about 12 months ago and by the Government at the time. But the problem remains that, if the legitimate value of immunity from inspection for diplomatic bags is not to be challenged and overthrown worldwide, one must stop short of committing search as a general rule. I believe that the Foreign Affairs Comittee endorsed our view that in certain exceptional circumstances, where danger to human life is anticipated, the right to search may arise. I do not think that the debate has yet advanced beyond that, but I am aware of a continuing interest in this question on both sides of the House and outside this country. It is extremely difficult to see how we can advance beyond the position defined by the Select Committee.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the House will wish him to convey our thanks, and those of the country, to those whose vigilance prevented a tragedy and to those whose diligence brought this man to justice? Is he further aware that the vast majority of our fellow citizens wish to maintain friendly relations with the moderate people of the Arab world? However, at the same time we have had more than enough of our country being used as a battleground for warring factions in the middle east. Consequently, we warmly welcome the court's sentence and the diplomatic action that my right hon. and learned Friend has taken today.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, as it is right to remind me to convey the thanks and congratulations of the House to all those who detected the crime and brought it successfully to a conclusion in a court of justice. My hon. Friend was also right to underline the point that I have already made twice, that we certainly wish to co-operate with all members of moderate Arab countries in order to try to bring about a solution to the problems of the middle east. That must involve a willingness to approach the matter in an even-handed fashion and to require Israel as well as the Arab countries continually to readdress the fundamental injustices in the region. Only if we tackle the root causes can we be confident of having destroyed the atmosphere in which terrorism can so easily breed.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): What is the size of the British community in Syria? What steps have been taken to notify it of the Government's decision to close the embassy in Damascus? What steps will the Foreign Secretary be taking to protect the interests of the British community between now and the embassy's closure in 14 days' time?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising those points. The British community in Syria is approximately 250-strong. Through Her Majesty's ambassador in Damascus, we have made it clear to the Syrian authorities that we hold them responsible for guaranteeing the continued safety of the British community there. In response, the Syrian Government have confirmed that they will continue to take responsibility for the safety of British lives and property in Syria. Even so, British citizens must understand that if they decide to travel to, or reside in Syria, they do so on their responsibility and that of the Syrian Government. We intend to establish an interests section in Damascus under the auspices of a protecting

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

power, but it is important to be clear that such representation cannot provide the full range of consular protection.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Is it not clear that the Government should be supported for reluctantly taking this step? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Syria is a major factor in the Lebanon, the Gulf war and in the search for a settlement to the Palestinian question? When the dust has settled, a certain amount of damage limitation will be called for by my right hon. and learned Friend and his colleagues if Britain's trade with that part of the world is not to be adversely affected. Will he confirm that the vast majority of Palestinians on the occupied west bank and in Gaza are totally opposed to international terrorism?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: One of the ironic tragedies of terrorism is that in virtually every case it is not endorsed or welcomed by those on whose behalf it is deployed. I have met Palestinians on the west bank and my impression is that they recognise the extent to which their cause is damaged by its identification with terrorism. My hon. Friend is right to point out that Syria is, and will remain, an important power in the region. We have no wish unnecessarily to increase tension there. The fact is that any damage at this stage to bilateral relations is the responsibility and fault of the Syrians and not ourselves. I hope that as a result of this the Syrian Government will realise the strength of the sense of revulsion in Britain and the rest of the world against terrorism and states that give support to such terrorism. We look forward to being able to co-operate with Syria, as with every other state in the region, in helping to solve difficult problems.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Secretary of State accept my assurance, as a London Member of Parliament, that Londoners will welcome any effective measures that the Government can take to convince foreign Governments that their diplomatic missions in London should be used for that purpose and that purpose only and not used ever again as bases for international terrorism or threats to the life and limb of people who live in London, or as bases from which to harass students and citizens of other countries whose diplomatic missions are located in London? Will he also accept that the application of one single rigorous standard will help in that, because we cannot have a double standard? We must be opposed to Syrian terrorism in London and, equally strongly, to French terrorism in New Zealand.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot on an occasion such as this be drawn into commenting on questions of a different and more complicated nature, whether or not the hon. Gentleman is a London MP. I am certainly ready to endorse the observations made by the hon. Gentleman. It is of the utmost importance that Governments should take effective action so far as they can to prevent terrorism bursting on the streets and citizens of our capital city and any other in the world. In trying to do that, it is important to apply a uniform standard. This Government have done and will continue to do everything that can be done in that direction.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The statement has already run for half an hour. In view of the importance of the subject, I shall call hon. Gentlemen who have risen, but I ask them to put their questions briefly.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that, following the sentence on Hindawi of 45 years, there is some concern that Abu Nidal might seek to take reprisals against bases in Cyprus or British legations around the world or in London. Can my right hon. and learned Friend advise me what steps, if any, have been taken regarding that matter? What action would the Government take if such steps were taken by the Syrian Government?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think my hon. Friend is right in underlining the anxiety that must be felt about the risk of reprisals as a result of such action in any circumstances. Our response to that is twofold: first, we must make it plain that the Government cannot and will not flinch from doing what must be done in such cases because of fear of reprisal. To adopt any other attitude would positively encourage terrorism. Secondly, we must take the fullest possible range of precautions, especially for premises overseas, to protect those who might be threatened by reprisals. Sadly, so long as terrorism remains a threat, one cannot produce a complete guarantee against it.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his robust and prompt action and join others who have done so. I ask him what measures he is taking to ensure that people who are appointed here in a diplomatic role are bona fide diplomats and are not in some way agents of either their secret service or terrorist organisations. Is he making certain that all diplomats are properly vetted before they are accepted as proper representatives of their country in London?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his opening remarks. He is right to draw attention to that point which, as he knows, was considered by the Foreign Affairs Committee. We seek to scrutinise the qualifications of those appointed to diplomatic positions in this country with those factors in mind, with particular vigilance where there is special reason to do so, and take action as appropriate. This case will serve to underline the need for further care and vigilance in that respect.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): In congratulating my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on the robust and swift way in which he has handled the matter, will he assure the House that if, as has come to light in the past few weeks of the trial and the heightened interest in the matter, there is any evidence that there is terrorist activity being run from other embassies in London, regardless of where they come from, he will not hesitate to act again?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that the House will need no reminding of the extent to which we seek to apply a uniform standard in relation to all these matters. Terrorism, especially if it is promoted or provoked by diplomatic misconduct, cannot be tolerated.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that to say to him that his action will meet with virtually universal approval in this country is not, as has been suggested, to wallow in congratulation but simply to state a fact, a fact which I feel sure will be

recognised by the tacit support and understanding of responsible Governments in the Arab world? In view of the notorious record of the Alawite regime in Syria, whose sinister activities have gone unpublicised and unpunished for far too long, will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that our security forces will now be placed on an exceptionally high level of alert against further possible Syrian terrorist action?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right to underline the importance of precautionary action of the sort that he has described. It is right that we should be especially vigilant in our security precautions at this time. It is right also that we should continue to leave the Syrian Government in no doubt of our abhorrence of terrorists and those who support them. We have discussed this through normal channels, as it were. I have done so myself with more than one Syrian Foreign Minister and with the Syrian president. Sadly, the earlier discussions do not seem to have been taken to heart.

Mr. Favell (Stockport): What can the civilised world do about those who indulge in barbaric behaviour and skulk behind diplomatic immunity?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): You will get £64,000 for answering that.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) for an unusually helpful and encouraging observation. The irony of the problem is that diplomatic immunity, properly exercised, is essential to the conduct of representation of Governments around the world, which is in itself essential if we are to be in a position to safeguard the interests of our citizens who travel overseas. When it is abused, however, the civilised world collectively has to make plain its determination not to tolerate such abuse. The United Kingdom and Her Majesty's Government have been in the forefront of encouraging the acceptance of that standard, sadly, perhaps, as a result of our exposure to abuse of diplomatic immunity. We shall continue pressing the case.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): As diplomatic immunity and privileges have been used traditionally to allow diplomats to report back to their Governments privately and thereby retain the good relations of which candid knowledge must be a part, have not diplomatic immunities and privileges been used increasingly in recent years for a far more sinister purpose, which is to undermine, subvert and even directly attack host countries? Therefore, has not the time come for us, in consultation with our friends and allies, to reconsider once again the scope of these immunities? It seems to me and to many others that the Syrian ambassador, whom we have just expelled, has as much in common with the traditional notion of diplomacy as, for example, the vicious armed robber who breaks into the back of a house has in common with a door-to-door salesman who knocks politely on the front door?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend, as always, has a gift for apt analogy and argument. It must be understood that when I stand at the Dispatch Box as the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and speak in justification of diplomatic immunity, I do not make the point on behalf of myself, my Department or my office. I do so because of the necessity to have immunity that covers legitimate diplomatic activities around the world. Having said that, there is a growing concern about the scale, nature and extent of abuse of these immunities. That is something that has preoccupied the House many times and an issue that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs has considered in depth over the past 12 months. The conclusion which the Select Committee arrived at was not that immunities should be stripped away, nor that we should seek to negotiate internationally to limit them. I think that it would be almost impossible to achieve international agreement on this issue. We should be profoundly vigilant in our surveillance and about the abuse of those immunities. We should encourage other nations to be similarly vigilant and intolerant of abuse. That is precisely what we have been doing. We shall be firm and vigilant in our actions in relation to abuse and we shall continue to promote a comparable response from other countries. There is no alternative way that is tolerable, not only for the sake of diplomats, but for citizens, to prevent it altogether.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): In reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), my right hon. and learned Friend gave some advice to British citizens who are still resident in Syria. Is any advice being given to companies with substantial business interests in Syria? In particular, as we are not ceasing airline connections, is any advice being given to airline companies in relation to their employees?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not think that we have given any separate and specific advice at this stage because the decision has only just been made. We shall give consideration to all the possible implications that follow from this. We have given special advice to British citizens living in the Lebanon, reinforcing advice already given to people living there of the need in Lebanon in particular to observe a high level of caution and to consider carefully whether they have sufficient reason to remain there.

Structure Plan (Dorset)

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

3.11 pm

Mr. Adley: I now resume with the 10 questions that I was about to put to my hon. Friend the Minister. I shall read them quickly to get them on the record.

One: what guidance, advice or recommendations emanate from the DOE to shire counties about the preparation by them of structure plans or revised structure plans?

Two: has the DOE any particular strategic planning recommendations to make to individual counties? If so, what are they for Dorset?

Three: what is the statutory position of shire counties regarding the preparation of revised structure plans?

Four: what account does the DOE take in assessing the progress on an agreed structure plan of the effect on the plan of DOE inspectors' or ministerial decisions on target overruns for housing completions?

Five: What account does the DOE take in assessing the progress on an agreed structure plan of the effect of deliberate over-building by one authority within the county on that county's housebuilding targets vis-a-vis the current structure plan?

Six: what effect, if any, does the content of a county structure plan or revisions thereto have on specific decisions by DOE inspectors in the case of appeals to the DOE following planning refusals by district councils in the relevant county?

Seven: does the DOE plan any changes in ministerial circulars to local authorities on housing and planning matters such as to influence local authority planning decisions on housing?

Eight: does the DOE plan any changes in ministerial circulars to local authorities on housing and planning matters such as to influence inspectors' attitudes and recommendations on planning appeals?

Nine: what effect will the "Future of Development Plans" have on the preparation by shire counties of their strategic plans, if the proposals therein ultimately result in legislation?

Ten: what account does the DOE take of direct representations from Members of Parliament, the public and district councils concerning structure plans and revisions thereto when county councils not only produce the plans but submit to the Department their assessment of public reaction thereto?

I have already given my hon. Friend written notice of those questions so he will not have needed to write them down in shorthand.

I wish again to put on the record the answer given to me by the Secretary of State on 23 July when I asked him:

"Will he confirm that the initiation of structure plans and, indeed, the initiation of the revision of structure plans, is primarily the responsibility of the county council, and not his Department? Will my right hon. Friend further confirm that his Department responds after the county council has produced its proposals, and does not pressurise county councils before they produce their proposals? Finally, will he confirm that Dorset county council's revised structure plan for south-east Dorset is entirely its own responsibility?"

The reply was:

"I can confirm that all that my hon. Friend says is entirely correct."—[*Official Report*, 23 July 1986; Vol. 102, c. 337.]

I submit that there is no substance behind Dorset county council's claim that the proposals in this revised structure plan are sponsored by or are the result of pressure from Her Majesty's Government. Furthermore, there is no logic behind the county council's claim that massive developments at Three Legged Cross, the Grange estate and Verwood, as proposed in the structure plan revision, would prevent development elsewhere. The logic of that argument can be shown to be quite silly. The county council claims that if these three huge new schemes are approved, the rest of Dorset will be able to shelter behind the planning refusals that may emanate from all the district councils in the areas outwith the three areas where major developments are planned. Yet all the evidence shows that each planning appeal is considered on its individual merits by the inspector.

If the county council gets away with what it is trying to foist upon my constituency, the green light will have been given to huge, unwanted developments that go way beyond anything contained in the 1980 structure plan. Thereafter, the rest of the county would still be open, on every single planning appeal, to the individual decision of the inspector and his assessment of Government policy as contained in ministerial circulars. That is why I stress the point that unless there is a change of ministerial circular we shall have the worst of all worlds if this plan is allowed to proceed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) wishes to address the House and I know that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), has given considerable thought to the reply that he is to make to the debate. My ambition is to give courage and strength to Dorset county councillors to reject these monstrous and wholly unwelcome proposals. My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North has described them as a misguided and cowardly retreat from the 1980 structure plan and I concur wholeheartedly with him. Furthermore, the 1980 structure plan was drawn up by my hon. Friend the Minister's own Department.

The House is now considering the Housing and Planning Bill. Government policies for the inner cities under that Bill appear to be to seek to regenerate growth and investment in the inner cities. They seek to generate investment jointly between the public and private sectors. I applaud that aim wholeheartedly. That is why those parts of the Housing and Planning Bill that refer to development in the inner cities have received universal support in this House. However, the Government's planning policies are moving in precisely the opposite direction.

As for the planning policies that are being pursued by the Department, development resources are being concentrated in areas where there are easy pickings for developers. Instead of using tax incentives and the planning law to funnel development into the inner cities, we are giving the green light to developers to build in the lush suburban areas and in the more prosperous areas. Unless the Department changes its planning policy, we shall continue to channel investment into areas where, economically and socially, it is neither needed nor wanted. Thus, simultaneously, areas where development is needed will be deprived of investment for development projects. That is the broader point. I look forward very much to the answers that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will have to give on the points that I have raised in this debate.

3.19 pm

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for having given me permission to join in this debate. I am also extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) for putting forward so eloquently and fully the case that concerns both his constituents and mine. He has already referred to some of the comments that I have made on the subject. I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said in the debate.

The level of development in south-east Dorset is of great concern to all our constituents. This matter concerns not just Dorset, a very beautiful part of our island, but the south of England generally. What my hon. Friend said about general planning policy is of great concern to many other constituencies, as I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister knows.

We had a structure plan in 1980 and a detailed consultation exercise arrived at the level of development to be contained in it. Inevitably, there was a compromise. I gave evidence but that did not provide the complete answer and was not reflected in the structure plan. However, there was a compromise and a plan of the level of development.

Now we have a draft review which shows how great a retreat is being proposed by the county council from the level of development in that structure plan. The document is a grim warning that we may expect 62,000 new dwellings in the area by 1996 instead of the 35,000 that were intended under the 1980 plan. Rather than strengthen a policy of containment for which there was widespread support by councillors and members of the public at every level in Dorset this document suggests an about-turn. It recommends an average building rate of about 2,350 dwellings a year instead of reducing that rate to 1,400 a year in line with the 1980 plan.

The recommendations are made for two reasons. The first is that somehow an increase in development in that part of the country will produce an increase in the number of jobs. If the review document is examined it will be seen that it contains the greatest amount of cold water for that proposal. There is no proven connection between a high level of development of residential houses—the kind of overdevelopment that concerns me—and the creation of jobs.

The second reason for the recommendations being made is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch said, that it is a matter of Government policy. That is why we are having this Adjournment debate today. We want to get it clear that the Government do not have a policy of overdevelopment, as I see it from the document, of south-east Dorset. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will reassure us on that.

Indeed, the review document brings into question the whole purpose and status of structure plans and that is why my hon. Friend has asked his 10 important questions. We shall be listening carefully to the answers that we receive. What I conceive to be overdevelopment is not any development, sensible infilling, allowing businesses to develop sensibly or the prevention of businesses from setting up in the middle of towns and perhaps even villages, as suitable, to create jobs; it is the wholesale imposition of large new estates, often without the infrastructure being properly prepared, which changes the nature of the countryside in our county against the wishes, and, indeed, the consciousness, of the people. We do not know that these great changes are going on until it is too late.

I have asked what the Government's policy is, and that is what we want to hear today. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister has seen the speeches made by the previous Secretary of State for the Environment. Those speeches, certainly as I read them, would not favour the kind of overdevelopment with which we are now threatened.

The county council has put to me the contents of some of the circulars coming from the Department of the Environment. In particular, I draw the attention of the house to circular 15/84, entitled "Land for housing". The recommendations in that circular, which I have studied in detail, do not amount to Government approval for overdevelopment, as I have defined it. I do not have time to go through it in detail, but it is the contents of that circular that county councillors are telling me constitute Government approval for overdevelopment.

The circular covers the whole country. It applies to the nation, not just to rural areas such as mine or to suburban areas such as south-east Dorset. I ask the Minister seriously to consider amending the circular to make it clear how he differentiates between different types of land.

My local council complains that its planning decisions are overturned. Perhaps the Minister will produce figures showing that relatively few decisions are overturned. Figures sometimes mean very little because they can cover up the number of developments that take place. More important than the precise number of decisions overturned is the effect on local authority morale and the threat that they feel the planning department makes. If local authorities believe that their decisions will be overturned, that will affect the way in which they make decisions.

I do not have time to quote from all the papers in my possession, but they illustrate how district councils in my constituency, particularly Wimborne district council, feel fettered by the threat of the Department of the Environment overturning their decisions.

Land is our most precious asset. We need a more detailed policy on land use. I hope that in current and future planning policies the Minister will differentiate between areas. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), I hope that he will help to reverse the trend to the south which is draining resources from parts of the country that need them and which is damaging the environment in the south.

3.27 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I know that the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) will be grateful to him for introducing this important debate, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker). I congratulate them both on the detailed but measured way in which they presented their case.

Concern about the planning of such an attractive area is well appreciated. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch raised the matter on the Adjournment as recently as June last year.

My hon. Friend asked a number of questions and I shall endeavour to answer them in the time available. I shall write to him about those that I cannot cover. My right

[Mr. Richard Tracey]

hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are always ready to continue the dialogue on general policy in correspondence and in person.

First, I shall go over the background to the south-east Dorset structure plan. It was approved in February 1980. It proposed about 35,000 new dwellings over the 20 years from 1976 to 1996. To achieve that would entail a reduction in the annual house building rate from 3,100 in 1976 to less than half that towards the end of the plan period. It was expected that 10,500 houses would be built on small infill sites within the urban area and the balance on larger sites mainly on the edge of the conurbation. Industrial and warehousing land was proposed at several locations and in broad terms the plan established a green belt.

When approving the plan, the Secretary of State acknowledged its uncertainties and emphasised the importance of monitoring. Dorset county council has been deligent in this and has published annual reports. Its latest figures confirm that housing development has exceeded the rates that were assumed in the plan. By March 1985, 28,200 dwellings had been built. Development of large sites has been broadly as expected, but development of small sites within the urban area has taken place much more rapidly than was originally assumed.

This experience and the shortening horizon of the plan prompted the county council to proceed with its review.

The county council says that it framed its strategy within the constraints of national and local factors. It points out the difficulties of implementing a policy of restraint while contending with the inherent attractions of the area, high house prices and the effect on the local economy. The proposed alteration is said to have attempted to balance these issues and to have been determined in relation to the capacity of the area to accommodate growth. The draft proposals provide for 34,300 new dwellings from 1985 to 2001. That is an average of 2,140 house completions per annum. Of this total, infilling and consolidation of development is expected to provide for 26,800 dwellings.

The county council considered two general areas for longer-term development, of which one, the north-east sector, was expected to provide about 14,000 dwellings eventually, only about 7,500 of which are expected to be built by 2001, provided there are satisfactory arrangements for infrastructure. The procedures for the alteration of the structure plan are essentially the same as when the plan was first prepared. Dorset county council has consulted the public on its draft alterations. This is a statutory requirement and six weeks are allowed for representations. However, the council felt it prudent to go beyond the legal requirement and allowed over 13 weeks for comment. The council has now made it known that representations after that date will still be considered.

The county council will now have to consider the responses to its publicity. I trust it will take careful note of all the representations that it receives. When the council have completed this process, the alteration will be submitted to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his approval. At that stage another period of six weeks is allowed for the public to submit objections or representations direct to the Secretary of State for his consideration. These will be carefully examined and the Secretary of State may arrange for an examination in public to be held under an independent chairman. If, after considering the report of the panel and all the objections, the Secretary of State proposes to approve the alteration with modifications, there will be public advertisement and again six weeks will be allowed for objections. At all stages of the procedure there will be adequate opportunity for the general public to express their views.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) asked how the Department treats direct representations from hon. Members and from the public and district councils when structure plans are revised. The county planning authority is responsible for publicity and public consultation, but under the Act my right hon. Friend has to be satisfied by the steps taken by the authority to meet those requirements. As my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch knows, objections and representations by the public can be made to the Secretary of State when the county council formally submits an alteration for approval. All representations received are given the most careful scrutiny before a final decision is made.

I will now deal with some of the other questions. My hon. Friends asked what guidance was given by my Department to county councils on the review and alteration of their structure plans. First I should explain that the legislation itself requires county planning authorities to keep their structure plans under review. This is not a procedure that has to be carried out at set intervals. I imagine it is self-evident why this should be so. We live in a rapidly changing world. It is important that planning policies are relevant and take account of the most recent information available. There is no statutory restriction on when county councils may propose alterations to their structure plans. They have been encouraged to do so when events have changed or when plans do not look sufficiently far ahead.

When altering their structure plans, county councils should have regard to Government policy. That is made public in circulars issued by my Department. In particular, we issued circular 22/84 in September 1984 which contains detailed advice in a memorandum on structure and local plans. I commend that memorandum to my hon. Friends for it explains a great deal more about the procedures than I can possibly cover this afternoon.

Our circulars on land for housing — No. 15/84, mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North—and green belts—No. 14/84—are relevant. The Government wish to encourage home ownership and to bring that within the reach of as many people as possible. We also want structure plans to be helpful towards the creation of employment by not imposing unnecessary restrictions on businesses. The planning system should cater effectively for private housing and ensure an adequate supply of land. The Government also intend—I emphasise this — that well established conservation policies should be firmly maintained. In essence, our aim is to accommodate necessary development in ways that protect amenity and ensure economy and efficiency in the use of land.

It is recognised that the planning system has served those purposes well in the past, and in ways that meet both local interests and those of the community at large. That is the challenge that county councils face when they propose to alter their structure plans and which my right hon. Friend will be concerned to see fulfilled when he approves them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch asked further whether my Department had any particular strategic planning recommendations for Dorset. The strategy which the county council adopts in the structure plan is a matter for the county council itself. The circulars I mentioned provide guidance, as do nationally produced statistics and projections, but it is then for the county council to decide how best it should plan its area and to provide the reasons for its chosen course. Objections and representations can be made about these matters and my right hon. Friend will have to decide on them later when the alterations are submitted for his approval. It would not be right to prejudice such a decision at this stage.

My hon. Friend asked about the recent Green Paper on the future of development plans. As is known, the present development plan system of structure and local plans is under review and the Government have proposed the changes set out in the Green Paper. These changes are necessary because it takes too long to prepare plans, many plans are too detailed and the system requires too much involvement by central Government in approving structure plans. I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand that I do not have time today to talk in detail about the proposed changes, but what I will say, however, is that the proposals would require legislation and none is expected in the next Session of this Parliament. Because of that, I would like to emphasise that for the present the preparation of structure plan alterations, and their submission to the Secretary of State, will continue as before.

My hon. Friend said that Dorset county council felt obliged to propose a large increase of housing over the 1980 structure plan directly and solely as a result of Government policy. It is true that the county councils have to keep their structure plans up to date. That is a statutory requirement. But I say again that the timing and content of the proposed alteration is entirely a matter for the council. It decided that the 1980 plan should be revised because of the need to extend it beyond 1996 to ensure a continuing framework for local planning and investment; to cater for changes concerning the creation of employment and provision of services, and to reflect an increased level of housing demand.

Dorset county council has said in its consultation document that the choice of housing strategies has been constrained by a number of local and national issues, including Government policies. This is right, and reflects the advice given in our circulars, in particular those that I have mentioned. The county council also points out that its strategies take account of the views of the local public, the nature of the areas and existing policies and commitments. The decision to propose an alteration to the structure plan appears to be based on a comprehensive cross-section of advice and opinion. I can understand from what my hon. Friend has said that he questions that, and naturally we shall look extremely closely at those points.

My hon. Friend asked what account is taken of the effects of inspectors' and ministerial decisions on the progress of a structure plan. There appears to be some misunderstanding. The housing provisions of structure plans are not targets but the basis on which the planning of land availability and infrastructure can be made.

I fear that I shall not be able to answer precisely all the questions, but I can refer to the important one about Hurn airport. The inspector has submitted his report to my right hon. Friend for consideration, and all the representations made in writing and at the inquiry will be taken into account. Those points in the questions put to me by my hon. Friend that we consider need to be dealt with in more detail will be answered on paper. I repeat that my right hon. Friend and I are always available to hear from my hon. Friend and concerned hon. Members representing the county.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes to Four o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 21 July 1986

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Surplus Food

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provision has been made in the revised European Economic Community budget for 1986 for the storage, disposal and destruction of food surpluses; and what was the comparable figure for 1985 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Jopling: The table sets out Community expenditure on public storage and disposal of products in structural surplus—cereals, sugar, milk products, beef and wine—and on withdrawals from the market of fish and fresh fruit and vegetables.

	Storage (mecu)	*Disposal (mecu)*	*Withdrawals* (mecu)*
1984	996	10,436	461
1985	1,299	11,165	230
†1986	1,308	12,629	283

Notes:

* In some circumstances withdrawn produce finds no end use and has to be destroyed although the expenditure involved is not separately identified in the relevant Community statistics.

† 1986 figures are taken from the supplementary budget proposed by the Commission. The overall provision for the EAGGF guarantee section in the final adopted budget exceeded the Commission's proposal by 1985 mecu. Details of the precise allocation of this extra sum have not yet been published. 1984 and 1985 figures are taken from Commission financial reports.

Welsh Language

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the leaflets, forms or any other material which his Department publishes in Welsh or in bilingual Welsh/English format.

Mr. Jopling: None. Publication of leaflets, forms and any other material in Welsh is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales.

Pollution (Compensation)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is Her Majesty's Government's policy regarding claims for compensation to United Kingdom farmers from the Government of the polluting country in the case of pollution from a foreign source; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Chernobyl Incident

Mr. Kennedy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with other European Community member states on the question of agricultural compensation arising from the income losses associated with the Chernobyl incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he proposes to take, in his capacity as President of the European Community Council of Ministers, to co-ordinate claims on behalf of European Community agriculture against the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for income loss associated with the Chernobyl incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to steps taken by other European Community member states to aid financially the agricultural sectors in those respective states for income losses associated with the Chernobyl incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Spain (Imports)

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his assessment of the effect on the competitive position of United Kingdom exporters of barley to Northern Spain of the insistence by the Spanish Government that goods can be shipped only by vessels under the Spanish flag.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make immediate representations to the European Economic Community Commission following the decision by the Spanish Government to accept imports of feed barley by ship only on vessels with a Spanish flag.

Mr. Moore: I have been asked to reply.

The Spanish Government have for many years reserved the carriage of certain cargoes, including barley, to vessels with a Spanish flag. However, I am pressing hard within the European Community for agreement on a proposed freedom to provide services regulation which would among other things put an end to discriminatory cargo reservation measures such as these.

Irradiated Food

Mr. Freeson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what action is being taken to ensure that irradiated foods are not being imported into the United Kingdom for sale for human consumption contrary to the United Kingdom Food (Control of Irradiation) Regulations;

(2) what practical means of detection of irradiation are available to ports authorities and trading standards officers to enable them to identify any irradiated foods being imported or offered for sale in the United Kingdom;

(3) how many samples of food were tested to detect any irradiation treatment at ports of entry into the United Kingdom since 1 January 1985; and what proportion of samples were found to have been irradiated.

Mr. Whitney: I have been asked to reply.

Responsibility for the enforcement of the Food (Control of Irradiation) Regulations 1967, as amended, is vested in the port health and local authorities. As yet there are no generally applicable chemical or physical tests, adequate for enforcement purposes, for identifying irradiated foods, but perusal of the accompanying documentation may reveal whether or not foods have been irradiated. No information is held centrally about the routine activities of enforcement authorities.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Board and Lodging

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what standards or minimum requirements currently exist in Northern Ireland covering the use of bed and breakfast accommodation and hostel accommodation; and whose duty it is to inspect and regulate the standards.

Mr. Needham: The requirements covering the use of bed and breakfast accommodation are set out in Statutory Rules and Orders of Northern Ireland 1953—No. 24 made under the Development of Tourist Traffic Act (Northern Ireland) 1948. It is the duty of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to inspect tourist accommodation and to regulate standards.

Hostel accommodation is not normally registered as the Act exempts premises which are not operated primarily for gain and are run by a charitable organisation.

The Government recently published a proposal for a draft Health and Personal Social Services and Public Health (Northern Ireland) Order which will enable the Department of Health and Social Services to provide for the registration and inspection of common lodging houses by health and social services boards.

Mount Royal, Donaghadee

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the extent to which the proposal in planning application X/388/86 in respect of the development of 57 apartments at Mount Royal, Donaghadee, is consistent with the North Down area plan to which it relates.

Mr. Needham: This development proposal is consistent with both the existing North Down area plan and the new North Down and Ards area plan 1984-95 at present under preparation.

Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many whole-time equivalent community psychiatric nurses have been employed by each health authority in Northern Ireland from 1974 to the latest available date, broken down by *(a)* registered mental nurses, *(b)* registered nurses for the mentally handicapped, *(c)* state enrolled nurses with mental training, *(d)* state enrolled nurses with mentally handicapped training, *(e)* others and *(f)* total.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

WTE

Year	Eastern HSSB*				Northern HSSB				Southern HSSB				Western HSSB				Totals			
	RMN	RNM-H	†EN	Other	RMN	RNM-H	†EN	Other	RMN	RNM-H	†EN	Other	RMN	RNM-H	†EN	Other	RMN	RNM-H	†EN	Other
1974	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9	—	1	1	11	—	1	1
1975	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	1	1	10	—	1	1
1976	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	11	—	1	1	15	—	1	1
1977	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	11	—	1	1	15	—	1	1
1978	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	11	—	1	1	17	—	1	1
1979	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	3	5	—	—	14	—	1	1	20	5	1	1
1980	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	3	5	—	—	15	—	1	1	21	5	1	1
1981	—	—	—	—	6	—	—	—	11	5	—	—	15	—	1	1	32	5	1	1
1982	16	2	—	—	6	—	—	—	11	5	—	—	18	1	1	—	51	8	1	—
1983	21	5	—	—	8	—	—	—	11	5	—	—	20	—	1	—	60	10	1	—
1984	27	5	—	—	8	—	—	—	11	5	—	—	19	3	1	—	65	13	1	—
1985	31	6	—	—	8	—	—	—	13	5	—	—	19	3	1	—	71	14	1	—
1986	36	6	—	—	8	—	—	—	13	8	—	—	19	4	1	—	76	18	1	—

* Prior to 1982 there was no formal community psychiatric nursing service although an unstructured service was provided by hospital nursing staff.

† Northern Ireland has only one register for second level nurses—EN (Enrolled Nurses).

O-level Examination Results

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the O-level pass rate expressed as a percentage of the total school population in Northern Ireland at the latest date for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what contribution the Anglo-Irish agreement conference is making to the reduction of sectarian discord and violence.

Mr. Tom King [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1986]: The Anglo-Irish agreement, which established the Intergovernmental Conference, offers a framework within which people of both Unionist and Nationalist traditions in Northern Ireland can be reconciled and can recognise and accept each others' rights. It also offers important

opportunities for co-operative effort with the Irish against terrorism. These aims cannot be achieved quickly; nor will the benefits of the agreement necessarily become clear in the short term. But I believe that no other way offers such a good prospect of achieving them.

Secretary of State (Interview)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the 18 complaints, objections and requests for clarification which the Irish Government have lodged with the Anglo-Irish secretariat in Belfast about an interview given by him to the *Belfast Telegraph* on Friday 4 July; what responses he is making to each of the 18 items; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986]: I have nothing to add to the replies that I gave to questions by the right hon. Members for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) and Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) on 18 July 1986.

Drugs

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the level and trends of misuse of drugs in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986]: The level of drug misuse in Northern Ireland remains low by comparison with the rest of the United Kingdom. The number of persons charged or cautioned for offences relating to controlled drugs in 1985 was 286 compared with 227 in 1984, 182 in 1983 and 218 in 1982. The vast majority of these offences related to cannabis and there is no evidence of a major hard drugs problem.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chernobyl Disaster (Compensation)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what negotiations there have been, and what negotiations have been arranged for the near future, with the Soviet Union over compensation for British farmers following the Chernobyl disaster.

Mr. Renton: On 10 July we formally reserved our right with the Soviet Government to claim compensation on our own behalf on behalf of our citizens for any losses suffered as a consequence of the accident at Chernobyl. The presentation of a formal claim, should we decide to make one, would not take place until the nature and full extent of any damage suffered had been assessed.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what purpose two scientists are being sent to the Falkland Islands in connection with penquin deaths; what instructions have been given them as to the scope of their work; and what are the fields of specialist expertise of the scientists concerned.

Mr. Eggar: The Falkland Islands Foundation and the Falkland Islands Development Corporation have jointly funded a project for two scientists, a marine ornithologist and an assistant to study the feeding habits of seabirds around the Falkland Islands.

Foreign Policy (EC)

Mr. Foulkes: asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the declarations on foreign policy made jointly by the European Economic Community countries since political co-operation archives began.

Mrs. Chalker: Declarations on foreign policy made jointly by the Twelve are placed in the Library of the House.

ENERGY

Coal Consumption

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has about the amount of coal consumed by industry in the last year for which figures are available; if he is able to provide a breakdown according to the principal types of industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The provisional figures for coal consumed by the principal types of industry in the United Kingdom during 1985 are:

	'000 tonnes
Iron and steel	30
Non ferrous metals	1,199
Cement and other mineral products	1,995
Chemicals	811
Mechanical engineering	124
Electrical engineering	23
Vehicles	231
Food, drink and tobacco	444
Textiles, leather and clothing	205
Paper, publishing and printing	546
Public administration	1,280
Agriculture	30
Miscellaneous	400
Other	1,847
Total	9,165

South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will discuss with the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority the termination of South Africa's associate membership of the United Kingdom Atomic energy Authority's systems reliability service.

Mr. Goodlad: It is our policy not to assist in any way South Africa's nuclear programmes. South African membership of the UKAEA's systems reliability service is not being renewed.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give details of the controls introduced to enforce the ban on new contracts for the sale and export of nuclear goods, materials and technology to South Africa, as agreed in the Commonwealth accord on Southern Africa adopted on 20 October 1985.

Mr. Goodlad: It remains United Kingdom policy not to supply any materials or equipment to South Africa which would aid her nuclear programme. This policy is exercised through the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1985.

Electricity Supply Regulations

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Energy when his Department will redraft and recirculate the proposals for new electricity supply regulations in the light of the comments received from the Electricity Consumers Council.

Mr. Goodlad: The redrafting will be carried out over the next few months in light of the many helpful and constructive comments that have been received from a number of bodies, including the Electricity Consumers Council. Interested bodies will be consulted further on specific issues during the redrafting.

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Energy why the 1937 electricity supply regulations are being redrafted; when the decision to redraft the regulations was taken; and on what date and at what stage in the redrafting process the views of the Electricity Council were sought.

Mr. Goodlad: Consideration has been given to this matter over a considerable period in view of developments since 1937. The Energy Act 1983 opened the way for increased private generation and this increased the need for revisions. Electricity Council staff took part in the early stages of the work following the Act but were not involved in decisions on, or the drafting of, the proposals which have been issued for general consultation. The council received the draft when this was circulated to other interested organisations.

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the energy organisations from whom comments were *(a)* requested and *(b)* received in the re-drafting of the electricity supply regulations.

Mr. Goodlad: The draft electricity supply regulations were sent to the following bodies with an invitation to comment and those marked with an asterisk have responded:

Association of County Councils.
Association of District Councils.
* Association of Metropolitan Authorities.
* Association of Supervisory and Executive Engineers.
* British Broadcasting Corporation.
* British Gas Corporation.
British Insulated Callender's Cables Pyrotenax Ltd.
* British Railways Board.
British Safety Council.
British Standards Institution.
* British Telecom.
* British Waterways Board.
* Combined Heat and Power Association.
* Confederation of British Industry.
Consumers Association.
* Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.
* Country Landowners Association.
Department of the Director of Public Prosecutions.
* Department of Economic Development, Northern Ireland.
Department of the Environment.
Department of Trade and Industry.
Department of Transport.
Electric Cable Makers Confederation.
* Electrical Association for Women.
* Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union.
* Electrical Power Engineers' Association.
* Electricity Consumers' Council.
* Electricity Council.
Engineering Equipment and Material Users' Association.
* Federation of British Electrotechnical and Allied Manufacturers' Associations.
Fire Protection Association.
Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning Manufacturers' Association.
* Health and Safety Executive.
Home Office.
* Imperial Chemical Industries, plc.
* Industry Department for Scotland.
Isle of Man Government.
Law Society.
* London Boroughs Association.
Manx Electricity Authority.
* Midlands Electricity Consultative Council.
* Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.
* Ministry of Defence.
National Caravan Council.
National Consumer Council.
* National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting.
National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers.
Northern Ireland Government.
Royal Institute of British Architects.
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.
Slough Industrial Estates.
* The Electrical Contractors' Association.
* The Electrical Contractors' Association of Scotland.
* The Electrical Installation Equipment Manufacturers' Association Ltd.
* The Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors.
The Institution of Civil Engineers.
* The Institution of Electrical Engineers.
* The Institution of Gas Engineers.
The Institution of Mechanical Engineers.
* The National Farmers' Union.
* The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.
Trades Union Congress.
Treasury Solicitor's Department.
* United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.
Water Authorities Association.

Coal Miners (Retraining)

Sir Ian Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Energy what retraining programmes for former coal miners have been submitted to the European Commission for funding under article 56(2)*(b)* of the European Coal and Steel Community treaty for each of the last six years; and what comparative information he has about schemes submitted in other Community countries.

Mr. David Hunt: In 1985 the National Coal Board introduced a new job and career change scheme (JACCS) under which it provides financial assistance for retraining redundant mineworkers, including the purchase of places on training courses. Discussions are in progress with the Commission on Community financial assistance towards the costs of JACCS.

I understand from the Commission that comparative data on coal industry retraining schemes submitted to them by other member states are not available.

Coal Industry Workers (Payments)

Sir Ian Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to how much money has been made available per coal industry worker in *(a)* France, *(b)* Belgium, *(c)* West Germany, *(d)* the United Kingdom in each of the last six years under article 56(2)*(b)* of the European Coal and Steel Community treaty, and as to the reasons for the differences between the several countries.

Mr. David Hunt: I understand from the Commission that the amount of coal readaptation aid made available.

in European currency units, from ECSC own resources to each member state in respect of the six calendar years ending 1984 was as follows:

	France		United Kingdom		Belgium		Germany	
	Amount made available	*In respect of number of workers*	*Amount made available*	*In respect of number of workers*	*Amount made available*	*In respect of number of workers*	*Amount made available*	*In respect of number of workers*
1979	4,277,750	1,022	—	—	1,758,000	812	7,081,750	5,062
1980			8,039,250	2,346	99,250	—	—	5,852
1981	4,866,250	1,059	8,986,000	2,426	—	—	—	—
1982	—	—	34,328,500	6,880	—	—	6,748,500	4,644
1983	436,500	126	28,644,750	5,495	4,278,250	1,317	9,939,750	8,079
1984	21,129,250	4,510	52,998,500	12,673	515,000	515	20,394,000	7,146

In 1984 an additional 60 mecu were made available for coal social measures from European Community general resources, of which France was allocated 15·4 mecu, the United Kingdom 23·1 mecu, Belgium 1·0 mecu and Germany 20·5 mecu.

The amounts made available to each member state reflect the differing circumstances of their coal industries and the particular national support measures in force.

Technology Options

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what discussions he has had recently with the British wind energy group on energy technology options;

(2) what discussions he has had recently with the United Kingdom Solar Energy Society on energy technology options;

(3) what discussions he has had recently with Friends of the Earth on energy technology options;

(4) what discussions he has had recently with the Cambridge energy research group on energy technology options;

(5) what discussions he has had recently with SCRAM (Edinburgh) on energy technology options;

(6) what discussions he has had recently with the Parliamentary alternative energy group on energy technology options;

(7) what discussions he has had recently with the British renewable energy forum on energy technology options;

(8) what discussions he has had recently with the Open University energy research group on energy technology options;

(9) what discussions he has had recently with the Open University appropriate technology group on energy technology options;

(10) what discussions he has had recently with the network for alternative technology and technology assessment on energy technology options;

(11) what discussions he has had recently with the national centre for alternative technology on energy technology options.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department holds frequent discussions with representatives of a wide range of alternative energy interest groups. During the past few months these have included the Open University, the British Wind Energy Association and the Parliamentary Alternative Energy Group.

Offshore Licensing Revenue

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures to show the total amounts received in the financial year 1985-86 from their share of offshore licensing revenue by *(a)* the Isle of Man and *(b)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The total amounts received by the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland during the financial year 1985-86 were respectively £2,786,226·45p and £80,511,191·67p.

North Sea Oil and Gas

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total amount and value in 1984-85 of *(a)* the oil and *(b)* the gas produced offshore in the North sea (i) north of latitude 55° 50′ and (ii) south of this latitude.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Reported sales of oil and gas produced from the offshore United Kingdom continental shelf in financial year 1984-85 were:

	Oil		Gas	
	million tonnes	*£ billion*	*billion m³*	*£ billion*
North of 55° 50′	125·7	21·55	12·4	0·81
South of 55° 50′	0·2	0·03	24·2	0·61

Plutonium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will update to 31 March 1986 the information on the allocation of plutonium produced in the Central Electricity Generating Board and South of Scotland Electricity Board Magnox reactors given in reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 23 July 1985, *Official Report*, column *475*.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 June 1986, c. *269-270*]: The table sets out the allocation or use of plutonium produced in the Magnox reactors of the SSEB and CEGB at 31 March 1986.

Allocation of plutonium produced in CEGB or SSEB Magnox reactors (position at 31 March 1986)

	Tonnes (to nearest half tonne)
Plutonium in irradiated fuel	
(a) estimated in fuel in CEGB/SSEB Magnox reactors	9

	Tonnes (to nearest half tonne)
(b) estimated plutonium in fuel discharged from CEGB/SSEB Magnox reactors, but not yet reprocessed.	4
Separated plutonium	
(c) in stock at British Nuclear Fuels plc as oxide	23
(d) in process at British Nuclear Fuels plc in intermediate other forms (eg. nitrate)	
(e) sold of leased to UKAEA for fast reactor R & D since 1969	5
(f) exported for civil purposes to countries other than the United States	
Sub-total	43
(g) Balance *(see note (g) below)*	

Notes:

(a) These figures are derived from the known tonnage of fuel elements and their estimated overall average irradiation and cannot be accurately calculated.

(b) As for (a). About 20 per cent. of amount shown was held by BNFL.

(c) and (d) This material is held at Sellafield on behalf of CEGB and SSEB.

(e) About 20 per cent. of amount shown was held by BNFL.

(g) The balance of plutonium produced in the boards Magnox reactors was consigned to the United States before 1971 under the United States/United Kingdom defence agreement, and as stated by the Prime Minister, on 21 April 1964, was used by the United States for civil purposes. Because of the barter arrangements under which plutonium was consigned, it would not be in the national interest to publish the figure.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy, what account is taken in assessment by Her Majesty's Government and by the nuclear industry of the safety of nuclear installations in the United Kingdom, of the Rasmussen report on the probability of accidents of various types in reactors in the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to the reply*, 14 July 1986, c. 389]: Extensive safety studies have been carried out by the nuclear industry. These take account of the Rasmussen report and of other relevant research.

Alternative Energy

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out in tabular form the amount of investment on research, development and demonstration made by his Department, the Central Electricity Generating Board, the South of Scotland Electricity Generating Board, British Nuclear Fuels Limited, United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and in collaborative projects with the European projects with the European Commission from 1975 to 1986, in relation to (a) thermal nuclear fission, (b) fast reactors, (d) coal burning for electricity generation, (e) combined heat and power technology, (f) active solar, (g) passive solar, (h) geothermal, (i) wind energy generation, (j) biomass energy, (k) wave energy, (l) tidal energy, (m) electricity conservation, (n) gas fired electricity generation and (o) oil-fired electricity generation.

Mr. David Hunt [*pursuant to the reply*, 14 July 1986, c. 387]: I have asked the chairman of the CEGB, SSEB and BNF plc to write to the hon. Member in respect of their expenditures. The table sets out expenditures by my Department for the period and categories requested, insofar as they are available:

	1975-76 million	1976-77 million	1977-78 million	1978-79 million	1979-80 million	1980-81 million	1981-82 million	1982-83 million	1983-84 million	1984-85 million
(a) Thermal Nuclear Fission[2,1]	12·8	15·3	20·8	17·0	17·2	22·8	35·7	36·0	30·5	25·6
(b) Fast Reactors[3,1]	49·1	53·2	60·3	77·9	76·4	90·8	98·2	96·4	114·9	102·5
(c) Fusion Reactors[4,1]	5·7	6·6	7·3	10·9	13·0	14·8	22·5	21·6	22·1	25·6
(d) Coal Burning for Electricity Generation[5]	—	0·3	1·9	0·5	1·8	2·0	4·4	2·5	2·8	—
(e) Combined Heat and Power[6]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
(f) Active Solar[7]				0·2	1·1	0·8	0·6	1·0	0·3	0·2
(g) Passive Solar[7]				0·0	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·4	0·6	0·3
(h) Geothermal[7]				0·2	1·3	8·2	8·2	4·5	4·7	5·7
(i) Wind energy generation[7]	[8]0·5	[8]0·3	[8]1·3	0·3	0·6	0·9	0·9	2·5	2·5	7·8
(j) Biomass Energy[7]				0·0	0·1	0·4	0·4	0·7	0·3	0·2
(k) Wave Energy[7]				1·8	3·0	4·4	4·4	3·1	1·0	0·4
(l) Tidal Energy[7]				0·0	0·6	0·4	0·4	0·0	0·0	0·3
(m) Electricity Conservation[9]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
(n) Gas Fired Electricity Generation	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
(o) Oil-Fired Electricity Generation	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0

Notes:

[1] Department of Energy expenditure through the UKAEA; 'full cost' terms.

[2] The figures from 1977-78 to 1984-85 also include expenditure on related safety R&D and on the operation of the Winfrith SGHWR and the Windscale AGR, where appropriate. Figures for 1975-76 and 1976-77 are not available on a comparable basis; those given do not include expenditure on safety related R&D.

[3] The figures for 1977-78 to 1984-85 also include expenditure on related safety R&D and on the operation of the Dounreay Prototype Fast Reactor. Figures for 1975-76 and 1976-79 are no available on a comparable basis; those given do not include expenditure on related safety R&D.

[4] The figures also include the contribution to the JET project, where appropriate.

[5] Expenditure 1975-76 to 1983-84 consisted of D/Energy's share of the United Kingdom's contribution to the IEA Pressurised Fluidised Bed Combustion (PFBC) project at Grimethorpe.

[6] RD&D in combined heat and power technology forms part of the total expenditure on energy efficiency RD&D. Except at disproportionate cost, it is not possible to show these figures separately. It is estimated that expenditure on CHP feasibility studies will have totalled 1·8 million in the period 1980-81—1985-86.

[7] Expenditures are shown for individual elements of the renewables R&D programme only and the figures do not include the cost of ETSU management services.

[8] Total figure for all Renewable R&D—including Energy Conservation R&D.

[9] RD&D in this category also falls within the total expenditure on energy efficiency RD&D and cannot, except at disproportionate cost, be shown separately

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Support for Innovation Scheme

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what level of expenditure has been allocated to the support for innovation scheme in each year since its inception in 1982; and what is projected expenditure on the scheme in cash terms and real terms, and indexed using 100 as a base.

Mr. Pattie: Net expenditure on support for innovation under the Science and Technology Act 1965 has been:

Outturn	*£ million*
1982-83	121
1983-84	200
1984-85	239
1985-86*	219

* Estimate.

Projected net expenditure on support for innovation is:

	1986-87 Provision	*1987-88 Plan*	*1988-89 Plan*
Cash terms (£ million)	224	232	243
Real terms (£ million)	224	224	228
Indexed	100	100	102

EUREKA

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give information available to him on the financial support schemes available for EUREKA projects in each of the EUREKA member states.

Mr. Pattie: EUREKA is not a funding mechanism, and public finance for EUREKA projects is a matter for individual national Governments. The available information on schemes in EUREKA member states is as follows:

Austria

1. Three funds are used to finance international projects, one of which—for the promotion and application of new technologies — would apply for EUREKA projects.

Belgium

2. Funding from existing schemes is available for EUREKA projects.

Denmark

3. Under existing schemes, loans of up to 50 per cent. are available for R and D projects (including EUREKA projects). Additional funds have been made available in 1986 for international R and D projects.

France

4. Within the budgets of the research, industry and PTT Ministers, funds have been allocated for EUREKA projects. The level of grants is up to 50 per cent., depending on the technical and commercial risk involved. In addition to the Ministries' budgets, the industrial organisation fund offers loans.

Germany

5. The normal arrangements for research funding apply to EUREKA projects, and funds have recently been earmarked for EUREKA. In sectors of major public responsibility, such as health, or environmental protection, public funding covers a significant share of the relevant research expenditure. For industrial projects funding can be provided for long-term and high risk R & D activities. Here, the Government contribute up to 50 per cent. of the relevant expenditure. Finance of up to 100 per cent. is available for public research institutes and universities from BMFT.

Finland

6. There is no special fund for EUREKA. Grants of up to 50 per cent. and loans of up to 75 per cent. may be available under existing schemes. In the case of large-scale university or research institute participation funding may be higher.

Greece

7. Funding is available from existing schemes. Loans for venture capital are under consideration.

Ireland

8. There is no special EUREKA fund at present. Grants of up to 50 per cent. are available from existing schemes.

Italy

9. Funding is available from existing schemes.

Luxembourg

10. There is no special EUREKA fund, nor are EUREKA projects accorded special treatment. Normal levels of funding would not exceed 50 per cent. The 50 per cent. is split so that up to 25 per cent. is provided through a subsidy, half of which is repayable in case of success, and up to 25 per cent. through a loan from the National Credit and Investment Corporation. In the case of feasibility studies, however, 50 per cent. through subsidy alone can be available.

Netherlands

11. Funding of projects is available from existing schemes. For 1986, however, a separate fund is available for feasibility studies.

Norway

12. For 1986, Norway has set aside special funds for industrial EUREKA projects.

Portugal

13. In 1986 a special EUREKA fund has been set aside. In addition, the Portuguese Development Bank has opened a special credit line to support innovative schemes, including those under EUREKA.

Spain

14. Under existing schemes loans at 7 to 11 per cent. are negotiated on a case by case basis. Interest and capital repayments are made when projects become profitable. The loans vary from 50 to 70 per cent.

Sweden

15. There is no special fund for EUREKA projects, nor are they given special preference. Current schemes may provide loans of up to 50 per cent. which attract nominal interest rates and are to be repaid if, and when, an individual project is successfully carried through. There is the possibility of tax credits under certain programmes.

Switzerland

16. There are no specific funds for EUREKA. Present schemes offer loans of up to 50 per cent.

Turkey

17. Turkey does not have special public funding arrangements for EUREKA projects, but the Government are considering the establishment of a special fund for supporting projects (national and international, including EUREKA) with high technology content. The Turkish Scientific and Technical Research Council gives grants to research institutes and individuals for R and D projects.

United Kingdom

18. The position of the United Kingdom is described in my reply to the hon. Gentleman's earlier question of today's date.

Pharmaceutical Products

Mr. Jackson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to introduce legislation to abolish the licence of right for pharmaceutical products.

Mr. Pattie: The Government intend to include legislation to relieve pharmaceuticals for human use from the licence of right of provisions of schedule 1 to the Patents Act 1977 in a Bill which will implement proposals in the White Paper "Intellectual Property and Innovation" (Cmnd. 9712). This Bill will be introduced as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

Coal Mining

Sir Ian Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which coal-mining areas of Great Britain benefit from assistance for new business development given under the European Coal and Steel Community treaty but are not eligible for assistance from the EEC regional Fund.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following areas are recognised as priority areas by the European Coal and Steel Community but are not eligible for any assistance from the European regional development fund:

Northumberland (Part)
Leeds TTWA* (Part)
Castleford TTWA*
Wakefield TTWA*
Staffordshire (Part)
Nottinghamshire (Part)
Coalville TTWA*
Fife (Part)

*TTWA = Travel-to-work area as defined by Department of Employment prior to September 1984.

Companies (Development Area Assistance)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the criteria for eligibility of companies applying for assistance to locate in development areas, intermediate areas or enterprise zones; and if account is taken of an applicant company closing a factory elsewhere in the United Kingdom or of any job losses thereby incurred.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The criteria for eligibility for regional development grants are published in appendix 4 of the annual report on the Industrial Development Act 1982, and for regional selective assistance in appendix 5.

When assessing the amount of regional development grant, account is taken of job losses in the assisted areas by the applicant or any associated undertaking as a direct result of the project. When assessing applications for regional selective assistance, account is taken of job losses elsewhere in the United Kingdom, with particular regard to losses within the assisted areas. Relocation projects where there is no net increase in jobs are normally excluded from regional selective assistance.

All industrial and commercial companies locating in enterprise zones (which are the responsibility of the Department of the Environment) are eligible for the benefits available in those zones. The scheme is administered by the local authorities concerned who apply criteria under schedule 32 to the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.

Travel-to-Work Areas (Midlands)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which travel-to-work areas in the midlands are eligible for Government assistance as development or intermediate areas.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is as follows:

Travel-to-work area	*Assisted area status*
Telford and Bridgnorth	Intermediate area
Wolverhampton	Intermediate area
Walsall	Intermediate area
Dudley and Sandwell	Intermediate area
Kidderminster	Intermediate area
Birmingham	Intermediate area
Coventry and Hinckley	Intermediate area
Gainsborough	Intermediate area
Corby	Development area
Cinderford and Ross-on-Wye	Development area

Development and Intermediate Areas (Assistance)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the terms and amounts of Government assistance for new buildings, new machinery and training cost for personnel in development and intermediate areas.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Regional development grant is paid towards approved projects of investment in the development areas. Grant is assessed at the higher of

(i) 15 per cent. of eligible capital expenditure subject, where applicable, to a grant per job limit; and

(ii) £3,000 for each net new job created, subject, where application, to a limit imposed by the European Community.

Regional selective assistance can be paid to projects in both the development and the intermediate areas which satisfy the necessary criteria. Assistance normally takes the form of a project grant which is negotiated at the minimum level necessary to enable the project to go ahead on the basis proposed. It is subject to limits imposed by the European Community. Training grant may also be available up to a maximum of 40 per cent. of eligible training cost, subject to satisfying European Community requirements. This attracts a matching grant from the European social fund.

Elders XL Bid (Departmental Evidence)

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 15 July to the right hon. Member for Bristol, South, what was the date on which his Department submitted evidence to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in relation to the bid by Elders XL for Allied Lyons.

Mr. Howard: Written evidence was submitted on 10 February 1986.

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 15 July to the right hon. Member for Bristol, South, if he will publish in the *Official Report* the evidence submitted by his Department to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in relation to the bid by Elders XL for Allied-Lyons.

Mr. Howard: No. Evidence is submitted to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in confidence. The commission may choose to quote from evidence in its report, but that is a matter for the commission.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission (Reports)

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 15 July to the right hon. Member for Bristol, South, what criteria are used to decide what are the relevant factors in considering reports of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Howard: There are no rigid criteria. Careful consideration is given in each case to assessing which factors are relevant.

Lancashire Enterprises Ltd. (EC Funding)

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he intends to review the funding made available under the European regional development fund textile fund non-quota section, BIS measures or other European regional development fund sources to Lancashire Enterprises Ltd.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Lancashire Enterprises Ltd. (LEL) has received several offers of grants under my Department's business improvement services schemes, and is eligible to make further applications while funds are available.

The future treatment of awards to LEL for infrastructure projects will depend on the outcome of the Department of the Environment's current review of local authority capital controls.

Post Office

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has set objectives for the Post Office.

Mr. Channon: I have today written to Sir Ronald Dearing, chairman of the Post Office, in the following terms.

"I believe that it would be helpful to you and your Board if I were to expose some of my thinking on the long term direction of the Post Office. In doing so, I have no wish to alter the relationship between the Post Office and the Secretary of State, which is established in existing legislation, nor to purport to assume or limit the Board's statutory responsibilities, nor to direct how they should be discharged. But Parliament has conferred powers on the Secretary of State and, without prejudice to my exercise of those powers in the light of circumstances prevailing at the time. I hope that it will be helpful to you to know the general considerations that will influence my view.

I would expect to see the Post Office continue on the course it has adopted towards the separation of the Royal Mails business, the Counters Service and National Girobank proceedings subsequently to the separation, where appropriate, of discrete business activities within Royal Mails. The financial and performance targets and the external financing limits set by the Government will increasingly reflect this enhanced separation. The Post Office should seek to develop its financial accounting for the discrete businesses within Mails as quickly as possible to the point that separate accounts are shown in the Post Office's published accounts. I regard these developments as desirable in themselves. I welcome the completion of action to establish Girobank as a Public Limited Company and I wish the Board similarly to press ahead with the incorporation of the Counters Business as a subsidiary company. I wish the Board to consider the further application of this principle to its other main activities.

To ensure the most responsive and efficient use of resources, I shall want continually to consider the possibilities for introducing private capital into Post Office activities and I should welcome your positive recommendations in this area. The Post Office should also regularly and critically appraise the scale and nature of the postal network against the background of technological and market developments.

I believe that the Post Office's prime objective must be to secure the maximum efficiency throughout the business by all practical means including, inter alia, sustained and detailed cost control of all aspects of the Post Office's activities and improved productivity. This will be reflected in the financial and performance targets and in the external financing limits set by the Government.

In improving the efficiency with which it uses its resources, the Post Office should reduce the real manpower and other costs of its services and thereby achieve at least the Government's efficiency targets, where set. It should do this while providing the quality of services which gives the best balance between the services provided and the costs of supplying it. In addition, the Post Office should pursue an investment programme designed to support the objectives set by the Government. This programme should be evaluated on the basis of appropriate investment appraisal techniques, designed to take advantage of technology where this can be demonstrated to produce adequate returns, satisfy any guidelines set down by the Government and have regard to financial limits set by the Government. The Post Office should also seek to realise the full potential of its workforce through the pursuit of productivity schemes and improved practices.

The Post Office should make a profit in each year in each of its constituent businesses sufficient at least to meet the Government's published financial targets and should make appropriate profits in those discrete activities subsumed within the wider targets. The Post Office should also seek to ensure that the main elements of its price structure are sensibly related to the costs of supply and the market situation and should avoid cross-subsidy, particularly from monopoly to competitive activities. In addition, the Post Office must continue the development of, and maintain, the necessary information and accounting systems to be able to ensure that it is following sound pricing principles, to ensure that it is able to monitor adequately the speedily the progress of each of its businesses, and in order to report performance through the published accounts.

The review of the business environment, the corporate plans and the examination of strategic options should have a central place in the relationship between the Post Office and the Government. The reivew of the business environment should be brought up to date and resubmitted to the Government each December. The corporate plans should be submitted each March. They should fully reflect the financial and performance targets and the external financing limits set by the Government.

The Post Office should ensure regular flows of information to the Government and meet the timetables settled with the Government to permit the monitoring of performance generally and specifically, both against the agreed strategies and in relation to the Government targets and external financing limits."

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the current situation in Ethiopia and the Sudan in regard to starvation, food stocks, international relief work and the level of British aid.

Mr. Eggar: Food aid pledges for Ethiopia more than cover the estimated requirements for this year. Widespread starvation has been averted, although the situation is critical in north western Welo. We have recently offered £250,000 towards the cost of air-dropping food to the isolated town of Sekota in this region. So far this year we have provided over £6 million bilaterally in emergency assistance in Ethiopia.

Sufficient food has been committed to meet all estimated relief needs in northern Sudan and starvation appears to have been arrested. The situation in southern Sudan continues to cause concern. We are supporting the efforts of the voluntary agencies to distribute food. We have provided over £5 million in bilateral emergency relief for Sudan this year in addition to our substantial longer-term development programme.

Joint Funding Scheme

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Overseas Development Administration joint funding scheme is intended for development projects or emergency relief.

Mr. Eggar: Grants under the joint funding scheme support British voluntary agencies in carrying out projects aimed at longer term economic and social development.

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any sums within the 1986-87 Overseas Development Administration joint funding scheme budget have been earmarked for work on human settlements during the international year of shelter for the homeless (1987).

Mr. Eggar: A grant of £16,500 has been made to the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless Trust in support of the school for self-help housing project in Colombia. A number of grants have been made to other British voluntary agencies in support of projects which include work on human settlements. These include projects being undertaken by:

OXFAM
Christian Aid
The Catholic Association for Overseas Development
SOS Sahel

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what figure he has announced for the 1986-87 Overseas Development Administration joint funding scheme budget; how much of the total budget has so far been allocated; and to which organisations.

Mr. Eggar: A provision of £5·3 million has been made for the joint funding scheme in the Supply Estimates for 1986-87. Those funds have been fully committed to individual allocations and spending will be kept under review in the light of progress on projects. The British voluntary agencies which have been allocated grants are:

Action Aid
Aga Khan Foundation (UK)
Appropriate Health and Rural Technologies Action Group
Associated Country Women of the World
British Red Cross Society
Catholic Institute for International Relations
Catholic Fund for Overseas Development
Christian Aid
Commonwealth Society for the Deaf
Earthlife
Euro Action Accord
Friends of Urambo and Mwanhala
Help the Aged
Institute of Cultural Affairs
International Secretariat of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme
International Year of Shelter for the Homeless Trust
International Voluntary Service
Leonard Cheshire Foundation
Leprosy Missions
National Childrens Homes
Ockenden Venture
OXFAM
Population Concern
Population Services
Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind
Rural Development Consultancy for Christian Churches in Africa
The Save the Children Fund
Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund
SOS Sahel International
St John's Ambulance Association
Tear Fund
Water Aid
World Conference of Boys Brigades
World University Service (UK)
Y-Care International
Zimbabwe Trust

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Personal Injury Cases

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney-General what is the average time between the issue and start of hearing in personal injury cases in the High Court during the last year for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: In 1985 the estimated average waiting time between issue and writ and start of trial—or date of disposal—for personal injury cases set down for trial in the High Court was 115·5 weeks in London and 144·1 weeks in the rest of England and Wales, but these figures include cases which are settled in the early stages and those which are fought to a finish and culminate in a judgment.

John Mikkelson

Mr. Ground asked the Attorney-General when a decision will be made as to what criminal proceedings shall be brought in respect of the unlawful killing of John Mikkelson in July 1985.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions is at present awaiting the completion of the transcripts of the evidence taken at the inquest on John Mikkelson. No decision can be taken until he has had an opportunity to consider those transcripts in conjunction with the evidence already submitted to him by the Metropolitan police.

PRIME MINISTER

Irish Nationals

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Prime Minister if she will list the rights to housing and social security benefits, and other benefits available to Irish nationals coming to the United Kingdom; how many of these rights are reciprocated by the Government of the Republic; and what discussions about them has taken place within the auspices of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

The Prime Minister: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to cash benefits available according to means. Under the Council of Europe convention on social and medical assistance, ratified by both the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom, Irish nationals legally in the United Kingdom are entitled to our social assistance benefits equally with and under the same conditions as United Kingdom nationals; British nationals are similarly entitled to benefits in Ireland. The main social assistance

benefits in the United Kingdom are supplementary benefit, family income supplement and housing benefit. In Ireland the comparable benefits are supplementary welfare allowance and family income supplement. Housing costs are not met by a special housing benefit in Ireland but are taken into account in calculating entitlement to supplementary welfare allowance.

The provision of cash benefits has not been discussed within the auspices of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

South Africa

Mr. Fisher asked the Prime Minister (1) whether she will place in the Library the text of any letters whe has written or received from President Botha of South Africa in the last three months;

(2) how many letters she has received from President Botha in the last three months;

(3) how many letters she has written to President Botha in the last three months.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 17 July in column 580.

Mr. Speller asked the Prime Minister if she will list those restrictive economic measures recently taken by Her Majesty's Government in relation to South Africa.

The Prime Minister: In the past year, together with our European and Commonwealth partners, we have agreed on a range of restrictive measures. Those having an economic content are:

We do not sell arms or para-military equipment to South Africa;

we do not import arems or para-military equipment from South Africa;

we refuse to sell sensitive equipment to the South African police and armed forces;

we refuse to collaborate in South Africa's nuclear development;

we refuse to sell oil to South Africa;

we have banned all new Government loans to the South African Government and their agencies;

we have ended Government funding for trade missions to South Africa and for trade fairs in South Africa;

we have banned the import of all gold coins from South Africa.

Cabinet Office

Dr. McDonald asked the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report*, the costs of manning the Cabinet in 1985-86 and the number of staff employed; and if she will indicate the number of specialist or political advisers employed during that period.

The Prime Minister: The Cabinet Office's 1985-86 running costs, excluding the Management and Personnel Office, were approximately £14,116,000. There were 503 staff employed in post at 31 March 1986. No political advisers were employed. Three specialist advisers were employed on a fee-paid basis at various times in the financial year.

Income Tax

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Kensington on 3 June, *Official Report*, column 433, what would be the additional costs in terms of revenue forgone if, instead of making all income other than the credits taxable, each individual, counting husbands and wives, separately, were allowed a non-transferable low income-tax exemption, similar to age allowance, of *(a)* £15, *(b)* £20 and *(c)* £25 per week.

The Prime Minister: [*pursuant to her reply*, 17 July 1986, c. 579]: The revenue costs of tax allowances at the specified levels are shown below. The offset to the cost resulting from withdrawing the allowance for those with larger incomes would depend on the level of the income limit and the marginal rate of withdrawal. The costs take account of progressive withdrawal of the exemption above the age allowance income limit of £9,400 per annum.

Direct revenue cost of personal allowance

Level of allowance £ per week	*Cost £ billion*
15	5
20	7
25	8·5

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Lobbies

Mr. Hayward asked the Lord Privy Seal how many mass lobbies of the House of Commons have taken place during the current Session of Parliament.

Mr. Biffen: Thirty five.

WALES

Sheepmeat

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met leaders of the farmers' union in Wales to discuss the sheepmeat sanctions.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I last met leaders of the farmers' union in Wales to discuss the restrictions on 7 July. Officials have also reported to me the views expressed by the unions in meetings held last week.

Cystic Fibrosis

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the centres in Wales which have the facilities for the prenatal testing of amniotic fluid for cystic fibrosis.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There are facilities for the prenatal testing of amniotic fluids for cystic fibrosis at the university hospital of Wales, Cardiff.

River Loughor (Road Bridge)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Gower on 17 April, *Official Report*, column *412*, what information his Department holds on the tenders submitted, both conforming and alternatives, on the new road bridge over the River Loughor.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None. This is a matter for the local highway authorities concerned.

Litter

18. **Sir Raymond Gower** asked the Secretary of State for Wales to what extent anti-litter campaigns are hampered by the non-availablity or shortages of suitable and adequate receptables for litter; and what steps he is taking to deal with this problem.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The provision of receptables for litter is a matter for Welsh local authorities.

Radioactivity

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the earliest time after monitoring radiocaesium levels in sheep and fodder crops that the results can be made known to the individual farmers concerned; what advance notice of monitoring is given to farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Every effort is made to agree with farmers one day in advance that samples should be taken for monitoring. Results of monitoring are normally available to the farmers concerned within three to four days.

Sheep (Ban)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales, further to his answer of 9 July to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn, if he will lift the ban on the sales of ewes, as distinct from lambs, in the those areas still affected by the ban.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: No. although the highest levels of radiocaesium have been found in young lambs, monitoring has also revealed some examples of high readings in ewes. Restrictions must continue in order to avoid the possibility of such animals entering the food chain.

Cervical Carcinoma

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for the following age categories (i) 15 to 24, (ii) 45 to 54, (iii) 55 to 64, (iv) 65 to 74 and (v) 75 to 84, the number of deaths from cervical carcinoma in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* each health authority in Wales for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is given in the table:

Deaths caused by malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri (ICD 180)

		1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Clwyd	15-24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	45-54	1	2	2	2	5	6	2
	55-64	7	3	6	4	5	5	4
	65-74	3	5	3	4	5	6	5
	75-84	4	6	4	1	3	—	5
East Dyfed	15-24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	45-54	2	1	5	2	2	1	2
	55-64	6	8	—	—	6	—	6
	65-74	4	2	1	4	6	2	3
	75-84	—	1	—	1	4	1	4
Pembrokeshire	15-24	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
	45-54	—	—	1	—	1	—	1
	55-64	2	—	3	1	1	3	2
	65-74	1	2	2	—	2	1	—
	75-84	—	—	—	3	—	1	1
Gwent	15-24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	45-54	4	2	3	—	2	2	2
	55-64	2	5	1	4	1	2	2
	65-74	5	2	5	5	4	1	3
	75-84	1	1	6	5	4	2	1
Gwynedd	15-24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	45-54	4	—	—	—	1	2	—
	55-64	7	3	6	2	2	3	2
	65-74	8	3	3	4	2	1	5
	75-84	2	3	4	2	1	2	4
Mid Glamorgan	15-24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	45-54	2	1	4	7	3	4	3
	55-64	10	8	7	5	7	5	11
	65-74	3	10	7	7	11	7	5
	75-84	3	5	3	3	2	6	4
Powys	15-24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	45-54	—	1	—	—	1	1	2
	55-64	2	4	1	2	—	—	2
	65-74	1	1	1	—	1	—	2
	75-84	—	—	1	—	1	—	—
South Glamorgan	15-24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	45-54	2	2	1	2	1	6	2
	55-64	2	4	5	1	4	9	6
	65-74	3	2	2	6	3	3	7
	75-84	—	2	2	2	4	1	1
West Glamorgan	15-24	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
	45-54	3	1	7	1	—	—	3
	55-64	8	7	6	7	3	1	6
	65-74	8	6	4	6	2	3	5
	75-84	2	5	3	2	3	5	1

		1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Wales	15-24	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
	45-54	18	10	23	14	16	22	17
	55-64	46	42	35	26	29	28	41
	65-74	36	33	28	36	36	24	35
	75-84	12	23	23	19	22	18	21

Perinatal Mortality

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each of the past seven years, up to 1985, the perinatal mortality rate for (i) Wales and (ii) each area health authority in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Perinatal mortality rates for 1985 are given in the following table:

Perinatal mortality rate—1985*

	Number
Clwyd	10·9
East Dyfed	8·0
Pembrokeshire	†8·7
Gwent	10·2
Gwynedd	10·3
Mid Glamorgan	8·0
Powys	†9·3
South Glamorgan	13·8
West Glamorgan	10·7
Wales	10·2

* Deaths per thousand total births.
† Rate calculated from less than 20 events.

Comparable figures for previous years have been published in "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for Wales", Vols. 8-12, copies of which are in the Library.

Radiology Services (Neath and Port Talbot)

Mr. John Morris asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he is satisfied with the availability of staff and resources for the radiology services in Neath and Port Talbot; and whether any improvements are proposed.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The level of staff and resources for radiology services in the Neath and Port Talbot area is an operational matter for the West Glamorgan health authority to determine within existing manpower guidelines.

Perinatal Services

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the all-Wales perinatal initiative report on perinatal services.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

National Health Service (Expenditure)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out the *(a)* gross and *(b)* net of charges expenditure, current and capital, on the National Health Service and personal social services for each year from 1971 to 1986-87 for Wales for *(a)* the hospital and community Health Service, *(b)* family practitioner committees and their predecessors, *(c)* centrally funded National Health Service services and *(d)* the PSS with the percentage increase deflated by (i) the gross domestic product, (ii) the retail price index and (iii) pay and prices.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Welsh Language

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing Government financial support for the Welsh language in each year since 1974-75 on a per capita Welsh speaker basis.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information about direct Government financial support for the Welsh language on a per capita Welsh speaker basis is given in the following table:—

	£
1974-75	0·22
1975-76	0·22
1976-77	0·66
1977-78	0·71
1978-79	1·35
1979-80	1·41
1980-81	2·83
1981-82	4·31
1982-83	4·68
1983-84	5·29
1984-85	5·03
1985-86	5·98
1986-87	6·42

Note:
Per Capita calculation based on 1981 census figures for usual residents aged three years and over speaking Welsh.

Executive Housing

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those organisations that expressed reservations regarding the existence of a genuine demand for sites for houses for executives.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Reservations were expressed by the following organisations:—
Town and Country Planning Association.
National Housing and Town Planning Council.
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.
Countryside Commission.
Civic Trust for Wales.
Ramblers Association.
Welsh Office of the Association of District Councils.
Welsh Counties Committee.
Royal Town Planning Institute.
Council for the Protection of Rural Wales.
Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers.
Welsh District Planning Officers' Society.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the date on which he first consulted each organisation before issuing Welsh Office circular 30/86 about housing for executives.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Organisations were first consulted on the draft circular on 9 December 1985.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place a copy in the Library of the response from each organisation he consulted before issuing Welsh Office circular 30/86 about housing for executives.

Mr. Mark Robinson: It is not our intention as this would require the agreement of the organisations concerned.

Road Construction

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the extent and the planned cost of new motorway and trunk road construction to be undertaken in Wales during the next five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Planned expenditure for new construction and improvement of motorway and trunk roads in 1986-87 is £83·24 million. We have not yet made any decision for subsequent years on the distribution of block public expenditure resources. As indicated in tables 3 and 4 of "Roads in Wales 1985" it is hoped to start work on some 87 miles of new motorway and trunk roads by December 1990.

Llandeilo (Travel-to-Work Area)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will consider making selective financial assistance available for the Llandeilo travel-to-work area;

(2) if he will consider making regional development grant available for the Llandeilo travel-to-work area.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: No. The present assisted areas map, which governs the availability of selective financial assistance and regional development grant came into force in November 1984 following a most comprehensive and objective review. Industrial investment decisions demand a substantial measure of stability in the map, and the Government have no plans for early changes to it.

Sheep Farmers (Anglesey)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about compensation for sheep farmers on Anglesey following the ban on sheep sales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have received representations about compensation from the unions and other interests in the industry. The Government have already made it clear that they will be prepared to consider compensating specific farmers for severe loss in particular circumstances. However, at this stage it is too early to assess the effect of the restrictions upon producers.

School Meals

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many children in Wales are currently in receipt of free school meals.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The latest available information, which relates to September 1985, indicates that 90,700 pupils at all maintained schools were then in receipt of free mid-day meals.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are employed in the school meals service in Wales; and what are the corresponding figures for May 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is not available centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many children in Welsh schools would lose free meals under the proposals within the Social Security Bill.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: An estimated 30,000, but most of these will be among the estimated 36,000 children who are expected to benefit from the cash compensation for school meals within the proposed family credit.

SCOTLAND

Drug Abuse (Borders Region)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has to counter drug abuse in the Borders region;

(2) what evidence he has of changes in the incidence of drug abuse in the Borders region in the last six years;

(3) what steps he plans to take to increase counselling facilities and anti-drug abuse education in the Borders;

(4) what projects are in operation in the Borders to help registered drug addicts;

(5) how many registered drug addicts reside in the Borders;

(6) how much is currently being spent on the prevention of drug abuse in the Borders region;

(7) what plans he has to increase funding for the Scottish Health Education Council specifically regarding tackling drug abuse in the Borders region.

Mr. John MacKay: The Government's strategy for tackling the problem of drug misuse and the wide range of positive measures which have been taken or put in hand are described in "Tackling Drug Misuse: A Summary of the Government's Strategy", the second edition of which was published in March 1986.

It is difficult to measure the extent of an illegal activity such as drug misuse, but the main indicators available centrally suggest that the incidence of drug misuse in the Borders region continues to be relatively low. Figures for the numbers of addicts formally notified to the Home Office are available only by police force areas.

NHS services for the treatment of drug misusers in the Borders area are provided as part of the general practitioner and hospital and community-based services.

The public information and education campaign mounted by the Scottish Health Education group on behalf of the Scottish Office is a national campaign, and the substantial resources which the Government have made available to launch and develop the campaign are not allocated for use in or in relation to any particular part of the country. The primary responsibility for tackling the problem of drug misuse at local level, including preventive education amd the provision of treatment and rehabilitation services for drug misusers, rests with local authorities and health boards, in consultation as appropriate with voluntary and community organisations.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of

prosecutions for drug abuse involving cannabis, diamorphine and amphetamines for each police division in the Lothians and Borders police force for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. John McKay: Information is available centrally only for the Lothian and Borders police force area as a whole. Figures for the years 1980 to 1984 are given in the table. Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available.

Persons proceeded against for offences under drugs legislation or other offences involving controlled drugs in the Lothian and Borders police force area.*

	Number of persons				
Type of drug	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Cannabis	85	133	251	216	178
Diamorphine (heroin)	10	42	72	59	77
Amphetamines	6	2	11	13	18

* As the same person may be proceeded against for offences involving more than one drug, rows cannot be added together to produce totals.

Gaelic Language

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for the Western Isles of 15 July concerning census forms, he will introduce legislation providing for the availability of forms in Gaelic.

Mr. Rifkind: For the 1981 census the Registrar General arranged that some Gaelic speaking enumerators would be employed in certain areas of Scotland. I understand that, as part of the planning process, he will consider the desirability of making similar arrangements for the 1991 census.

I have at present no plans for introducing legislation on this matter.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for the Western Isles on 15 July regarding registration of births, marriages and deaths, he will introduce legislation to enable the use of Gaelic in the registration process.

Mr. Rifkind: I have at present no plans to do so.

Rural Areas (Financial Assistance)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing Government expenditure on direct assistance to certain sectors of economic activity in rural Scotland for 1984-85 and 1985-86 on the same basis as the table published for 1983-84 in the report on economic trends and support to economic activity in rural Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The table published for 1983-84 was part of a special exercise for that year. No later information on a similar basis is currently available.

NHS (Management)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost to public funds of the report commissioned by the Scottish Home and Health Department on "General Management in the Scottish Health Service: Application to Units" published in April.

Mr. John MacKay: The report was prepared after an eight-month period of research which included studies of existing unit management arrangements in four health boards—Argyll and Clyde, Grampian, Lanarkshire and Lothian. The total cost of this research, the production of detailed working papers, some additional work commissioned in connection with the research and the printing of the final report was £118,126, including expenses and value added tax.

Dounreay

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, further to his reply of 15 July, whether he will give a detailed breakdown of the estimated £5,000 cost to the inquiry reporters' unit of holding a one-day session in Lerwick of the public inquiry into the proposed reprocessing plant at Dounreay.

Mr. Rifkind: It has been calculated that the costs of holding the Dounreay public inquiry amount to £1,581 per day. This sum covers such items as salaries and fees, travel and subsistance, hire of inquiry premises, telephone installation and charges, the provision of a daily transcript of the proceedings and the installation and provision of photocopying facilities.

If the inquiry team of four were to move to Lerwick for a one-day session, they would have to devote two additional days to travel. The total cost would therefore be three times the daily rate quoted above, plus the travel cots of £440.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Nature Conservancy Council has submitted written evidence to the public inquiry considering the expansion of facilities at Dounreay; and if he will instruct the Nature Conservancy Council to appear before the inquiry.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

State Hospital, Carstairs

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan may expect a reply to his letter of 23 May regarding entrapped patients in the State hospital, Carstairs.

Mr. Rifkind: I have sent the right hon. Member a reply today.

Housing Action Areas

Mr. Fletcher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about housing action areas in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: In recent months the consideration that I give to draft resolutions declaring housing action areas under the Housing (Scotland) Act 1974 has taken longer than normal.

I have been concered that some local authorities, principally the district councils of Glasgow and Edinburgh, have continued to declare new housing action areas although there are substantial existing demands on their non-housing revenue account allocations and they have no basis for assuming that they could meet new demands in addition for some considerable time. The

delay in coming to decisions on individual current draft housing action area resolutions has been caused, in part, by difficulty in obtaining and assessing the costs of proceeding with the development of these areas and in establishing the priority which the local authorities concerned give to each housing action area in relation to other housing action areas in their council's area and to the other demands on the non-HRA block.

I have therefore decided that from today all draft housing action area resolutions submitted to me for consideration should be accompanied by additional information to enable these assessments to be made. A circular letter explaining in detail these proposals will be issued shortly by the Scottish Development Department. I have also agreed today that all the draft resolutions currently with my Department should be cleared.

I hope that these new arrangements will provide local authorities with a framework which will assist them in deciding priorities within the resources available to them on the non-HRA block.

National Health Service

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out *(a)* gross and *(b)* net of charges expenditure, current and capital, on the National Health Service and personal social services for each year from 1971 to 1986-87 for Scotland for *(a)* hospital and community health services, *(b)* family practitioner committees and their predecessors, *(c)* centrally funded National Health Service services, and *(d)* personal social services, with the percentage increase deflated by (i) gross domestic product, (ii) retail prices index and (iii) pay and prices.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

North British Hotel, Glasgow

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what grants or loans were made by the Scottish Development Agency in connection with the refurbishment of the North British Hotel, Glasgow, between 1983 and 1985; and what money was repaid when the hotel was subsequently sold.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. 383]: Through the local enterprise grants for urban projects (LEGUP) scheme the Scottish Development Agency provided a loan of £200,000 in connection with the refurbishment of the North British hotel in October 1984. Under the terms of the loan this sum plus an early redemption payment of £31,438 was repaid to the agency in December 1985 after the hotel was sold.

A separate direct grant of £187,110 was paid under the agency's environmental powers for stone cleaning and other works. None of this was due to be repaid.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Liaison Committees

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to which London boroughs have established official police liaison committees; at what estimated cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, who has responsibility for establishing consultative arrangements throughout the Metropolitan police district, that community/police consultative groups have been established in 35 of the 40 London boroughs. The cost involved in running these groups is met from the Metropolitan police fund and is estimated for the current financial year at £327,000.

The following boroughs have consultative groups:

Barking and Dagenham
Barnet
Bexley
Brent
Bromley
Broxbourne
Croydon
Ealing
Elmbridge
Enfield
Epping
Epsom
Greenwich
Hammersmith and Fulham
Haringey
Harrow
Havering
Hertsmere
Hillingdon
Hounslow
Islington
Kensington and Chelsea
Kingston-upon-Thames
Lambeth
Lewisham
Merton
Redbridge
Reigate and Banstead
Richmond-upon-Thames
Spelthorne
Sutton
Tower Hamlets
Waltham Forest
Wandsworth
Westminster

Immigration

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the application and interpretation of the primary purpose rule by the immigration service.

Mr. Waddington: This rule and the other requirements for people seeking entry on the basis of marriage are necessary safeguards against the use of marriage to secure admission or settlement by those who would not otherwise qualify. Immigration staff apply the immigration rules approved by Parliament in the light of the decisions of the courts and the immigration appellate authorities.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were detained under Immigration Act powers for a period of more than two months on completion of a custodial sentence during 1985.

Mr. Waddington: Twenty persons who completed a custodial sentence in 1985 were so detained under deportation powers. I regret that similar information relating to illegal entrants is not available.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will provide, for the latest convenient date, a table indicating the period of time spent in prison department establishments by persons detained

under Immigration Act powers, showing numbers detained for not more than one, two, three, four, five, six and for six or more months, respectively.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested in respect of prison department establishments in England and Wales on 1 July 1986 is:

Not more than	*Number*
1 month	*42
2 months	20
3 months	6
4 months	9
5 months	4
6 months	4
More than 6 months	5

* Excluding persons refused leave to enter, the figures for which are no longer recorded centrally where detained for under a month.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table of the number of appeals to immigration adjudicators allowed, dismissed and withdrawn in the first quarter of 1986, broken down by category of appeal and nationality.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is given in the table:

Appeals to immigration adjudicators, first quarter 1986

Number of persons

Appeal category	*Nationality of appellant*					
	Bangladesh			*India*		
	Allowed	*Dismissed*	*Withdrawn*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	*Withdrawn*
Exclusion—appeal at port	—	4	—	—	—	1
Exclusion—external appeal	—	8	1	1	1	2
Refusal of certificate of entitlement	—	5	—	—	—	—
Refusal of entry clearance for temporary purposes	8	12	3	5	12	2
Refusal of entry clearance for employment, business or independent means	1	—	—	—	1	—
Refusal of entry clearance for wives, children and persons for immediate settlement	252	338	58	16	31	19
Refusal of entry clearance for female fiancees	—	—	—	—	—	—
Refusal of entry clearance for husbands	4	4	—	12	23	6
Refusal of entry clearance for male fiances	—	—	—	18	57	17
Variation of landing conditions	—	—	—	—	3	1
Refusal to vary leave to enter	5	11	6	4	36	29
Decision to make a deportation order	—	2	—	—	8	1
Refusal to revoke a deportation order	—	1	—	—	1	—
Giving of removal directions	—	1	—	—	—	—
Destination only	—	—	—	—	1	—
Total	270	386	68	56	174	78

Appeal category	*Nationality of appellant*					
	Pakistan			*EEC*		
	Allowed	*Dismissed*	*Withdrawn*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	*Withdrawn*
Exclusion—appeal at port	—	—	—	—	—	—
Exclusion—external appeal	2	7	2	—	6	3
Refusal of certificate of entitlement	—	—	—	—	—	—
Refusal of entry clearance for temporary purposes	1	3	1	—	—	—
Refusal of entry clearance for employment, business or independent means	—	—	—	—	—	—
Refusal of entry clearance for wives, children and persons for immediate settlement	73	114	35	—	—	—
Refusal of entry clearance for female fiancees	—	—	—	—	—	—
Refusal of entry clearance for husbands	7	12	—	—	—	—
Refusal of entry clearance for male fiances	28	53	11	—	—	—
Variation of landing conditions	—	1	3	—	8	1
Refusal to vary leave to enter	4	31	27	—	2	6
Decision to make a deportation order	—	2	—	—	—	4
Refusal to revoke a deportation order	—	—	1	—	1	—
Giving of removal directions	—	1	—	—	—	—
Destination only	—	1	—	—	—	—
Total	115	225	80	—	17	14

Appeal category	Nationality of appellant					
	Other nationalities			All nationalities		
	Allowed	Dismissed	Withdrawn	Allowed	Dismissed	Withdrawn
Exclusion—appeal at port	—	13	12	—	17	13
Exclusion—external appeal	10	112	20	13	134	28
Refusal of certificate of entitlement	—	3	3	—	8	3
Refusal of entry clearance for temporary purposes	54	148	41	68	175	47
Refusal of entry clearance for employment, business or independent means	2	9	6	3	10	6
Refusal of entry clearance for wives, children and persons for immediate settlement	22	53	33	363	536	145
Refusal of entry clearance for female fiancees	1	—	—	1	—	—
Refusal of entry clearance for husbands	3	3	1	26	42	7
Refusal of entry clearance for male fiances	2	2	—	48	112	28
Variation of landing conditions	2	18	17	2	30	22
Refusal to vary leave to enter	39	261	229	52	341	297
Decision to make a deportation order	6	50	17	6	62	22
Refusal to revoke a deportation order	—	5	—	—	8	1
Giving of removal directions	—	5	1	—	7	1
Destination only	—	16	9	—	18	9
Total	141	698	389	582	1,500	629

Prison Department Statistics

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were detained in prison department establishments during 1985 as *(a)* illegal entrants, *(b)* deportees, *(c)* seamen deserters and *(d)* passengers arriving at ports of entry.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will provide for the latest convenient date a table indicating the number of persons detained under Immigration Act powers by individual prison department establishment and category.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested in respect of prison department establishments in England and Wales on 1 July 1986 is:

Establishment	Persons subject to deportation procedures	Illegal entrants	Persons refused* leave to enter the United Kingdom
Birmingham	3	1	
Blundeston	1		
Bristol	1	1	
Camp Hill	1		
Channings Wood	1		
Durham	1		
Exeter	1		1
Gloucester	1		
Holloway	2		
Latchmere House	25	30	10
Leicester	1	1	
Pentonville	6		1
Winchester		1	

* Excluding those detained for under a month, the figures for which are no longer recorded centrally.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were detained in prison department establishments under Immigration Act powers during 1985 after completion of a custodial sentence; and what was the average length of such detention.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will provide for the latest convenient date a table indicating the number of persons detained under the Immigration Act powers by individual prison department establishment and category.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested in respect of prison department establishments in England and Wales on 1 July 1986 is:

Establishment	Persons subject to deportation procedures	Illegal entrants	Persons refused leave to enter the United Kingdom*
Birmingham	3	1	—
Blundeston	1	—	—

Establishment	Persons subject to deportation procedures	Illegal entrants	Persons refused leave to enter the United Kingdom*
Bristol	1	1	—
Camp Hill	1	—	—
Channings Wood	1	—	—
Durham	1	—	—
Exeter	1	—	1
Gloucester	1	—	1
Holloway	2	—	—
Latchmere House	25	30	10
Leicester	1	1	—
Pentonville	6	—	1
Winchester	—	1	—

* Excluding those detained for under a month, the figures for which are no longer recorded centrally.

Neighbourhood Watch (Southampton)

Mr. Hill

asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the 15 wards in Southampton are covered by neighbourhood watch schemes; and what information he has as to the number of uniformed police involved, and as to the number of citizens on the organising committees.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of Hampshire that there is one neighbourhood watch scheme in Southampton, which operates within the Bassett ward. The scheme was initiated by the current co-ordinator, a member of the public, who is assisted by other residents. Two uniformed beat officers also assist, in consultation with the local crime prevention officer and superintendent. The police have also received 16 inquiries about establishing neighbourhood watch schemes covering six wards from members of the public in Southampton and are to meet those interested.

Public House Signs (Travelling People)

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to amend the law relating to signs which may be displayed in public houses to prevent discrimination against travelling people.

Mr. Waddington: Under the Race Relations Act 1976 it is unlawful to publish an advertisment or notice which indicates an intention to discriminate on grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins. We have no plans to extend these provisions to cover other forms of discrimination.

Rape

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of rape were reported in the last three years; and what was the number of convictions for rape in this period.

Mr. Mellor: Annual numbers of offences of rape recorded by the police were published most recently in table 5 of Home Office statistical bulletin issue 4/86. Information on persons found guilty of rape is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (table S4.1(A) of the issue for 1984) under offence classification 19; this information is not yet available for 1985. The figures for rape include some offences other than under section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956, including offences of aiding and abetting and attempts.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many rape offences were reported to the police in 1985 and 1986; and how many have been cleared up.

Mr. Mellor: A total of 1,842 offences of rape were recorded by the police in England and Wales in 1985; 1,177 offences of rape were cleared up. These figures have been published in table 5 of Home Office statistical bulletin issue No. 4/86. A total of 465 offences of rape were recorded in the first quarter of 1986; figures for the second quarter are not yet available. Details of offences cleared up are collected centrally only annually and so no information is yet available for 1986.

Mr. Rashpal Singh

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the removal of Rashpal Singh, port reference number TN3/RLE/3846/86, on 29 June took place whilst representations were being made about his temporary admission as a sportsman.

Mr. Waddington: No. Representations had not been received by the time Mr. Rashpal Singh was removed. I will be writing to the constituency member about the circumstances in which removal took place.

Prisoners (Mental Illness)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were considered by prison medical officers to be mentally ill within the criteria of the Mental Health Act on the most recent convenient date.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 March 1986 there were 305 prisoners in England and Wales who, in the opinion of the prison medical officer, were suffering from mental disorder of a nature or degree which would satisfy the criteria in the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners considered by prison medical officers to be mentally ill within Mental Health Act criteria left penal establishments after serving sentences or following a remand in custody in the most recent convenient year.

Mr. Mellor: I regret that this information is not recorded centrally.

Penal Establishments

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which penal establishments are currently of security category C; and what is the average cost of keeping a prisoner and the staff-prisoner ratio at each.

Mr. Mellor: The most recent available information is as follows:

Establishment	*Prisoners per member of staff (as at 1 January 1986)*	*Cost per prisoner (1984-85)* £
Featherstone	3·71	188
Ranby	3·11	203
Stafford	3·21	207
Stocken	2·73	n/a
Acklington	2·89	216
Haverigg	4·86	151
Lancaster	2·40	155
Lindholme	n/a	n/a
Preston	4·17	148
Thorp Arch	n/a	n/a
Wymott	3·76	187
Camp Hill	2·64	238
Highpoint	3·06	207
Northeye	4·91	149
Norwich (Brittania Unit)	2·58	n/a
Send	n/a	n/a
Wayland	3·64	n/a
Channings Wood	2·85	242
Shepton Mallett	3·10	210
The Verne	3·83	203

Figures are not available where the establishment was not operating or was not fully operational as a category C prison at the date given, except in the case of the Britannia unit of Norwich prison, the costs of which are not separately recorded centrally.

Public Houses (Assaults on Staff)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average penalty imposed by the courts for assaults upon licensees or staff in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: Except in the case of assault on a police officer the information collected centrally on court proceedings does not include details of the victim of the assault.

Terrorism

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been held under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act at Liverpool between 10 July and 14 July in each of the past three years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The figures for detentions under the Prevention of Terrorism legislation at Liverpool between 10 and 14 July in 1984-86 are as follows:

	Number
1984	1
1985	0
1986	0

Securicor

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what duties are performed by Securicor on behalf of the immigration service.

Mr. Waddington: Securicor Ltd. has been contracted to the Home Office since 1970 to provide staff who act as orderlies for passengers under examination by an immigration officer and for the purpose of guarding and escorting persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what payments have been made to Securicor in each year since 1978 for duties performed on behalf of the immigration service.

Mr. Waddington: The cost of the service provided by Securicor Ltd. is a matter of contract which it would not be appropriate for me to disclose.

Bingo

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek powers to enable bingo to be played on licensed premises.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans to seek powers to enable bingo to be played on licensed premises in circumstances where it is not already permitted.

Drink-Driving

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to bring forward a zero limit drink-driving law.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

I believe that at present we must continue to concentrate on increasing compliance with the law as it stands.

Illegal Immigrants

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of *(a)* persons against whom action was commenced as alleged illegal immigrants in 1984, 1985 and the first quarter of 1986, respectively, *(b)* persons who were detained as a result of such action in those years and *(c)* persons who were removed as illegal immigrants or, subsequent to commencement of action, deported voluntarily in those years; if he will identify such persons by country of origin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 July 1986, c. *285-6*]: The information requested has now been collated and is set out below. It shows for each year, and for the first quarter of 1986,

(a) those against whom action was commenced as illegal entrants;

(b) those detained in custody as a result of such action; and

(c) those removed or departing voluntarily as illegal entrants

It should be noted that since action against those in *(a)* or *(b)* was not necessarily concluded during the relevant year, the figures at *(c)* do not necesarily correspond with those at *(a)* or *(b)*.

The information is largely based on the type of passport held by the people concerned which will not in all cases indicate their country of origin. Some of the small number

of British overseas citizens, stateless persons and persons of doubtful nationality may not have been included in these figures.

1984

(a) Afghanistan 1; Algeria 19; Antigua 1; Argentina 1; Australia 2; Austria 1; Bangladesh 35; Belgium 1; Brazil 2; Cameroon 1; Canada 3; Chile 17; Colombia 47; Cyprus 44; Czechoslovakia 1; Dominican Republic 1; Ecuador 2; Egypt 16; Ethiopia 3; France 2; Gambia 1; Ghana 159; Greece 2; Guyana 2; Hong Kong 28; Hungary 1; India 87; Indonesia 1; Iran 21; Iraq 1; Israel 1; Italy 7; Ivory Coast 1; Jamaica 6; Japan 2; Jordan 1; Kenya 1; Lebanon 3; Liberia 1; Libya 4; Malawi 2; Malaysia 1; Malta 2; Mauritius 10; Morocco 11; Netherlands 7; New Zealand 2; Nigeria 109; Norway 1; Pakistan 61; Peru 10; Philippines 9; Poland 9; Portugal 14; Romania 3; Saint Lucia 1; Saint Vincent 1; Sierra Leone 1; Somalia 1; South Africa 6; Soviet Union 1; Spain 10; Sri Lanka 30; Sudan 2; Sweden 2; Switzerland 2; Syria 2; Tanzania 1; Thailand 6; Tunisia 8; Turkey 62; United States of America 18; West Germany 3; Yugoslavia 10; Zaire 4; Zimbabwe 2.

(b) Algeria 17; Bangladesh 21; Canada 1; Chile 5; Colombia 19; Cyprus 17; Dominican Republic 1; Ecuador 2; Egypt 7; Ethiopia 2; France 1; Ghana 96; Greece 2; Hong Kong 16; Italy 3; India 57; Iran 5; Iraq 1; Ivory Coast 1; Jamaica 3; Libya 2; Mauritius 4; Morocco 6; Netherlands 4; New Zealand 1; Nigeria 62; Pakistan 34; Peru 3; Philippines 1; Poland 7; Portugal 6; Romania 3; Saint Vincent 1; South Africa 3; Soviet Union 1; Spain 3; Sri Lanka 17; Sudan 1; Sweden 1; Switzerland 1; Syria 1; Thailand 3; Tunisia 6; Turkey 38; United States of America 7; West Germany 2; Yugoslavia 7; Zaire 2.

(c) Algeria 18; Australia 2; Austria 1; Bangladesh 20; Belgium 1; Brazil 2; Canada 1; Chile 12; Colombia 30; Cyprus 33; Dominican Republic 1; Ecuador 3; Egypt 9; Ethiopia 2; France 1; Gambia 1; Ghana 104; Greece 2; Hong Kong 17; India 59; Indonesia 1; Italy 6; Iran 6; Iraq 1; Ivory Coast 1; Jamaica 4; Japan 2; Jordan 1; Kenya 1; Liberia 1; Libya 4; Malaysia 1; Mauritius 3; Morocco 8; Netherlands 4; New Zealand 2; Nigeria 65; Pakistan 45; Peru 3; Philippines 7; Poland 3; Portugal 11; Romania 4; Saint Lucia 1; Saint Vincent 1; Somalia 1; South Africa 4; Spain 12; Sri lanka 14; Sudan 1; Sweden 2; Switzerland 1; Thailand 6; Tunisia 6; Turkey 45; United States of America 16; West Germany 3; Yugoslavia 6; Zaire 1.

1985

(a) Albania 2; Algeria 32; Argentina 3; Australia 2; Bahamas 1; Bahrain 1; Bangladesh 43; Bermuda 1; Bolivia 2; Brazil 3; Bulgaria 1; Burma 1; Cameroon 2; Canada 2; Chile 12; Colombia 83; Comoros Islands 1; Cyprus 27; Denmark 1; Dominica 2; Ecuador 1; Egypt 17; Ethiopia 1; Finland 4; France 4; Gambia 2; Ghana 183; Greece 2; Grenada 1; Guyana 3; Haiti 1; Hong Kong 24; Hungary 1; India 89; Iran 15; Iraq 3; Israel 4; Italy 5; Ivory Coast 3; Jamaica 3; Jordan 4; Kenya 2; Liberia 1; Libya 3; Malaysia 4; Malta 4; Mauritius 11; Morocco 22; Netherlands 2; New Zealand 3; Nigeria 153; Norway 1; Pakistan 76; Peru 2; Philippines 7; Poland 4; Portugal 29; Romania 2; Saudi Arabia 1; Sierra Leone 5; Singapore 2; South Africa 6; South Korea 1; Spain 12; Sri Lanka 20; Saint Lucia 1; Sudan 2; Sweden 2; Switzerland 1; Tanzania 1; Thailand 4; Trinidad and Tobago 2; Tunisia 2; Turkey 77; United States 21; Uganda 3; West Germany 7; Yugoslavia 11; Zambia 1; Zimbabwe 3.

(b) Albania 1; Algeria 22; Argentina 1; Australia 1; Bahrain 1; Bangladesh 28; Brazil 2; Bulgaria 1; Cameroon 1; Colombia 63; Comoros Islands 1; Cyprus 7; Denmark 1; Dominica 2; Egypt 11; Finland 1; France 2; Ghana 113; Greece 1; Guyana 1; Haiti 1; Hong Kong 15; India 43; Iran 4; Iraq 1; Israel 1; Italy 4; Ivory Coast 2; Jamaica 2; Jordan 1; Liberia 1; Libya 3; Malaysia 2; Malta 3; Mauritius 4; Morocco 16; Netherlands 2; Nigeria 88; Norway 1; Pakistan 38; Peru 1; Philippines 1; Poland 1; Portugal 14; Romania 1; Saint Lucia 1; Saudi Arabia 1; Sierre Leone 2; South Africa 3; South Korea 1; Spain 4; Sri Lanka 2; Sweden 2; Switzerland 1; Thailand 1; Tunisia 2; Turkey 56; United States 11; West Germany 7; Yugoslavia 7; Zimbabwe 1.

(c) Algeria 22; Argentina 2; Australia 2; Bahrain 1; Bangladesh 28; Bolivia 1; Brazil 3; Bulgaria 1; Cameroon 2; Canada 1; Chile 3; Colombia 83; Cyprus 23; Denmark 1; Dominica 2; Egypt 15; Finland 1; France 4; Gambia 1; Ghana 144; Greece 1; Grenada 1; Guyana 3; Haiti 1; Hong Kong 19; Hungary 1; India 12; Iran 10; Iraq 1; Israel 5; Italy 5; Ivory Coast 2; Jamaica 3; Jordan 1; Kenya 3; Liberia 1; Libya 3; Malawi 1; Malaysia 3; Malta 4; Mauritius 6; Morocco 15; Netherlands 1; New Zealand 1; Nigeria 115; Norway 1; Pakistan 41; Peru 3; Philippines 4; Poland 4; Portugal 28; Romania 1; Saint Lucia 1; Saudi Arabia 1; Sierre Leone 3; South Africa 6; South Korea 1; Spain 10; Sri Lanka 4; Sudan 1; Sweden 2; Switzerland 1; Thailand 3; Trinidad and Tobago 1; Tunisia 2; Turkey 75; United States 17; West Germany 7; Yugoslavia 10; Zambia 1; Zimbabwe 3.

1986 (first quarter)

(a) Australia 2; Algeria 4; Bangladesh 18; Bolivia 1; Brazil 6; Chile 1; China 1; Colombia 15; Cyprus 8; Ecuador 3; Egypt 8; France 2; Ghana 117; Hong Kong 14; India 24; Indonesia 1; Iran 4; Israel 1; Italy 2; Ivory Coast 1; Jamaica 3; Japan 1; Jordon 1; Kenya 1; Lebanon 2; Malaysia 3; Mauritius 3; Mexico 1; Morocco 6; Nigeria 71; Norway 1; Pakistan 23; Philippines 4; Poland 2; Portugal 15; Senegal 1; Sierra Leone 2; Singapore 1; South Africa 4; Spain 7; Sri Lanka 20; Sudan 2; Switzerland 1; Tanzania 1; Thailand 4; Tunisia 1; Turkey 28; Venezuela 1; West Germany 3; Yugoslavia 3; Zambia 1; Zimbabwe 1.

(b) Algeria 3; Australia 1; Bangladesh 11; Bolivia 1; Brazil 4; Chile 1; China 1; Colombia 11; Cyprus 3; Ecuador 3; Egypt 6; France 2; Ghana 85; Hong Kong 3; India 13; Italy 1; Ivory Coast 1; Jamaica 1; Malaysia 2; Mauritius 1; Mexico 1; Morocco 5; Nigeria 49; Norway 1; Pakistan 9; Philippines 1; Portugal 8; Senegal 1; Sierra Leone 1; Singapore 1; South Africa 1; Spain 4; Sri Lanka 5; Switzerland 1; Thailand 3; Tunisia 1; Turkey 17; West Germany 1; Yugoslavia 2; Zimbabwe 1.

(c) Albania 1; Algeria 7; Australia 1; Austria 1; Bangladesh 18; Bolivia 2; Brazil 2; Chile 4; Colombia 12; Cyprus 7; Ecuador 4; Egypt 5; France 1; Ghana 93; Hong Kong 3; India 21; Indonesia 1; Iran 5; Israel 1; Italy 1; Ivory Coast 1; Jamaica 1; Japan 1; Jordon 1; Malaysia 3; Mauritius 2; Morocco 2; Nigeria 51; Norway 1; Pakistan 13; Philippines 3; Poland 2; Portgual 13; Senegal 1; Sierra Leone 1; South Africa 3; Spain 7; Sri Lanka 9; Sudan 1; Switzerland 1; Tanzania 1; Thailand 3; Tunisia 1; Turkey 16; United States 2; Venezuala 1; West Germany 2; Yugoslavia 3; Zimbabwe 1.

ENVIRONMENT

Induction Loop System

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with local authorities as to the introduction of an induction loop system for people hard of hearing in all council buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: It is for local authorities to decide in which of their buildings induction loops should be provided but the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, as amended by the Disabled Persons Act 1981, requires the local planning authority, when granting planning permission for buildings to which the public are admitted, to draw the attention of the person to whom permission is granted to the British Standards Institution code of practice BS5810. This recommends the installation of induction loops in new conference halls and similar facilities.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning appeals against decisions made by the borough of Brighton were considered for each of the years 1975 to 1985, inclusive; and what percentage were upheld each year.

Mr. Tracey: The number of planning appeals against decisions made by the Brighton borough council in the calendar years 1984 and 1985, the earliest period for which information is available, and the percentage upheld were:

Number of appeals decided		*Percentage of appeals upheld*	
1984	*1985*	*1984*	*1985*
29	35	41	51

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning appeals were considered by his Department for each of the years between 1975 and 1985, inclusive; and what percentage were rejected in each year.

Mr. Tracey: The information requested is as follows:

	Number of appeals decided	*Percentage of appeals rejected*
1975	11,486	74·6
1976	9,253	70·6
1977	8,366	70·8
1978	8,952	72·0
1979	8,933	70·9
1980	13,130	69·2
1981	14,451	67·3
1982	12,915	69·0
1983	11,221	67·6
1984	11,643	67·6
1985	14,639	62·6

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the numbers and different categories of planning appeals against decisions made by the borough of Brighton for each of the years 1975 to 1985, inclusive; and what percentage in each category were upheld.

Mr. Tracey: The numbers and different categories of planning appeals against decisions made by the Brighton borough council in the calendar years 1984 and 1985, the earliest period for which information is available, were:

Development type	*Number decided in 1984*	*Number upheld in 1984*	*Number decided in 1985*	*Number upheld in 1985*
Major dwellings	1	0	0	0
Other major developments	1	0	1	1
Minor dwellings	4	2	7	4
Minor offices	4	1	1	0
Minor retail	2	2	2	1
Other minor developments	10	3	7	5
Householder developments	3	1	8	4
Change of use	4	3	9	3

Midlands (Enterprise Zones)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which areas in the midlands are designated as enterprise zones; and what financial assistance is available by way of buildings, machinery or training grants for personnel of companies seeking to locate in an enterprise zone.

Sir George Young: The following areas in the midlands have been designated as enterprise zones:

Name of zone	*Area of zone (hectares)*
Corby	113
Dudley	263
Telford	113
Wellingborough	54

Three financial benefits are available to firms in enterprise zones, for a 10-year period from the date on which each zone is designated:

i. industrial and commercial property is exempt from rates;

ii. One hundred per cent. of capital expenditure on the construction of industrial and commercial buildings can be set against tax. This allowance is available either for corporation or income tax purposes; and

iii. the power of industrial training boards to impose a levy on employers does not apply to establishments in enterprise zones.

Households (Statistics)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to the number of households renting accommodation from a local authority in each parliamentary constituency in Greater London at the time of the 1981 and 1971 censuses and as to the percentage of all households that figure represents;

(2) what information he has as to the number of households living in owner-occupied accommodation in each parliamentary constituency in Greater London at the time of the 1981 and 1971 censuses and as to the percentage this figure represents of the total households.

Sir George Young: The information available is contained in "Census 1971, Parliamentary Constituency Tables as constituted at February 1974 (England, Scotland, Wales)" and, for the same constituencies, in

"Census 1981 Parliamentary Constituency Monitors, Great Britain". Both were published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and are available in the Library.

Dover House Drive, Wellsbourne (Planning Appeal)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce the date for the public inquiry in respect of planning appeal No. APP/J3720.A.86, regarding Dover house drive, Wellsbourne following the submission of appeal forms by the appellant company on 2 April.

Mr. Tracey: The inquiry will open at 10 am on Wednesday 24 September 1986 in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Church street, Stratford-upon-Avon.

Crown Suppliers

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about consultations with the Property Services Agency departmental trade union side before he takes a decision on the Crown Suppliers review team reports, 1 and 2, and on the further considerations and report made to him by the central purchasing unit.

Sir George Young: The departmental trade union side continues to be fully consulted before any final decisions are taken about the future of the Crown suppliers.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place a copy of the report of the central purchasing unit on the future of the Crown Suppliers in the Library; and if he will make a copy available to the Property Services Agency departmental trade union side.

Sir George Young: The advice from the central unit on purchasing to Ministers is not in a form suitable for publication. However, I hope soon to be in a position to indicate the next steps I propose to take in the light of the CUP advice and the earlier review team report.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a detailed statement containing a full cost-benefit analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of contracting out, hiving off or privatisation of any part ot the Crown Suppliers.

Sir George Young: I am not yet in a position to make a detailed statement on those lines.

Charitable Housing Associations

Mr. Ground asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of dwellings in England and Wales, at present owned by charitable housing associations, which were built by local authorities prior to 1974 and which are not covered by the legislation granting to tenants the right to buy or cash payments to assist with home purchases.

Sir George Young: I regret that neither the Department nor the Housing Corporation holds centrally any information on which to make such an estimate.

Local Authority Enterprise Boards

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will unfreeze applications made to his Department by local authority enterprise boards for grants from the European regional development fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I am considering the most appropriate means of dealing with applications from such bodies for grants from the European regional development fund in the light of my current review of the local authority capital control system.

Acid Rain

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies are being undertaken by his Department on the effects of sulphur dioxide emissions from sources in the United Kingdom on *(a)* European lakes and forests generally and *(b)* Norwegian lakes and forests.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department is carrying out a wide range of studies, including both field and laboratory work, on such matters as the status of freshwater catchments and the effects of acidity on lakes, streams, soils, trees and crops. None of these studies specifically relates to lakes and forests in parts of Europe other than the United Kingdom, but the results are likely to be applicable to conditions in other countries. We are also involved in wider international research through bilateral exchanges of research information and participation in collaborative work within the European Community and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Her Majesty's Government are considering the payment of compensation to Norway for any damage done by emission of sulphur dioxide from sources in the United Kingdom to Norwegian lakes and forests.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations have been made by the Norwegian Government to Her Majesty's Government seeking compensation for damage done to Norwegian lakes and forests by emissions of sulphur dioxide from sources in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the effect which emissions of sulphur dioxide from sources in the United Kingdom have had on *(a)* Norwegian forests and lakes and *(b)* European forests and lakes, generally.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is a wide consensus among the scientists involved that sulphur dioxide emissions, from United Kingdom and other European sources, are involved in the acidification of lakes in certain sensitive areas of Europe, notably in Norway and Sweden. However, other factors, including certain forestry and agricultural practices, also appear to play a part and it is difficult, given our present limited understanding of the damage mechanisms involved, to quantify the effects of one country's emissions on the ecosystems of another country.

The cause of the damage which has been found in forests in central Europe is still unclear. Although air pollution is generally agreed to be a contributory factor,

emissions of sulphur dioxide from United Kingdom sources are unlikely to be a significant source of the problem. So far as I am aware, no damage to forests of the kind found in central Europe is evident in Norway.

Norfolk Broads

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to introduce legislation relating to the Norfolk Broads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State to the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder) on 7 March in column 288. It remains our firm intention to introduce a Bill to set up a new statutory authority for the Broads area at the earliest practicable opportunity.

UK2000

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what salary will be paid to members of the board of UK2000; how many hours a week they will be expected to spend on board business; and what expenses they will be able to claim.

Mrs. Rumbold: Members are not paid for serving on the UK2000 board; they can claim travelling and subsistence expenses. The time spent on board business is likely to be different for each member, and to alter as circumstances change.

Water Authorities (Debt Burden)

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals his Department is considering for the restructuring of the debt burden of the water authorities.

Mr. John Patten: Nearer the time of privatisation, the Government will discuss with each authority the appropriate restructuring of its balance sheet on conversion to plc status.

Lead Fishing Weights

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Lead Development Association in connection with its proposal to purchase redundant lead weights from fishing clubs following the publication of regulations to ban the use of these weights from January 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department has been closely involved in discussions with the Lead Development Association throughout the preparation of the scheme. I have welcomed the scheme's introduction and commended it to all anglers and angling clubs.

Rating Reform

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take steps to extend the availability of information about the Government's proposals for the reform of the rating system.

Mr. Waldegrave: Apart from the Green Paper itself, we have produced a factual pamphlet summarising the main proposals. In addition, we have prepared a short audio visual presentation which may be borrowed on application to room N6/16 at the Department.

Hazardous Waste Inspectorate (Report)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the second report of the hazardous waste inspectorate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: On behalf of myself and the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, I am pleased to welcome the second report of the Hazardous Waste Inspectorate published today. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The report is concerned with the standards achieved in the disposal of hazardous wastes for the year ending 31 March 1986. Whilst in general terms the report reiterates the critical message of the inspectorate's 1985 report, repeating and further detailing the observations of widely differing standards of disposal site licensing, operation and inspection across the country, it also notes some encouraging improvements.

The report extends the inspectorate's observations of disparate operational and control standards to sites operated by waste producers, and comments favourably on standards of waste management in the very small number of Crown establishments which have been visited by the inspectorate.

In noting improvements which have occurred, the report draws attention both to operational improvements at some of the worst sites upon which the inspectorate previously reported, and to the encouraging moves by some waste disposal authorities in the deployment of additional resources to this important aspect of their duties.

The report details specific incidents where the technical guidance on best practice issued by my Department's series of waste management papers has been disregarded without, apparently, breaching disposal site licence conditions and calls, therefore, for clearer definition of the best practicable environmental option for the disposal of certain waste streams, together with the revision of site licensing guidance provided by my Department, disposal site licence conditions and calls, therefore, for clearer definition of the best practicable environmental option for the disposal of certain waste streams, together with the revision of site licensing guidance provided by my Department. Drawing upon those examples and upon its preliminary review of disposal site licence conditions for a number of major landfill disposal sites, the Hazardous Waste Inspectorate also advocates improved standards of landfill site licensing. In particular, it calls for clearer definition of the types and quantitties of wastes acceptable at landfill sites, for improved monitoring and for more care to be taken in ensuring that the conditions imposed upon licences or local authority resolutions are enforceable.

The Government welcome the signs of improvement recorded by the inspectorate as an indication of what can be achieved within the existing statute. However, higher standards must be consistently achieved across the country in future and the Government announced their intention to introduce tougher waste management controls on 10 December 1985. These proposals are in an advanced stage

of preparation before being put out to consultation. I am convinced that these, together with the revision of guidance on disposal site licensing, will further secure the improvements which are needed in standards of waste management.

Urban Housing Renewal Unit

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the latest progress made by his urban housing renewal unit.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce my right hon. Friend's favourable response to proposals for a further seven schemes submitted to the urban housing renewal unit. These schemes are in the London borough of Brent, the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Cannock Chase district council, City of Wakefield metropolitan district council. Langbaurgh borough council and Knowsley metropolitan borough council. All these schemes, which have been worked up by the local authorities in close collaboration with the Department's urban housing renewal unit and regional offices, involve improved housing management.

Approval in principle has been given for additional resources to be made available in 1986-87. The amounts and the estates which will benefit are as follows:

Authority	*Estate (dwellings)*	*Targeted UHRU HIP resources £*	*Targeted UHRU UP resources £*	*Description*
Brent	Chalkhill (141)	900,000		Pilot scheme to remodel blocks of flats to control access and create smaller, identifiable management units; security measures and provision of concierge system.
Brent	South Kilburn (640)	550,000		Extension of existing concierge pilot scheme to 5 other tower blocks—involving security measures and delegation of management functions to individual blocks.
Kensington and Chelsea	Holmefield House (189)	160,000		Remodelling of estate to control access and increase security, opening of local housing office on estate; provision of resident estate supervisor.
Cannock Chase	Rawnsley (160)	307,000		Security and environmental improvements to estate; external works to dwellings and heating and insulation improvements; appointment of full-time estate officer and more localised delivery of housing services.
Wakefield	Simpson's Lane (120)	300,000		Security measures and improvements to environment and external appearance of dwellings; appointment of two resident caretakers.
Langbaurgh	Redcar Road East, South Bank (876)	20,000		Environmental works to derelict land sites; estate office to be set up providing full range of housing services backed by estate-based repairs team, with advice from Priority Estates Project consultant.
Knowsley	Tower Hill (1,921)		396,000	Environmental improvements; provision of estate housing office; remodelling of layout access and environment of estate.

Pleasure Boats (Litter)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to increase control on litter being deposited from pleasure boats in rivers flowing through metropolitan areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Such littering is an offence against the Litter Act 1983 and can attract a fine of up to £400; we have no plans to change the law.

Enterprise Boards

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to publish the review he has been carrying out into the status of enterprise boards.

Mr. Tracey: We are not currently carrying out a review of the status of enterprise boards. We shall consider the most appropriate means of dealing with applications from such bodies for grants from the European regional development fund in the light of the Department's current review of the local authority capital control system.

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to deal with peripheral bodies and local authority companies in the course of his current review of enterprise boards' job-creating programmes.

Mr. Tracey: I am not aware of any review of enterprise boards' job-creating programmes.

Transferable Discounts

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his estimate of the annual cost to public funds of offering transferable discounts to tenants of wheelchair housing owned by local authorities or housing associations on the same basis as to able-bodied tenants of housing associations;

(2) how many tenants of housing associations have applied for a transferable discount; and if he will express this figure as a percentage of the total number of housing units owned by housing associations whose tenants are eligible for transferable discounts.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his replies*, 3 June 1986, c. *504-505*]: In addition to the 7,573 tenants who had applied for a transferable discount under the home ownership scheme for tenants of charitable housing associations up to 31 March 1986, I now understand that there are an estimated 680 further tenants who had registered an initial interest but who have not yet sought approval in principle for their discounts. These 8,223 applications in fact represent just over 10 per cent. of the

estimated total number of dwellings owned by charitable housing associations whose tenants are eligible for the scheme.

Homeless Households

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the number of homeless households placed by (i) local authorities in greater London and (ii) local authorities in the non-metropolitan areas in bed and breakfast accommodation *(a)* at the end of 1984 and *(b)* at end of 1985;

(2) what is his Department's explanation of the increase in the number of homeless households placed by (i) local authorities in the greater London and (ii) local authorities in non-metropolitan areas in bed and breakfast accommodation at the end of 1985 over that at the end of 1984;

(3) what is his Department's explanation of the higher percentage increase in the number of homeless households placed by (i) local authorities in the non-metropolitan areas, compared with (ii) local authorities in greater London in bed and breakfast accommodation at the end of 1985 over the number of households placed in bed and breakfast accommodation at the end of 1984.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986]: The relevant information on numbers of homeless households is as follows:

	In bed and breakfast		*Increase*		*Accepted as homeless during*		*Increase*	
	31 December 1984	*31 December 1985*	*number*	*percentage*	*1984*	*1985*	*number*	*percentage*
Greater London	2,400	2,960	560	23	25,180	27,390	2,210	9
Non Metropolitan areas	750	1,100	350	47	35,820	41,890	6,070	17

The number of households in bed and breakfast accommodation reflects the availability of alternative accommodation locally and the level of acceptances by individual local authorities. An additional factor is the volume of applications and the extent to which authorities place households in bed and breakfast pending the completion of inquiries into their circumstances.

Though proportionately the increase in households in bed and breakfast accommodation in the non-metropolitan areas has recently been larger than in Greater London, it has been smaller in absolute terms and smaller in relation to the number of acceptances.

Homelessness

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his statement on 20 December 1985, *Official Report*, column 709, if he intends to announce further measures to help relieve the growing problem of homelessness.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986]: We are constantly looking at ways to prevent and relieve homelessness. Some measures have already been announced and others will follow as and when they are ready.

Homes Insulation

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the outturn figures for spending by St. Helens district council under the homes insulation scheme in 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986]: St. Helens district council's expenditure on homes insulation grants in 1984-85, for which it has received 100 per cent. Exchequer funding, was £53,642. The corresponding final figure for 1985-86 is not available.

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 14 July concerning grants available to local authorities under the homes insulation scheme, what criteria he used in reaching the level of funding available to St. Helens district council for 1984-85 and 1985–86; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986]: Each year the Department asks local authorities to submit bids for homes insulation scheme resources for the forthcoming financial year. All the bids are considered together against expected demand for grants, and the resources available. In 1984-85 St. Helens district council bid for £80,000 and was allocated £75,000.

In 1985-86 St. Helens district council bid for £100,000 and was allocated an initial £72,000. It was allocated an additional £30,000 in November 1975 on the basis of information it provided about its grant commitment to date.

Development Corporations

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has had any discussions with the local authorities about the possiblity of development corporations being appointed in some areas to take over certain local government functions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to introduce a development corporation into the metropolitan district of St. Helens; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986]: The possibility of building on the achievements of existing urban development corporations is being considered by my right hon. Friend, and it has been raised at various meetings with representatives of local authorities and others. No decisions have been taken on further designations, whether in St. Helens or elsewhere.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Lower Attaining Pupils Programme

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children are currently involved in the lower attaining pupils programme; what is the total cost of the programme to both central and local Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Some 5,500 pupils participated in the lower attaining pupils' programme in the academic year 1984-85 and about 11,000 in 1985-86.

The programme provides for total expenditure of about £3 million a year to be supported through the urban programme. The local education authorities involved bear 25 per cent. of the cost of their projects. Seventy five per cent. is borne by central Government, supplemented in the case of two projects by funds of the European Community transition to work programme. The Government strongly support the lower attaining pupils' programme, which aims to provide a more effective education for those pupils, mostly aged 14-16, who were deriving little benefit from school. An open day was held recently at Warwick university to disseminate the interim findings of the programme to a wide range of educational interests. I enclose a copy of the speech made by my right hon. Friend on that occasion.

Pupil Statistics

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the total number of children in independent, grammar and non-grammar public sector schools, for pre-compulsory and for post-compulsory schooling, expressed in both numerical terms and as a proportion of the relevant age cohort.

Mr. Dunn: The total numbers of full-time and part-time pupils in independent, grammar and other maintained schools for pre and post-compulsory schooling in England in January 1986 are given below:

January 1986 (provisional)

	Pre-compulsory age pupils ie under five years*		*Post-compulsory age* pupils ie 16+*	
	Number	*Per cent.†*	*Number*	*Per cent.‡*
Independent schools	32,820	3	66,634	3
Grammar schools	—	—	24,623	1
Other maintained schools	508,856	43	280,034	13

* Age as at end August 1985.

† The age cohort for under fives is the OPCS estimate of the three and four-year-old population in England.

‡ The age cohort for 16+ pupils is the OPCS estimate of the population aged 16-18 years in England.

Student Support (Questionnaire)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which countries outside the Eurodice network are being asked to answer the questionnaire on student support issued by his Department as part of the review of student support; and whether he is satisfied that the questionnaire is comprehensive for the purposes of making meaningful international comparisons.

Mr. Walden: The questionnaire referred to was issued before the review of student support was announced, and was concerned only with the level of social security benefits and indirect support to students in countries covered by Eurodice. The information it yields will clearly have to be brought together with up-to-date information on support via grants and loans before meaningful international comparisons can be attempted.

Students (Dependants' Allowances)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students receive allowances for dependants during term time; and what is the cost of these allowances to public funds.

Mr. Walden: In the academic year 1984-85 nearly 7,350 students received allowances for dependants under regulations made by the Secretary of State, most of them for a full year of 52 weeks. The total cost was aout £9·5 million; the cost of allowances paid during term-time cannot be separately distinguished.

Part-time Education (Development Funding)

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is prepared to review the development funding of part-time education in the light of the University Grants Committee's decisions with regard to Birkbeck College.

Mr. Walden: I am not aware that the discussions between London university and the University Grants Committee regarding Birkbeck College raise any broader issues about the funding of developments in part-time higher education. We welcome the recent increases in part-time student numbers and hope they continue.

Clinical Academic Staff

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether clinical academic staff will receive the same pay increase, implemented from the same date, as their National Health Service colleagues;

(2) why there has been a delay in providing the funding for the 1986 pay increase for clinical academic staff.

Mr. Ryman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government that sufficient funds are made available to universities to enable clinical academic staff to receive future pay awards on the same date as their counterparts in the National Health Service; when he expects that funds will be made available to implement the 1986 pay award to clinical academic staff; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if, in the light of Her Majesty's Government's commitment to link clinical academic staff pay to that of equivalent National Health Service staff, he will explain the factors which governed the decision to pay National Health Service doctors their 1986 increase with their July pay before the timing of the payment of the 1986 increase to clinical academic staff had been determined; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The Government have said that they accept the principle that the pay of clinical academic staff should be linked to that of doctors and dentists in the National Health Service. But the pay levels of clinical academic staff are actually determined by the clinical academic staffs salaries committee in which the Government have no part. The Government have undertaken that, if a pay settlement is agreed in CASSC which provides increases for clinical academic staff equivalent to those in the National Health Service arising from the Doctors and Dentists Review Body report, it will provide the universities with additional funds to cover the cost of that settlement to the extent that it exceeds the pay

settlement for non-clinical academic staff. The sum involved cannot be determined until the two pay settlements have been agreed.

Psoriasis

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been spent on research into psoriasis by the Medical Research Council in each of the past three years.

Mr. Walden: I understand from the Medical Research Council that expenditure on projects exclusively on research in psoriasis has been as follows:

Financial Year	*£'000*
1983-84	199
1984-85	271
1985-86	156

Teachers

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the names of the local education authorities which have applied for teachers from ethnic minorities to be granted qualified teacher status together with the number applied for in each case.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is not available. Local education authorities recommending teachers for qualified teacher status are not required to specify the ethnic origin of those teachers.

Information Technology

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish a breakdown of figures for spending on information technology related courses, separating computer science from mathematics, in universities, polytechnics and other institutions for the most recent years available;

(2) if he will publish figures on university spending on information technology-related courses in the most recent years available, separating computer science from mathematics.

Mr. Walden: Details of expenditure on courses in universities and the public sector of higher education are not available centrally on the basis sought by my hon. Friend.

The Government have made additional funds available through the information technology and engineering and technology programme, to expand the provision of places on information technology-related courses; these will supplement the considerable teaching and research activity already taking place in both sectors of higher education.

Spina Bifida

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those centres which are currently involved in the Medical Research Council tests involving vitamin supplementation of mothers at risk of having spina bifida children.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the following centres are participating in the Medical Research Council's randomised clinical trial of folic acid and other vitamin supplementation in the prevention of neural tube defects.

	Centre
United Kingdom	
Ashton-under-Lyne	Tameside General Hospital
Birmingham	East Birmingham Hospital
Cardiff	Welsh National School of Medicine
Dundee	Ninewells Hospital
Edinburgh	Western General Hospital
Glasgow	Yorkhill Hospital
London	Queen Charlotte's Hospital
	St. Bartholomew's Hospital
	St. George's Hospital
	University College Hospital
	The London Hospital
Newcastle	The Department of Human Genetics, University of Newcastle
Oxford	John Radcliffe Maternity Hospital
Portsmouth	St. Mary's Hospital
Sheffield	Jessop Hospital for Women
Southampton	Princess Anne Hospital
OVERSEAS	
Canada	
Vancouver	Grace Hospital
	Department of Paediatrics, McMaster University
Hamilton	
Halifax	Hospital for Children
Hungary	
Budapest	National Institute of Hygiene
Debrecen	Medical University
Miskolc	County Hospital
Pecs	County Hospital
Szeged	Medical University
Szambathely	Markusovsky Hospital
Israel	
Tel-Aviv	Sheba Medical Centre

Medical Research Council

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how the Medical Research Council is constituted; and who are its present members.

Mr. Walden: The Medical Research Council was incorporated under its present title by royal charter in 1920. The members of the council are as follows:

Chairman
The Right Hon. Earl Jellicoe KBE DSO MC

Deputy Chairman
Sir James Gowans CBE MD DSc D Phil FRCP FRS

Members
Sir Donald Acheson DM FRCP FFCM
Sir Brian Bailey OBE JP
Mrs. B. Banham CBE JP BSc SRN
Professor I. A. D. Bouchier MD FRCP FRCPE
Dr. J. T. Carter MB FIH MFOM DHMSA
Mr. D. Crouch MP
Professor M. A. Epstein MD DSc FRC Path FRS
Professor R. E. Kendell MD FRCP FRCPsych
Professor J. Lloyd MD FRCP
Dr. I. S. MacDonald MD FRCPE FFCM
Professor P. J. Morris PhD MB FRCS FRACS FACS
Professor J. M. Newsom-Davis MD FRCP
Professor D. K. Peters MB FRCP
Dr. D. A. Rees DSc FRS
Sir Michael Stoker MD CBE FRCP FRS
Professor J. K. Wing MD PhD DPM FRCPsych
Professor L. Wolpert PhD DIC FRS

Departmental Staff

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list additional statutory responsibilities

and other initiatives which have had manpower implications for his Department since 1979 and the number involved in each category where identifiable.

Mr. Chris Patten: The principal statutory responsibilities and initiatives undertaken by the Department since 1979 include the following:

Statutory Responsibilities

Education Act 1980: new arrangements for school government; new responsibilities on the Secretary of State in respect of parental appeals; the assisted places scheme and other provisions.

Education Act 1981: new responsibilities on the Secretary of State in respect of parental appeals and the approval of special schools and other provisions.

National Heritage Act 1983: new arrangement for Victoria and Albert and science museums.

Education (Grants and Awards) Act 1984 and Education (Amendment) Act 1986: provision for the payment of education support grants to local education authorities and other provisions.

Local Government Act 1985: setting of the precept limit for the Inner London education authority.

Further Education Act 1985.

Education Act 1986

Other Initiatives

Education Bill 1986

Managing the contraction of the schools system to cope with falling rolls

Reform of examinations to create a single 16+ examination

Proposals for an 18+ examination

Re-examination of school curriculum to establish its main content and standards to be attained

Curricular policies for key subjects

Initiating a national system of records of achievements for school leavers

White Paper "Better Schools"

Follow-up work on the Swann committee of inquiry into the education of children from ethnic minority groups

Devising action to deal with drug abuse and AIDS

Establishment of the microelectronics education programme (MEP) and its successor the microelectronics education support unit (MESU)

Abolition of the Schools Council and setting up of the Secondary Examinations Council (SEC) and the School Curriculum Development Committee (SCDC)

Reform of the Inner London education authority

Programme of development projects for lower attaining pupils

Technical and vocational education initiative (TVEI)

Certificate of pre-vocational education (CPEVE)

Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill 1985

Publication and follow-up reports from Her Majesty's inspectors of schools

Review of higher education policy and issue of Green Paper "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s"

Pursuing quality and cost effectiveness in higher education. Follow-up to the Jarratt efficiency review of universities and the Lindop Report of public sector validation. Croham review of the university Grants Committee

Professional industrial and commercial updating programme (PICKUP)

Adult unemployed programme (REPLAN)

Student grants reviews

Setting up of the National Body for Public Sector Higher Education (NAB)

College-employer links project (CELP)

Educational contribution to the Manpower Services Commission's initiatives on training, including White Papers "Training for Jobs" and "Working Together — Education and Training"

New arrangements for in-service training for teachers

Work towards long term reform of teachers' pay, duties and contract

Establishment of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE)

Major reviews of science policy and its support, including support of university scientific research (1982), Social Science Research Council (1982), postgraduate education (1982), in-house and university research (1983), commissioned research (1983), the UK's role in high energy particlephysics (1985, special complementing (1986) and private funding of research (1986)

Development work on the educational component of the needs assessment for the rate support grant system

Financial management initiative and centrally imposed initiatives on personnel management

Financial management review of non-departmental public bodies

It would not be possible to quantify the number of staff involved without a disproportionate effort. So far the Department has managed to contain these new demands within the manpower ceilings.

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of full-time equivalent employees in *(a)* administrative and *(b)* other grades in his Department in each year since 1970.

Mr. Chris Patten: The full-time equivalent staff-in-post figures for the Department of Education and Science including the UGC are as follows:

Staff-in-post on 1 April

	Administrative Grades	*HMI*	*Total*
1970	2,562	532	3,094
1971	2,516	478	2,996
1972	2,527	459	2,986
1973	2,519	440	2,959
1974	2,430	441	2,871
1975	2,475	433	2,908
1976	2,491	427	2,918
1977	2,397	411	2,808
1978	2,277	401	2,678
1979	2,286	401	2,687
1980	2,222	421	2,643
1981	2,140	407	2,547
1982	2,036	392	2,428
1983	2,024	381	2,405
1984*	1,993	390	2,383
1985*	1,971	460	2,431
1986*	1,948	464	2,412

* From July 1983 staff assigned to the Office of Arts and Libraries were no longer part of the Department.

O-level Pass Rate

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the O-level pass rate expressed as a percentage of the total school population in England and Wales at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: Information is not available precisely in the form requested. However, the Department's school leavers sample survey estimates that 65 per cent. of the GCE O-level examinations, as taken by pupils of all ages who left school during the academic year 1984-85, were awarded at higher grades A-C. It is also estimated that 82 per cent. were awarded at grades A-E.

Information for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Appeals

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the number of appeals received by him in the last year under (i) section 5(6) and (ii) section 8(6) of the Education Act

1981; and whether he will provide a breakdown of the decisions made in respect of those appeals and state the number on which a decision is outstanding and the average time for a decision to be made.

Mr. Dunn: The information is as follows:

Appeals under section 5(6) of the Education Act 1981 during the period 1 July 1985 to 30 June 1986

LEA	Number of appeals	LEA decision upheld	Direction under section 5(8)	Not yet decided
Barnet	1	1	—	—
Bury	2	—	—	1
Cheshire	3	—	—	3
Dorset	1	—	—	1
Durham	1	—	—	1
Hampshire	1	—	—	—
Hereford and Worcester	2	1	—	—
Humberside	1	—	—	—
Kent	1	—	—	—
Lancashire	1	—	—	—
Newham	1	—	—	1
Norfolk	1	—	—	1
Nottinghamshire	3	1	—	—
Oxfordshire	3	—	2	1
Solihull	1	—	—	1
Surrey	2	1	—	1
Tameside	1	—	—	1
Total	26	4	2	12

In five instances, Bury (1), Humberside (1), Lancashire (1), Nottingham (2) the LEA have agreed to make a statement following informal decisions with the Department.

In three instances, Hampshire (1), Hereford and Worcester (1), Kent (1), the appeal was withdrawn.

Appeals under Section 8(6) of the Education Act 1981 during the period 1 July 1985 to 30 June 1986

LEA	Number of appeals	Statement confirmed	Statement amended	Not yet decided
Avon	1	—	1	—
Barnet	3	3	—	—
Buckinghamshire	1	—	—	1
Cheshire	1	1	—	—
Croydon	1	—	—	1
Cumbria	1	1	—	—
Doncaster	1	—	1	—
Durham	1	1	—	—
Gloucestershire	1	—	—	1
Hertfordshire	1	1	—	—
Humberside	1	—	1	—
Lancashire	1	—	—	1
Leicestershire	1	1	—	—
Lincolnshire	1	1	—	—
North Yorkshire	2	—	—	1
Rochdale	1	—	—	1
Solihull	1	1	—	—
Surrey	2	1	—	1
Wolverhampton	1	1	—	—
Total	23	12	3	7

In one instance, north Yorkshire, the appeal was withdrawn.

The average length of time taken for a decision to be made was approximately 16 weeks.

Further Education

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the level of participation in further education of young people with special educational needs as compared with the general levels of participation.

Mr. Walden: The information is not centrally available. However, some figures relevant to the question will be available later this year, following the completion of a survey commissioned by the Department.

School Closures

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the number of school closures awaiting his decision under section 12 of the Education Act 1980; and whether he will provide a breakdown of the decisions made in terms of those confirmed and overruled.

Mr. Dunn: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Teachers and Lecturers (Pay)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the maximum and minimum salaries of *(a)* a senior teacher in a school and *(b)* a lecturer on the career scale lecturer II/senior lecturer in a polytechnic at (i) 1 April 1979, (ii) 1 September 1980, following the comparability study under the chairmanship of Professor Clegg and (iii) 1 April 1986, all expressed in terms of 1 April 1986, as corrected by the index of average earnings; and the decrease in comparable terms between 1 September 1980 and 1 April 1986 following the recent interim award.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986]: The information is presented below. Columns 1 and 2 of the table give salary figures at cash prices. Columns 3 and 4 present these salary figures in index form, adjusted by the index of average earnings.

	£ Cash Prices		Index of Salaries Relative to Average Earnings Index, April 1986 = 100	
	Senior Teacher	Lecturer II minimum Senior Lecturer maximum	Senior Teacher	Lecturer II minimum Senior Lecturer maximum
1 April 1979				
minimum	5,838	4,470	108·7	109·9
maximum	7,722	8,253	106·6	109·9
1 September 1980				
minimum	7,887	6,012	109·1	109·7
maximum	10,656	11,295	109·1	111·8

	£ Cash Prices		Index of Salaries Relative to Average Earnings Index, April 1986 = 100	
	Senior Teacher	Lecturer II minimum Senior Lecturer maximum	Senior Teacher	Lecturer II minimum Senior Lecturer maximum
1 April 1986				
minimum	11,349	8,595	100·0	100·0
maximum	15,330	15,873	100·0	100·0

TRANSPORT

A1-M1 Link Road

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has yet received the report of the inspector who conducted the inquiry into the proposed A1-M1 link road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport have just received the report and will be studying it carefully.

M63 (Barton Bridge)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* what publicity he has given to the M63-Barton bridge motorway works and to the alternative routes indicating at which areas such publicity has been aimed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In November we met representatives of the national motoring organisations, public transport operators, road hauliers, local industry and the local emergency services to discuss alternative routes for all types of traffic to avoid the Barton bridge area. My own visit to the region in March included a press conference and TV interviews about it. A 24-hour telephone answering service was established and a site liaison officer is available to answer queries. Over a million pamphlets illustrating recommended alternative routes were released to the public via travel agents, local authorities, police stations, motorway service areas, public libraries and the motoring organisations. A regular Barton bridge bulletin is published for use by the media and gives the latest information on the traffic situation.

The publicity campaign has been aimed at both local and longer distance traffic. I am grateful for the ready assistance we have received from the press, from BBC and independent radio and television, from motorway and industrial organisations and from Manchester international airport.

Property Acquisitions

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* commercial and *(b)* residential properties have been acquired by his Department as a consequence of the national trunk road programme since 1979; and what is the estimated total cost of these acquisitions at 1986 prices.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This question can only be answered at disproportionate cost. I will write to the hon. Member.

Helicopters (Search and Rescue)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to increase the use of civilian helicopters for search and rescue in addition to or in substitution of the provision made for search and rescue by the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has no plans to increase the use of civilian helicopters for search and rescue beyond the single contract S61N aircraft presently operated by Her Majesty's Coastguard from Sumburgh, Shetland Isles.

However, a working group set up by the United Kingdom search and rescue committee is reviewing the rescue helicopter coverage of the United Kingdom search and rescue region for civil maritime and aviation search and rescue and will make recommendations to the committee at its meeting in December.

Interested bodies and Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn, will be invited to make representations to the working group either by letter or at the group's coastal meetings in Inverness on 29 July and at Lee-on-Solent on 31 July.

M3 (Bar End-Chichester)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is now in a position to announce his determination of the inspector's report into the completion of the M3 motorway from Bar End to Chichester in Hampshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The inspector's report following the public inquiry into proposals for extending the M3 from Bar End near Winchester to the M27 was received last month. Although it will take some time to consider all the issues discussed at the inquiry, we will do so as quickly as possible. I hope to be able to announce decisions by the end of the year.

Level Crossings

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the installation of automatic open level crossings in the light of recent accidents; and if he will make a statement on the safety of these crossings compared with conventional gated crossings.

Mr. David Mitchell: Preliminary reports indicate that in all the recent accidents at automatic open crossings the equipment was in full working order and each accident was caused by a failure of the road user to observe the simple rules for the safe use of the crossing. I have no plans therefore to review the arrangements for the installation of these crossings. Stopping at red traffic lights at a junction with another road or with rail is an elementary part of driver safety.

On the basis of comparison used in previous answers, it is still true to say that the likelihood of having an

accident at a crossing with gates is some one and a third times greater than at an automatic open crossing of the type where the train driver monitors the correct functioning of the crossing such as is installed at Woodham Ferrers.

Aviation Fuel Prices

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications of the extent to which lower aviation fuel prices have been passed on to the consumer by airlines for his policy on competition in the airline business; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The regulation of air fares is primarily for the Civil Aviation Authority. The authority looks at all of a United Kingdom airline's costs, including its fuel costs, when exercising its regulatory functions. Through our competition policy, it is for each airline to take the initiative in deciding whether to pass to the consumer any benefits it may receive from cheaper fuel; but fuel is only one factor in aviation costs which must be taken into account. Airlines also have to consider changes in other operating costs and levels of traffic and revenue.

Passenger Coaches (Roof Strength)

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will report progress in implementing the international standard for coach roof strength on passenger coaches.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The UN:ECE regulation on coach roof strength is expected to be published soon. We are consulting interested organisations with a view to applying the standard to new coaches registered in Britian and introducing other new safety measures, including the provision of seat belts on front seats and the use of fire retardant materials.

Copies of the consultation letter have been placed in the Library of the House.

Management Consultants (Departmental Contracts)

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1985, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I regret full information in the form requested could be made available only at disproportionate cost. I will write to my hon. Friend.

British Rail

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what discussions his Department has had with British Rail concerning reorganisation and the retention of jobs in areas of high unemployment;

(2) if he will make a statement on the proposed reorganisation of British Railways Board proposals for reorganisation of the traction maintenance division of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Transport made a statement to the House on 20 May, at columns 188-89, about British Rail's proposals for rolling stock maintenance, including the measures being taken by the board to help those affected by the changes.

British Airways (Employees)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of employees employed by British Airways on 1 January for each year since 1979; and what proportion of these employees have been employed for less than a year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The available figures are as follows:

British Airways Group Staff

	Number
31 March 1979	60,788
1 January 1980	60,646
1 January 1981	55,960
1 January 1982	49,685
1 January 1983	44,134
1 January 1984	36,567
1 January 1985	37,895
1 January 1986	39,723

At 1 January 1986, 3,586 staff (including 549 temporary staff) had less than one year's service.

Civil Aviation

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is yet in a position to respond to the Civil Aviation Authority's recommendations on traffic distribution for the London area, contained in CAP 522; and what assessment he has made of the effects on air services between Dundee, Carlisle and Heathrow.

Mr. Neale asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has reached any decisions on the Civil Aviation Authority's advice on air traffic distribution in the London area (CAP 522).

Mr. Pollock asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is yet in a position to respond to the Civil Aviation Authority's advice on traffic distribution rules for the London airports contained in CAP 522.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend has today written to Mr. Christopher Tugendhat, chairman of the CAA, responding to the authority's advice and indicating those traffic distribution rules which we propose to make as soon as section 31 of the Airports Act 1986 comes into force. I have placed copies of the letter in the Library.

Structural Highway Maintenance (Report)

Mr. Alan Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has considered the report by Mr. J. A. Gaffney and his colleagues on their review of structural highway maintenance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have now completed our preliminary consideration of this report on the structural maintenance of motorways and other trunk roads. We shall want to discuss its detailed conclusions with representatives of local authorities through the standing committee on highway maintenance. In the meantime, I am placing in the Library a copy of a document which indicates our broad response to the key recommendations of the report.

We welcome the report's general endorsement of the scale of investment which we have committed to the maintenance of motorways and trunk roads. There is a good prospect on present trends that we shall have dealt with the backlog of maintenance needs by 1992, as well as having kept pace with current deterioration. The report rightly emphasises the importance of early action to repair carriageways if uneconomic costs are to be avoided. We agree that we should seek, so far as practicable, to build a greater element of firmness and continuity into the major programmes of capital investment necessary for the satisfactory maintenance of the trunk road system. We acknowledge the need to take steps to refine and improve monitoring on the general lines recommended, and to develop further our procedures and techniques for ranking priorities.

We also recognise the basic importance of further development of the whole life costing approach in maintaining trunk roads, and of sponsoring the research and development work essential to updating knowledge and techniques for pavement design and maintenance. We regard the report, taken, as a whole, as a significant contribution to enabling us, together with our agent authorities, to ensure the satisfactory maintenance of the trunk road system.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC (Resources)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will raise at the next meeting of the Council of Finance Ministers the paper 7113/86 issued by the Vice-President of the Commission regarding the exhaustion of European Economic Community resources in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Commission's paper 7113/86 containing its proposals for a supplementary budget for 1986 was subsumed in the Commission's letter of amendment to the 1986 budget, issued to the budget authority on 3 July. This and other matters concerning the adoption of the 1986 budget were discussed by ECOFIN and subsequently by Budget Council at their meetings on 7 July.

Customs Officers

Mr. Hancock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will express as a ratio of the average number of passengers passing through each of the English ferry ports to Europe the numbers of Customs and Excise officers at such ports.

Mr. Brooke: The numbers of preventive staff at ports and airports are based on management assessment of risk. For operational reasons it is not in the public interest to disclose staffing resources at individual ports. Provisional figures for the year ended 31 March 1986 indicate that nationally there were about 90 inward passengers daily to each preventive officer at seaports.

Tax Inspectors (Wales)

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many inspectors of taxes are based in Wales; and how many of these are Welsh-speaking.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There are 319 inspectors of taxes based in Wales, of whom 25 are Welsh speaking. One hundred and one of these inspectors are spread among three large offices. Two of these offices deal with the affairs of taxpayers in the United Kingdom generally — civil servants and seamen, respectively, and the third is concerned solely with employees of non-Welsh employers.

Portsmouth Ferryport

Mr. Hancock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will increase the numbers of customs officers working at Portsmouth ferryport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Customs are constantly monitoring their staffing requirements and seeking to achieve greater efficiency in line with Government policy and as recently as January last the Portsmouth complement was increased by nearly 25 per cent.

The need for any additional resources for Customs is currently being considered by Ministers as part of the public expenditure survey.

Financial Management Unit

Mr. Alan Howarth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the functions of the financial management unit; and what work is being carried out on policy evaluation within the Civil Service.

Mr. Brooke: The financial management unit completed its work at the end of 1984. However, the joint management unit was established in early 1985 to assist the top management of the Treasury and Cabinet Office to provide effective leadership in carrying through the programme of management reform in the Civil Service designed to secure better value for money, see *Official Report*, 12 December 1984, column 493.

Policy evaluation is the responsibility of Departments concerned with individual policies. In addition, as was announced when the final reports of the financial management unit were made publicly available, the Government share the approach described in the report on policy work and the financial management initiative, and the joint management unit is working with Department on a programme of improvements, see *Official Report*, 10 June 1985, column 298.

EC Budget

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) pursuant to the statement on 11 July, *Official Report*, columns 613-21, what is his estimate of the United Kingdom net contribution to the European Economic Community in respect of 1986 before and after the agreement on the revised 1986 budget on 10 July; and if he will explain the precise reasons why the estimated net contribution in respect of 1986 will be lower in consequence of the revised budget;

(2) what estimate he has made of the amount of the additional expenditure on the structural funds which will accrue to the United Kingdom following the agreement on the revised European Economic Community budget for 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: No forecast of our net contribution to this year's Community budget has so far been made, though one will be included in the White Paper on the 1986

Community budget to be published in August or September. The reduction in our net contribution to the Community budget in 1986 compared with that in respect of the Council's Second Reading budget is estimated at around £250 million. The main reason for this reduction is the increase in the United Kingdom's abatement of 500 mecu (£310 million). This will mean that our gross contribution to the 1986 budget will be less than our gross contribution to the Council's Second Reading budget, and our VAT rate will fall from 0·69 per cent. to 0·68 per cent. We shall also benefit from additional receipts resulting from the extra expenditure contained in the new budget. The increase in our receipts from the structural funds could be of the order of £150 million.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy towards the financing of the 1987 European Economic Community budget solely by the 1·4 per cent. value added tax levy plus the other funds levied by the European Economic Community in accordance with the Treaty of Rome, without the provision of additional funds from intergovernmental agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government consider that the 1987 European Communities' budget should be financed solely from the revenue described in the Commission's revenue forecasts for 1987 in accordance with the treaty. We see no case for the provision of any additional funds.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of the Council of Finance Ministers towards making provision for 1986 European Economic Community spending to be carried forward to 1987.

Mr. Brooke: The Council's recent decisions on the 1986 budget were influenced by a concern to avoid where possible the carrying forward of expenditure from 1986 into 1987.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the basic difference between commitment appropriations and payment appropriations as set out in the statement of 11 July, *Official Report*, column 621.

Mr. Brooke: Commitment appropriations lay down the level of commitments which may be entered into during the year. In the case of agricultural guarantee expenditure, and some other parts of the budget, these commitment appropriations must be matched in the budget by equivalent payment appropriations, as the entry into the contract and its payment take place simultaneously. These are known as non-differentiated appropriations. Where such commitments may not be liquidated immediately, as inmost of the structural funds and non-obligatory expenditure, separate commitment and payment appropriations (differentiated appropriations) are provided. Payment appropriations therefore comprise the maximum amounts which are payable during the budgetary year towards the relevant commitments entered into by the Commission.

Mr. Teddy Taylor, asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the principal factors which led to the estimate by the Council of Finance Ministers that payment appropriations in the revised 1986 budget, should exceed the 1985 total by 39·18 per cent., as set out in the statement of 11 July, *Official Report*, column 621.

Mr. Brooke: The increase agreed for non-obligatory expenditure payments appropriations took account of the extra costs arising from enlargement of the Community through the accession of Spain and Portugal. The increase also allowed for a reduction of the so-called cost of the past, whereby the size of commitments which the Commission is authorised to enter into has exceeded the payments appropriations available for carrying them out.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the principal factors which led to the estimate by the Council of Finance Ministers that commitment appropriations in the revised 1986 budget should exceed the 1985 total by 14·54 per cent., as set out in the statement of 11 July, *Official Report*, column 621.

Mr. Brooke: The increase agreed for non-obligatory expenditure commitment appropriations was primarily to allow the structural funds to extend their activity to the new member states, Spain and Portugal.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why he is not seeking to invoke the 4 December 1984 agreement of the European Council to claw back in future years exceptional spending in 1986 within the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Article 5 of the budget discipline conclusions refers to agricultural expenditure. We shall, of course, be seeking to ensure that agricultural guarantee expenditure in future years is limited in accordance with the financial guideline and that the provisions of article 5 are respected.

Pensions

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer of 19 October 1982, *Official Report*, columns 82-87, relating to public sector pensions, to the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Trustee Savings Bank

Mr. Cabora asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why he is appointing Monday 21 July as the vesting day for the TSB in view of the fact that the Treasury gave an assurance during the Lords hearing that no vesting date would be named until after the full judgment was available.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Treasury gave no such assurance. In advance of their Lordships' judgments, in view of the differences in approach taken by the lower courts, counsel for the treasury explained the potential imporance of having the full text of their Lordships' opinions. However, the judgments, which were given without delay on 3 July, were unequivocal in finding unanimously against the appellant depositors on all counts. Having taken legal advice and consulted the TSB central board, as required by the Trustee Savings Banks Act 1985, the Government concluded that the judgments provided no basis for further delaying the implementation of the Act.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the gross domestic product

per capita, expressed in terms of $US, for each of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries in 1984 and in 1985.

Mr. MacGregor: Following is a table showing comparable figures for OECD countries.

GDP per head in OECD countries (US $)*

	1984	*1985†*
Australia	11,200	9,800
Austria	8,500	8,600
Belgium	7,700	
Canada	13,300	13,500
Denmark	10,700	11,100
Finland	10,500	11,000
France	8,900	9,100
Germany	10,000	10,000
Greece	3,400	
Iceland	10,700	
Ireland	5,000	
Italy	6,100	6,200
Japan	10,500	10,800
Luxembourg	9,200	
Netherlands	8,500	8,400
New Zealand	7,100	
Norway	13,200	13,500
Portugal	1,900	
Spain	4,200	
Sweden	11,400	11,800
Switzerland	14,000	
Turkey	1,000	
United Kingdom	7,500	7,700
United States	15,300	16,200

* Figures are calculated at current prices and exchange rates. It is generally thought preferable to convert individual country's GDP figures into a common currency using purchasing power parities, but no such estimates are available for 1985.

† Provisional figures. Where no figures are shown an estimate of population is not yet available.

Source: OECD Monthly Economic Indicators, June 1986.

Mr. Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give figures for the financial years 1983-84, 1984-85, and 1985-86 to show the gross domestic product of the United Kingdom continental shelf region.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Charities

Mr. Moynihan asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to publicise the new tax reliefs for charitable giving.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Inland Revenue is today publishing, under the title "Tax Aid", two leaflets explaining the tax reliefs which will now be available for gifts to charities. These are designed to help both donors and charities to take full advantage of the new reliefs we have introduced.

One of the leaflets includes an explanation of the new scheme for tax relief for donations up to £100 a year under payroll giving schemes. Although the new relief does not start until April 1987, forward planning for schemes will be necessary and I hope that many employers will take part in the scheme and that charities and employees will encourage them to do so.

The other leaflet includes a description of the relief for single donations by companies (other than close companies) up to 3 per cent. of their ordinary annual dividends. This relief, which is additional to the existing relief for charitable contributions made under deed of covenant, is available for payments made on or after 1 April 1986.

Together with the abolition of the £10,000 limit on higher rate relief for covenanted donations by individuals, these measures constitute the most substantial package of reliefs for charitable giving ever introduced. They have been very widely welcomed by the charities themselves and I hope that the public in turn will respond generously in supporting the valuable work charities carry out. In the Budget we forecast the cost of the new reliefs at £60 million in 1987-88, but that is intended only as an estimate and not as an upper limit on the relief available. If the new reliefs stimulate greater contributions to charity than we have anticipated, we will be only too pleased. The "Tax Aid" leaflets should help to ensure that the new possibilities are as widely known and understood as possible.

Mileage Allowance

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Leicester, East of 3 June, *Official Report*, column *471*, if any exemptions have been made for any categories of persons to the general rule regarding the taxation of mileage allowance paid for travel between home and work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 June 1986, c. *198*]: Allowances paid to cover the cost of travel between home and the usual place of work in the United Kingdom are normally taxable. However, the tax treatment may vary either where an employee's duties take him away from his usual place of work or the workplace is constantly changing. Allowances relating to leave travel of members of Her Majesty's armed forces and home to work travel of the seriously and permanently disabled are exempt from tax.

Incomes

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of people in 1985-86, counting husbands and wives separately, with investment income and/or earned income of less than *(a)* £10, *(b)* £15 and *(c)* £20 a week, showing those above retirement age separately.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986, c. *606*.]: Approximate estimates are given in the table. Since records are not kept by the Inland Revenue for many persons with small incomes below the tax threshold, the estimates have been based on projections from recent family expenditure surveys. The information can be taken only as an approximate guide in view of the small sample size and incomplete coverage of these surveys.

Numbers of United Kingdom adults in 1985-86*

millions

Weekly incomes†	*Below retirement age‡*	*Above retirement age*	*Total*
Under £10	9	6	15
Under £15	9·5	6·5	16
Under £20	10	7	17

* Aged over 16, excluding school children.
† Earnings and investment income excluding national insurance retirement pensions and state benefits.
‡ Men under 65, women under 60.

Section DS19

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will explain the functions of his Department's section DS19.

Mr. Stanley: Defence Secretariat 19 was disbanded in September 1983. It was formed to advise the then Secretary of State for Defence on how best to explain to the public the facts about the Government's policy on deterrence and multilateral disarmament.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of staff and the annual expenditure of his Department's section DS19 in each year since its inception.

Mr. Stanley: Defence Secretariat 19 was set up in February 1983 and disbanded in September 1983. The number of staff employed was eight and the costs of the unit were confined to the salaries of those eight posts and associated administrative costs which totalled approximately £142,000 at 1983 prices.

South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy henceforth to refuse permission to officers of the British forces to serve in the South African Defence Force.

Mr. Stanley: Under the Government's present policies any request for a serving officer of the armed forces of the United Kingdom to be attached to the South African defence forces would be refused.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the measures taken to prohibit all forms of military co-operation with South Africa, as agreed in the Commonwealth accord on Southern Africa adopted on 20 October 1985.

Mr. Stanley: The last major defence arrangement between the two countries, the 1955 agreements on the Simonstown naval base (Cmnd. 9520) were terminated by an exchange of letters between Governments in June 1975 (Cmnd. 6229). The United Kingdom operated a voluntary arms embargo against South Africa from 1974 and then introduced legislation in 1978 in order to comply with UN Security Council resolution 418 which imposed a mandatory arms embargo with South Africa. The United Kingdom does not import arms, ammunition and military vehicles produced in South Africa in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 558. In addition, no South African service men have received training at British military establishments, nor have British service men received training at South African military establishments, since 1976. As my right hon. Friend the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs announced on 20 November 1985 in column 263, the British military attachés in Pretoria have been withdrawn.

Virgin Atlantic Challenger

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) of 7th July, *Official Report*, column 7, when the operational training sortie referred to was planned; and what was its estimated cost.

Mr. Freeman: The RAF Nimrod operational training sortie was planned some two months in advance and was approved in accordance with standing instructions. The estimated cost of the sortie based on the hourly flying rate was about £50,000.

Government and the Media (Study)

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make available copies of the studies into relations between the Government and the media commissioned in 1982 from King's college, London and University college, Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I have placed copies of the study by King's College, London into "Unofficial commentary in the media on military aspects of the Falklands Campaign 1982" in the Library. I have also placed in the Library copies of the study by the Centre for Journalism Studies at University college, Cardiff, into "Relations between Government, the Armed Forces and the media in time of armed conflict". The second study contains a large number of recommendations which are being considered in parallel with the work that is already taking place on the Beach report on censorship. I am grateful to the authors of both these studies for the work they have done.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, in the light of the recent contract awarded for the transport of formaldehyde to Gruinard Island, he will make it his policy that his Department be involved in the selection of subcontractors in similar cases.

Mr. Lee: No. In general, it is the Ministry's policy to make its contractors fully responsible for the conduct of the work required, including the selection of any sub-contractors.

Land

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what area of land is owned by his Department in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: Ministry of Defence land and forshore holdings, at 1 April 1986, are set out below:

England

Land:
Freehold: 425,370 acres
Leasehold: 18,737 acres

Foreshore:
Freehold: 25,693 acres
Leasehold: 11,476 acres

Scotland

Land:
Freehold: 41,364 acres
Leasehold: 6,232 acres

Foreshore:
Freehold 3,662 acres
Leasehold 486 acres

Wales

Land:
Freehold 48,717 acres
Leasehold 179 acres

Foreshore:
Freehold 2,530
Leasehold —

United States Service Men

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many United States service men are stationed at *(a)* Machrihanish, *(b)* Holy Loch, *(c)* Edzell and *(d)* Thurso.

Mr. Stanley: Information on the number of United States service personnel at these facilities is compiled annually. As at October 1985, the figures were as follows:

	Number
Machrihanish	91
Holy Loch	1,881
Edzell	759
Thurso	175

Dismissals on Courts Martial

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many Royal Naval officers and how many ratings have been dismissed from the service or court-martialled in each of the last five years;

(2) how many RAF officers and how many men have been court-martialled or dismissed from the service in each of the last five years;

(3) how many Army officers and how many men have been dismissed from the service or court-martialled in each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 July 1986, c. 306]: The information requested is as follows:

*Dismissals**

	RN			*ARMY*			*RAF*		
	Officers	*Ratings*	*Total*	*Officers*	*Soldiers*	*Total*	*Officers*	*Airmen*	*Total*
1981	1	85	86	5	349	354	4	60	64
1982	5	66	71	4	425	429	1	78	79
1983	1	56	57	5	331	336	4	48	52
1984	2	44	46	5	350	355	1	54	55
1985	1	†		5	337	342	4	71	75

* For RN those imprisoned or dismissed following Court Martial or dismissal following summary trial by Commanding Officer; for Army and RAF those imprisoned or dismissed following Court Martial.
† Figures not readily available.

Courts-Martial Convictions

	RN			*ARMY*			*RAF*			
	Officers	*Ratings*	*Total*	*Officers*	*Soldiers*	*Total*	*Officers*	*Airmen*	*Total*	*Total*
1981	23	28	51	15	1,201	1,216	8	234	242	1,509
1982	17	33	50	12	1,186	1,198	5	226	231	1,479
1983	21	41	62	11	908	919	8	207	215	1,196
1984	30	43	73	12	837	849	2	199	201	1,123
1985	26	35	61	13	807	820	6	182	188	1,069

Note. All figures include females.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many letters from hon. Members to his Department still awaiting a substantive reply were received more than *(a)* one month ago, *(b)* two months ago, *(c)* three months ago and *(d)* four months ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. 428]: A check of our records has indicated that 17 letters from hon. Members received between one and two months ago are awaiting a ministerial reply.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Sayeed asked the Paymaster General what are the latest figures available for the number of self-employed in Bristol, East; and what was the comparable figure in 1979.

Mr. Lang: The latest available information comes from the 1981 census of population which identified 2,495 self-employed persons resident in Bristol, East.

A comparable figure for 1979 is not available.

Mr. Wilson asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the latest non-seasonally adjusted percentage unemployment figures for *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Lang: The following information is available in the Library. The table shows the numbers of unemployed claimants in the areas requested on 12 June 1986, expressed as a percentage of the working population.

	Per cent.
England	11·1
Scotland	14·0
Wales	14·1
Northern Ireland	18·6

Mr. Wilson asked the Paymaster General what was the precentage increase in unemployment from 1975 to 1985 in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales, *(d)* Northern Ireland and *(e)* England; and what information he has about the increase in (i) the original seven European Economic Community countries as a whole and (ii) the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries as a whole.

Mr. Lang: Following is the available information. The figures are not fully comparable because of national differences in coverage and methods of compilation.

Per cent. increase in unemployment: 1975 to 1985

	Per cent.
United Kingdom	262
Scotland	230
Wales	230
Northern Ireland	222
England	271
Original six members of EC	162
Total OECD*	175

*1975 to 1984.

Note:

The figures for countries for the United Kingdom are based on the seasonally adjusted series which allows for discontinuation in coverage.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General what is the most recent estimate for the increase in the labour force between 1986 and 1990; and what is his estimate of the total numbers in the labour force in 1990.

Mr. Lang: The civilian labour force in Great Britain is projected to increase by 380,000 between mid-1986 and mid-1990, to reach a level of 27,198,000.

National Manpower Council of South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General what was the purpose of the visit by Dr. Barker of the National Manpower Council of South Africa to his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I understand that he is a senior official who expressed an interest to learn about my Department's employment and training programmes.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General who Dr. Barker of the National Manpower Council of South Africa met in the Department of Employment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The head of my Department's economics branch.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General how many visits have been made to his Department by the National Manpower Council of South Africa in the past two years; and whether any more are planned.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The recent visit by Dr. Barker is the only such visit of which my Department has any record. We have received no request for any further such visit.

Wages Inspectors

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how many wages council inspectors are currently in post in the north-west region; what is the proposed figure for 1987; and what was the comparable figure in 1979.

Mr. Trippier: Currently there are 15 outdoor wages inspectors in post in the north-west region. It is planned to reduce the number of posts to 10 in 1987. There were 21 outdoor inspectors in post in 1979.

Employee Protection

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General if Her Majesty's Government are refusing to accept the EEC draft directives designed to provide additional protection for employees at work.

Mr. Lang: In considering any proposals for employment protection legislation the rights and interests of people in employment have to be balanced against the needs of the unemployed. It must be a major priority for the Community to improve the operation of the labour market to create the conditions for employment growth. The Government's position on particular proposals is determined in that light.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General what consideration he has given to the employment of disabled people in the financial services sector in the light of the findings of the Banking Insurance and Finance Union's survey of disabled people, a copy of which has been sent to him; if there is any action he plans to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I am obliged to the right hon. Member for sending me a copy of the Banking Insurance and Finance Union's survey report. As he will realise, this has only just arrived and it is an interim report. I therefore look forward to seeing the final report and will consider the implications of the findings then.

Area Manpower Boards

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the criteria for business and industry nominations to area manpower boards; and whether people from co-operative businesses are eligible.

Mr. Trippier: Nominations for the five employer representatives on area manpower boards are agreed by MSC's regional directors with the CBI at regional level. The names put forward by the CBI need not necessarily be CBI members: others, including, for example, local chambers of commerce and the Co-operative Union, are welcome to identify possible members who can be proposed by the CBI.

Within the criteria set by the Manpower Services Commission, the overiding factor is that the employer representatives should reflect the "structure of employment" in the area concerned. Smaller as well as larger firms should be represented, and the commercial and service sectors should be represented alongside manufacturing industry. In rural areas the importance of agriculture and related services should also be reflected.

Community Programme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General when, pursuant to his answer of 7 July, *Official Report*, column *16*, he expects to provide the hon. Member for Huddersfield with the information sought; and if he will give reasons for the delay *(a)* in publishing a summary of the second postal follow-up survey of community programme participants and *(b)* in providing a full analysis of the results of the survey.

Mr. Lang: I replied to the hon. Member on 14 July at columns 363-64.

The report of the second postal follow-up survey of community programme participants was placed in the Library on 13 March 1986. This did not represent any significant delay.

This report constitutes a full analysis of the survey to the extent that the information contained within it can be regarded as statistically reliable.

Wages Councils

Mr. Dixon asked the Paymaster General what guidance his Department has given to wages councils about the conduct of their business while the Wages Bill is being considered in Parliament.

Mr. Trippier: No such guidance has been issued but all members of councils have been made aware of the relevant provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Dixon asked the Paymaster General how many wages councils have deferred their normal business pending enactment of the Wages Bill.

Mr. Trippier: I understand from the secretary to wages councils that one council has deferred consideration of proposals for a new wages order until the future legislative position becomes clearer.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Craigen asked the Paymaster General if he consulted the Equal Opportunities Commission prior to the publication of his proposals to raise the hours of work threshold for employment rights and to exempt small firms from mothers' right of return; and why he does not propose to consult now on these proposals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. The chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission has now written to my right hon. and noble Friend setting out the Commission's views on these proposals. Small firms are not and will not be exempt from the obligations to reinstate employees after maternity absence where it is reasonably practicable to do so.

Worker Participation

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Paymaster General what progress has been made in European Economic Community discussions on the Vredling directive on worker participation in industry; if it is his intention, in his capacity as President of the Council, that further discussions on this measure will be on the basis of majority voting under article 100; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: On June 5 the EC Council of Social Affairs Ministers recalled that last June it had noted the major difficulties which the draft so-called "Vredling" directive would cause for those member states with a tradition of voluntary collective agreements. The Council further decided that discussion of the proposal would not be resumed until 1989.

Enterprise Boards

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Paymaster General whether his Department is reviewing the funding made available from the European social fund to local authority funded enterprise boards.

Mr. Lang: No. Decisions on individual applications to the European social fund are the responsibility of the European Commission.

This Department keeps the operation of the fund under continuous review and is regularly in touch with the Commission about it.

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking during his presidency of the European Council of Ministers to ensure that enterprise boards in Lancashire and Yorkshire will continue to qualify for European regional development fund and European social fund funding.

Mr. Tracey: I have been asked to reply.

I know of no proposal by the European Commission affecting the eligibility of enterprise boards for grants from the European regional development or social funds.

Agricultural Inspectorate

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of additional inspectors that will be employed by the Agricultural Inspectorate for the enforcement of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.

Mr. Trippier: The total number of agricultural inspectors in post on 1 July 1986 was 160. The Health and Safety Executive has said that it will meet its responsibilities for enforcing the Food and Environment Protection Act. This will have to be done with existing staff through rearrangement of priorities since two or three years are required to recruit and train fully effective new inspectors. Active recruitment to the Agricultural Inspectorate is nevertheless currently under way.

Irish Nationals

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate how many Irish nationals are currently working in the United Kingdom; and how many of these are drawing unemployment benefit.

Mr. Lang: Preliminary labour force survey results for the spring of 1985 indicate that there were about 268,000 persons of Irish nationality in employment in the United Kingdom. The number of those who reported that they were also claiming benefit was too small to be measurable by the labour force survey.

Employment Programmes

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General what is the latest figure for the numbers in *(a)* the YTS and *(b)* each special employment programme; and in each case what is his estimate of (i) the reduction in unemployment as a result, (ii) the gross cost per person on the programme and (iii) the net cost per person on the programme.

Mr. Lang: The figures for the numbers supported by YTS and the employment measures are given in the table.

It is difficult to calculate precisely the effect on the unemployment count of employment measures; their estimated average effectiveness was set out in table 3.7.13 of the public expenditure White Paper together with details of the gross and net costs, (Cmnd. 9702). YTS is a permanent training scheme.

Great Britain

Measure	*May*
Enterprise allowance scheme	58,000
Community industry	8,000
Community programme	216,000
Job relase scheme	38,000
Job splitting scheme	275
Young workers scheme	36,000
YTS	250,327

Retraining

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list each adult retraining scheme, the numbers on it, projected numbers for 1987, 1988 and 1989, and the most recent estimate of the cost per place.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General how many of those who complete the YTS, and what proportion, are retained in full employment in *(a)* the public sector and *(b)* the private sector.

Mr. Trippier: Information is not available on the proportion of YTS leavers who are retained in work in the public sector and private sector. The latest survey results, covering those who left YTS between April 1985 and January 1986, show that 28 per cent. of all leavers and 41 per cent. of all who completed their time on YTS, where in work with the same employer who provided their training some three months later. Altogether 57 per cent. of leavers were in employment and two thirds either in work or full-time education and training.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Stretford constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at his Department's local offices for the same period.

Mr. Major: Stretford is covered by three of the Department's offices, Rusholme, Chorlton and Sale, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)			*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**		
	1982-83	*1985-86*	*Per cent. change*	*1982-83*	*1985-86*	*Per cent. change*
Rusholme	18,865	13,985	−25·9	11,140	12,499	+12·2
Chorlton	12,030	10,221	−15·0	8,805	10,242	+16·3
Sale	19,207	19,525	+1·7	14,554	15,294	+5·1

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1982-83—1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Rusholme	+6·1	−6·2
Chorlton	+11·9	−2·9
Sale	+14·6	−9·2

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of Housing Benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many children in Scotland were living in families below supplementary benefit level, on supplementary benefit, and with incomes up to 140 per cent. of supplementary benefit level, classified by employment status; whether they were in one or two parent families in 1983 on the latest basis and on a basis comparable with 1981 and 1979; and what proportion these children made up the total number of children;

(2) if he can estimate, following the publication of the low income family tables for 1983, to what level *(a)* family income supplement and *(b)* child benefit would need to be raised to ensure that all working families with children have an income above the supplementary benefit entitlement, on the same basis as his reply of 30 July 1984 to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), *Official Report*, column 109.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) on 8 July at column *157*. When the tables are published, I will then be in a position to reply to the hon. Member's questions.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Birmingham, Ladywood constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at his Department's local offices for the same period.

Mr. Major: Birmingham, Ladywood is covered by three of the Department's offices, Edgbaston, Handsworth and Ladywood, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1980-81 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)			*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**		
	1980-81	*1985-86*	*per cent. change*	*1980-81*	*1985-86*	*per cent. change*
Edgbaston	16,820	16,426	−2·3	10,668	18,116	+69·8
Handsworth	24,512	16,522	−32·6	17,274	20,137	+16·6
Ladywood	11,328	9,815	−13·4	7,795	12,163	+56·0

Percentage change in complement 1980-81—1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Edgbaston	+42·9	+14·5
Handsworth	+16·4	−8·3
Ladywood	+13·6	+12·9

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action in February.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in East Lothian constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the Edinburgh East office of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major: East Lothian is covered by one of the Department's offices, Edinburgh, East, but the office's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the office is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)	*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**
1979-80	12,294	6,459
1985-86	11,808	10,542
Percentage change	−4·0	+63·2

Percentage change in complement 1979-80 to 1985-86

	Change
Supplementary benefit staff	+37·3
All staff	+1·3

*Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action in February.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Robert Edwards asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Wolverhampton, South-East constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in: (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major: Wolverhampton, South-East is covered by two of the Department's offices, Wolverhampton, North and Wolverhampton, South, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1980-81 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested. Information that is available for the offices is as follows:

	Wolverhampton, North	*Wolverhampton, South*
Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)		
1980-81	16,843	15,966
1985-86	16,655	16,872
Percentage change	−1·1	+5·7
*Number of peopie receiving supplementary benefit**		
1981-82	11,659	10,823
1985-86	18,964	19,339
Percentage change	+62·7	+78·7

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

*Percentage change in complement 1980-81 to 1985-86**

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Wolverhampton, North	+31·4	+83·3
Wolverhampton, South	+53·8	−11·7

* In February 1981 some contributory benefit work and staff were transferred from Wolverhampton, South to Wolverhampton, North.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Midlothian constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major: Midlothian is covered by one of the Department's offices, Edinburgh, South, but the office's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the office is as follows:

	1978-80	*1985-86*	*Percentage change*
Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)	14,960	15,376	+2·8
Number of people receiving supplementary benefit*	5,413	10,397	+92·1

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1979-80 to 1985-86

	Percentage change
Supplementary benefit staff	+50·7
All staff	+0·7

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Don Valley constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at his Department's local offices for the same period.

Mr. Major: Don Valley is covered by four of the Department's offices, Doncaster, East, Doncaster, West, Wath on Dearne and Mexborough. Mexborough is a national insurance office and does not deal with supplementary benefit. Their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested. Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	1982-83	*1985-86*	*Percentage change*
Doncaster, East	15,115	13,703	−9·3
Doncaster, West	17,290	17,650	+2·1
Wath on Dearne	9,350	9,393	+0·5

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	1982-83	*1985-86*	*Percentage change*
Doncaster, East	10,111	11,617	+14·9
Doncaster, West	12,543	14,422	+15·0
Wath on Dearne	6,958	8,174	+17·5

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Doncaster, East	+26·0	−0·7
Doncaster, West	+12·7	−10·3
Wath on Dearne*	+17·9	+17·9
Mexborough	†	−32·1

* Deals only with supplementary benefit.
† Not applicable.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Stockton, North constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the Department's percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at his local offices for the same period.

Mr. Major: Stockton, North is covered by one of the Department's offices, Stockton, but the office's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested. Information that is available for the office is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)	*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**
1982-83	21,223	18,894
1985-86	21,915	21,928
Percentage change	+3·3	+16·1

Percentage change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86:

	Change
Supplementary benefit staff	+18·4
All staff	+2·6

*Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by

type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Derby, South constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at his Department's local offices for the same period.

Mr. Major: Derby, South is covered by two of the Department's offices, Derby Beckett Street, and London Road, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency. Comprehensive figures are not available before 1980-81 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested. Information that is available is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)			*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**		
	1980-81	*1985-86*	*percentage change*	*1980-81*	*1985-86*	*percentage change*
Beckett Street	13,703	14,207	+3·7	8,452	13,240	+56·6
London Road	14,451	15,049	+4·1	9,579	14,688	+53·3

Percentage change in complement 1980-81—1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Beckett Street	+17·3	−8·1
London Road	+26·5	−3·5

*Based on a 100 per cent. count in action in February.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Cynon Valley constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what was the percentage change; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local office of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major: Cynon Valley is covered by two of the Department's offices, Pontypridd and Aberdare, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency. Comprehensive figures are not available before 1981-82 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested. Information that is available for the above offices is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)			*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**		
	1981-82	*1985-86*	*percentage change*	*1981-82*	*1985-86*	*percentage change*
Pontypridd	7,891	8,992	+14·0	6,152	7,639	+24·2
Aberdare	7,236	7,101	−1·9	5,581	6,840	+22·6

Percentage change in complement 1981-82—1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Pontypridd	−2·0	−14·2
Aberdare	+8·7	−10·5

*Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many staff were dealing with supplementary benefits at the Canning Town and Plaistow social security offices in 1979 and 1985, respectively; what was the percentage change; and if will also give the comparable figures of changes in staff numbers for all purposes over the same year;

(2) if he will state, or estimate, the number of persons claiming supplementary benefits at the Canning Town and Plaistow social security offices in 1979 and 1985, and the respective percentage increases.

Mr. Major: Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested. Information that is available is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)			Number of people receiving supplementary benefit*		
	1982-83	1985-86	percentage change	1982-83	1985-86	percentage change
Canning Town	5,218	4,250	−18·6	5,471	5,997	+9·6
Plaistow	9,460	9,790	+3·5	8,779	10,464	+19·2

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff		All staff	
	Canning Town	Plaistow	Canning Town	Plaistow
1982-83	49	68	72	114
1985-86	57	73	71	102
Percentage change	+16·3	+7·4	−1·4	−10·5

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Preston in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents;

(2) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the local offices of his Department between 1979 and 1985.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Monklands, East constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department over the same period.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the percentage change in individual Department of Health and Social Security offices in Leeds of *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the Leeds Department of Health and Social Security offices;

(2) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Leeds, Central constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give figures, relating to the administration of supplementary benefits, for *(a)* the staffing complement, *(b)* the number of staff in post and *(c)* the live caseload at 1 June 1984, 1985 and 1986, for each of the Department of Health and Social Security offices of Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool, Redcar and Eston;

(2) how many extra staff have been deployed in the Department of Health and Social Security ILOs of Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool, Redcar and Eston in order to deal with work generated by the Cleveland county council benefits take-up campaign.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the local offices of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major: I shall let the right hon. and hon. Members have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Bootle constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; what was the percentage change in: *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the local offices of his Department over the same period.

Mr. Major: Bootle is covered by two of the Department's offices, Bootle and Crosby, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)			Number of people receiving supplementary benefit*		
	1982-83	1985-86	percentage change	1982-83	1985-86	percentage change
Bootle	14,782	12,252	−17·1	11,967	13,577	+13·5
Crosby	10,766	10,325	− 4·3	9,777	11,131	+13·8

Percentage change in complement 1982-83—1985-86:

	Supplementary benefit staff	All staff
Bootle†	−11·3	−21·4
Crosby	+11·5	+ 1·0

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

† In January 1983 30 posts were transferred from Bootle following a boundary change.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of

legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the parliamentary constituency of Brent, East in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents;

(2) how many staff there were in his Department's offices in the Brent, East constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; how many of these were responsible for handling supplementary benefit claims; and what was the percentage change in both cases.

Mr. Major: Brent, East is covered by three of the Department's offices, Cricklewood, Neasden and Harlesden, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)			*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**		
	1982-83	*1985-86*	*percentage change*	*1982-83*	*1985-86*	*percentage change*
Cricklewood	8,957	8,217	−8·3	7,637	9,257	+21·2
Neasden	16,504	16,840	+2·0	10,681	12,343	+15·6
Harlesden	13,225	14,914	+12·7	9,508	10,994	+15·6

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86:

	Supplementary benefit staff			*All staff*		
	1982-83	*1985-86*	*percentage change*	*1982-83*	*1985-86*	*percentage change*
Cricklewood	60	68	+13·3	94	90	−4·3
Neasden	84	100	+19·0	162	147	−9·3
Harlesden	78	98	+25·6	134	135	+0·7

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee on the proposed reductions in supplementary benefit payments for mortgage interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: No.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Scotland in 1983 were (i) below, (ii) at and (iii) up to 140 per cent. of the supplementary benefit level on the latest basis and on a basis comparable with 1979 and 1981; what percentage of the total population they represent in each case; what his estimate is of the number of children living in such households in each case; and what percentage of total children they represent in each case.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Public Sector Pay

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the proportion of United Kingdom gross domestic product expended on *(a)* teachers' pay and *(b)* nurses' pay, for each year since 1970.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available for the years prior to 1975-76. For the remaining years the information requested is as follows:

	(1) Nurses' pay percentage of GDP	*(2) Teachers' pay percentage of GDP*
1975-76	1·08	Not available
1976-77	1·07	Not available
1977-78	1·00	Not available
1978-79	0·99	Not available
1979-80	1·01	1·75
1980-81	1·22	1·93
1981-82	1·22	1·95
1982-83	1·21	1·88
1983-84	1·17	1·82
1984-85	1·19	Not yet available

Notes:

1. Figures in column (1) cover all nurses, excluding agency staff, employed in the hospital and community health services
2. Figures in column (2) cover public sector nursery, primary and secondary education teachers. They include an element of estimation for central government expenditure on teachers' pay in Northern Ireland.
3. All figures include employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions.

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the fuller information about the risks of infection from acquired immune deficiency syndrome and appropriate precautions, being prepared by his Department for travellers abroad, will be ready; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: A new edition of my Department's leaflet SA35 entitled "Protect your health abroad" containing fuller information about acquired immune deficiency syndrome will be ready for distribution by travel agencies and others during the autumn.

Attendance Allowance

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent on attendance allowance in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: The information requested is given in table 3.15 of the Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89 (Cmnd. 9702-II), a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are now receiving attendance allowance.

Mr. Newton: At 31 March 1985, the latest date for which information is available, an estimated 543,000 people were receiving attendance allowance.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time taken to deal with individual claims for attendance allowance at his Department's Norcross office for the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

Date	*Average time (weeks)*
March 1983	12½
March 1984	10
March 1985	9
March 1986	8½

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to contact married women likely to be eligible to receive the invalid care allowance; what publicity material is being produced to alert married women carers to their possible eligibility; and when this material will be made available.

Mr. Newton: Wherever possible we will be writing individually during the next few weeks to recipients of attendance allowance and constant attendance allowance to advise them that if they have a carer who is a married woman or lives with a man as his wife she may now qualify for invalid care allowance.

An explanation of the new rules is already in production and will be issued in the next few days as an insert to the current invalid care allowance leaflet. A new leaflet with a revised claim form will be available in August. The changes will be advertised in August in the national press and some magazines. The advertisement will include a coupon for ordering the new leaflet. The Department's regional information officers will be explaining the new rules in radio and TV broadcasts.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were receiving invalid care allowance at the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Newton: 10,906 as at 30 June 1986.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of families now in receipt of family income supplement; and what is the average amount of benefit received by these families.

Mr. Major: At the end of March 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, 201,000 families were receiving family income supplement and the average amount of benefit received was £13·30 weekly.

Hospitals (Maintenance)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much has been spent on the repair and maintenance of National Health Service hospitals at constant prices in each of the past five years; and what percentage of National Health Service expenditure this represented.

Mr. Whitney: Following are the figures derived from the annual accounts of health authorities in England:

	Hospital services-building maintenance expenditure £ million (at 1984-85 prices)	*Percentage of total NHS current expenditure**
1980-81	155·7	1·4
1981-82	166·1	1·4
1982-83	157·0	1·3
1983-84	157·6	1·3
1984-85	156·5	1·3

* Including family practitioner services.

School Dental Service

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average number of teeth extracted per full-time dental officer in the school dental service.

Mr. Hayhoe: The average number of teeth extracted from school children per dental officer engaged in clinical duties, based on whole time equivalents, in the community dental service in England was 379 in 1985.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time taken to deal with individual mobility allowances claims at his Department's Norcross office for the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

Date	*Average time (weeks)*
June 1983	14·5
June 1984	13·0
June 1985	9·5
June 1986	8·5

Ambulance Service

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients were unable *(a)* to keep appointments with consultants and *(b)* attend day care due to lack of ambulances to take them to hospital for each of the last three months for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Pike: asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many ambulance men were employed at each ambulance station on 1 May in the current year and for the last five years in Lancashire;

(2) how many journeys ambulances made for each station in Lancashire in the first week in May in each of the last five years; and how many patients were not provided with ambulance transport although requested by hospitals or doctors.

Mr. Whitney: We do not hold such information centrally. The hon. Member may therefore wish to address his inquiries to the chairman of Preston health authority, which is responsible for the management of Lancashire ambulance service.

Artificial Sweeteners

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 30 June, *Official Report*, column *416*, he will ask the panel of Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy inquiring into sugar to examine intense and artificial sweeteners as well.

Mr. Whitney: The Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy, which is formulating the terms of reference for the panel that will examine the role of sugars in the diet, will consider whether intense and artificial sweeteners should be included within the remit.

Invalidity Pension and Allowance

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent on (i) invalidity pension, (ii) invalidity allowance and (iii) the additional component to invalidity pension in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: The information requested is as follows:

	£ million
(i)	1,892
(ii)	161
(iii)	100

All figures relate to 1984-85, the latest year for which information is available.

Invalidity Benefit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people at the latest date for which information is available were receiving invalidity benefit: (i) with the higher rate invalidity allowance, (ii) with the middle rate invalidity allowance, (iii) with the lower rate invalidity allowance and (iv) with the additional component.

Mr. Major: As at 30 March 1985, the latest date for which the information is available, the numbers of recipients were:

	Number
(i)	211,000
(ii)	176,000
(iii)	321,000
(iv)	528,000

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were receiving severe disablement allowance at the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Newton: As at March 1985, about 252,000 people were receiving a severe disablement allowance. In the year to March 1986, provisional figures indicate that a further 10,700 people have been awarded the allowance.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the cost of paying the severe disablement allowance to all those who would qualify under the rules that applied to the non-contributory invalidity pension but including married and cohabiting women and what would be this cost if the severe disablement allowance were increased by £7·35 for the single person's rate.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *419*]: The estimated additional cost in a full year would be about £290 million and £380 million, respectively.

Retirement Pensions

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were receiving retirement pensions at the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Major: The latest date for which information is available is September 1985, when the number of people receiving retirement pensions was in excess of 9,561,000.

Mobility and Attendance Allowances

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of people receiving *(a)* mobility allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 26 February at columns *602-3*.

Students

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, columns *70-1*, how many of the 140,000 students living away from home who will gain the full increase in the grant *(a)* are dependent upon their parents, *(b)* claim social security benefits during short vacations, *(c)* live in college accommodation, *(d)* claim housing benefit or *(e)* are absent from their accommodation during the summer vacation.

Mr. Newton: The 140,000 students mentioned are those who claim neither housing benefit, nor supplementary benefit or unemployment benefit in the short vacations. None of them therefore falls into category *(b)* or *(d)*. None are treated as dependent on their parents for social security purposes, although some will depend on contributions from their parents for all or part of the maintenance grant. It is not known how many of them live in college accommodation, or are absent from their

accommodation during the summer vacation; but, since they do not claim housing benefit, they will not be affected by the changes in entitlement in these areas.

Health Education Council

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any proposals to privatise the functions of the Health Education Council.

Mr. Whitney: No.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the number of people on the waiting lists for acute surgery every six months since 30 September 1982 for *(a)* each district health authority and special health authority in Greater London, *(b)* the health authorities in Greater London added together and *(c)* the health authorities in Inner London added together;

(2) if he will give the number of people on in-patient waiting lists every six months since 30 September 1982 for *(a)* each district health authority and special health authority in Greater London, *(b)* the health authorities in Greater London added together and *(c)* the health authorities in Inner London added together.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further action he is taking to reduce waiting lists for National Health Service patients.

Mr. Fowler: The record of the Health Service in increasing the number of patients treated is excellent. Since 1978 the number of in-patient cases treated in English hospitals has increased from 5,370,000 to 6,178,000; day case attendances have gone up from 562,000 to 903,000; and out-patient attendances have increased from 33,950,000 to 37,043,000. These figures are all new records for the National Health Service.

Waiting lists have also come down. In England at 31 March 1979 they stood at 752,422. By September 1985 they had fallen to 661,249. This was in spite of industrial action in 1982 following which waiting lists rose by about 100,000 cases.

Further progress, however, is needed. In some places and for some kinds of treatment, people are having to wait too long. I have therefore asked the chairmen of the regional health authorities to initiate a new drive on long waiting lists and waiting times. I envisage action continuing over the next three years. The chairmen have been asked to start the process by reviewing the waiting lists and times for in-patient treatment in every district in the country. They have also been asked to review waiting times for out-patient treatment. Where these are unsatisfactory, they will ask the districts to establish why this is so, and to decide what needs to be done to improve matters. The regional health authorities will report by the end of October on the results of the review and on the proposals for action which they have agreed with the districts. Further action will then be put in hand.

Experience in a number of districts which have acted to reduce their waiting lists has shown that reorganisation and better co-ordination of existing resources can bring lists and waiting times down. Better planning of the use of staff, operating theatres and beds can enable more patients to be treated.

For example, NHS staff have already done much, by changing methods and introducing new techniques, to enable patients to be treated as day cases and to reduce lengths of stay in hospital. By these and other means further progress will be possible.

I know that health authorities share my view that we should make a sustained attack on long waiting lists and times.

Senior Registrars

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many senior registrars are in post in each specialty; and how many have been given consultants' posts in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hayhoe: The numbers of senior registrars in post in each specialty are set out in table 1:

Table 1
Hospital medical and dental senior registrars at 30 September 1985
England and Wales
NHS permanent paid and honorary

Specialty	*Total*	*NHS paid**	*Honorary†*
All medical specialties	3,287	2,624	663
General medicine group	826	585	241
General medicine	200	122	78
Thoracic medicine	35	27	8
Clinical pharmacology and therapeutics	16	4	12
Nephrology	11	9	2
Endocrinology	7	3	4
Gastroenterology	8	2	6
Infectious diseases	5	4	1
Dermatology	53	49	4
Neurology	41	31	10
Cardiology	40	25	15
Rheumatology	62	55	7
Genito-urinary medicine	31	29	2
Medical oncology	16	5	11
Clinical physiology	4	—	4
Clinical neuro-physiology	8	8	—
Audiological medicine	7	6	1
Clinical genetics	8	5	3
Occupational health	3	2	1
Geriatric medicine	113	102	11
Paediatrics	147	93	54
Paediatric neurology	4	3	1
Other	7	1	6
Surgery group	589	496	93
General surgery	182	129	53
Paediatric surgery	6	6	—
Ear, nose, throat	59	55	4
T/O surgery	127	112	15
Urology	35	29	6
Plastic surgery	22	22	—
Cardio thoracic surgery	41	37	4
Neurosurgery	22	20	2
Ophthalmology	95	86	9
Accident and emergency	47	47	—
Obstetrics and gynaecology	138	88	50
Anaesthetics	386	355	31
Radiology group	310	293	17
Radiology	245	238	7
Radiotherapy	61	51	10
Nuclear therapy	4	4	—

Specialty	Total	NHS paid*	Honorary†
Pathology group	486	351	135
Chemical	68	55	13
Haematology	120	85	35
Histopathology	176	113	63
Medical microbiology	98	74	24
Neuropathology	13	13	—
Immuno-pathology	6	6	—
Blood transfusion	5	5	—
Psychiatry group	505	409	96
Mental handicap	43	39	4
Mental illness	326	243	83
C/A psychiatry	93	88	5
Forensic psychiatry	16	13	3
Psychotherapy	27	26	1
Dental specialties	104	58	46
Oral surgery	49	23	26
Orthadontics	33	29	4
Restorative dentistry	20	6	14
Paediatric dentistry	2	—	2

* Includes full-time and part-time senior registrars.

† Honorary staff are those employed by universities in research and elsewhere whose work requires access to NHS patients.

The latest available information on the numbers of doctors leaving senior registrar appointments in England and Wales on appointment as consultants in England and Wales is given in tables 2 and 3. Neither table includes data on transfers to and from such appointments in the armed forces, Scotland, Northern Ireland or elsewhere.

Table 2

NHS paid senior registrars who became consultants on next appointment, 1 October to 30 September the following year: England and Wales

	Doctors	Dentists
1979-80	464	12
1980-81	472	12
1981-82	489	10
1982-83	483	9
1983-84	524	7
1984-85	n.a.	n.a.

Table 3

Total senior registrars (both NHS paid and honorary) who became consultants on next appointment, 1 October to 30 September the following year: England and Wales

	Doctors	Dentists
1979-80	513	13
1980-81	512	15
1981-82	537	13
1982-83	520	12
1983-84	567	17
1984-85	n.a.	n.a.

School Meals

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the health implications of the removal of the school meals service by some local education authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: All local education authorities are required to provide free school meals for those who qualify to receive them and no local education authority has ceased to undertake this duty.

Psoriasis

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons are psoriasis sufferers in England and Wales in each of the past three years.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member information in precisely the form requested. The majority of psoriasis sufferers are treated by general practitioners or as hospital out-patients and diagnostic information is not held centrally on these patients. The available information is given in the table. Figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

NHS non-psychiatric, non-maternity hospitals, England

	1982	1983	1984
Estimated number of in-patient cases with main diagnosis of psoriasis and similar disorders	6,910	7,170	7,730

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to put psoriasis on the prescribed list of prescription exemptions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Hospitals (Cigarettes)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice has been given by his Department about the sale and use of cigarettes in hospitals and other health service premises; if he will seek powers to reverse decisions by health authorities not to ban the sale of cigarettes in the premises they administer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Guidance was issued to health authorities last year with a view to making non-smoking normal practice on Health Service premises and for Health Service staff. It asks authorities not to allow the sale of tobacco products on National Health Service premises, with the possible exception of long-stay, psychiatric or mental handicap establishments. I will be glad to look into any cases where this guidance is not being followed.

Board and Lodging Allowance (Ipswich)

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will give the names and addresses of the establishments in Ipswich where boarders receive his Department's payments for board and lodging allowance.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is confidential and cannot be disclosed.

Pregnant Women (Vitamin Supplementation)

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the value of vitamin supplementation for prospective and pregnant mothers who are at risk of having handicapped children who suffer from spina bifida or other neural tube defects.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Women and Children (Domestic Violence)

Mr. Orme asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to ensure that women and children who have had to leave their homes and possessions as a result of domestic violence will be exempted from restrictions of entitlement to single payments under the Supplementary Benefit (Amendments Regulation) 1986.

Mr. Newton: I refer the right hon. Member to my statement to the House earlier today, when the Supplementary Benefit (Miscellaneous Amendment) Regulations 1986 were laid. The regulations make specific provision for claimants who have had to leave their previous home due to fear of domestic violence and are in need of furniture and bedding on obtaining a further tenancy.

North Western Regional Health Authority

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when, pursuant to his answer of 7 July, *Official Report*, columns 77-8, he will be publishing the report on North Western regional health authority computerisation referred to.

Mr. Whitney: Health authorities are expected to consider audit reports in public session and, unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary, to make such reports available to the general public. I understand that the North Western regional health authority considered this report at its meeting on 27 May 1986. The hon. Member may therefore wish to approach the chairman of that authority for the information he seeks.

General Practitioners (Work Load)

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the effect of old people being discharged from hospitals into homes in the community on the work loads of general practitioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Old People's Homes

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has to the number of private homes for old people operating in west Yorkshire; and if he will list them by district, giving the number of residents in such homes by districts.

Mr. Whitney: The latest complete data which are available centrally are given in the table.

West Yorkshire—registered private homes for the elderly as at 31 March 1985

Local authority district	*Number of Homes*	*Number of Residents*		
		Permanent	*Short-stay*	*Total*
Bradford	73	1,008	44	1,052
Calderdale	20	256	19	275
Kirklees	22	353	13	366
Leeds	36	452	14	466
Wakefield	7	141	1	142
Totals	158	2,210	91	2,301

Expenditure Statistics

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the information on the National Health Service and personal social services, expenditure per capita given in his answer of 11 November 1985, *Official Report*, column 94, so as to give data for 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

"Health and Personal Social Service Statistics"

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for England 1986" will be published.

Mr. Whitney: "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for England 1986" edition will be published shortly.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the information on bed numbers given in his answer of 1 July 1985, *Official Report*, column 49, so as to give data for 1985 and 1986 to date.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as can be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the information given in his answer of 1 July 1985, *Official Report*, column 51, on bed numbers, so as to give data for 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks. The 1985 figures are not yet available. Figures for 1984 are given in the table.

Average daily number of available beds in NHS hospitals in England

Region	Acute*	Geriatric	Mental illness†	Mental handicap	Maternity‡	All specialties
Northern	10,108	3,894	5,800	3,022	1,252	24,332
Yorkshire	11,403	4,938	6,442	3,067	1,474	27,470
Trent	11,628	5,233	6,884	4,340	1,680	30,000
East Anglian	5,171	2,452	2,868	1,501	698	12,727
North West Thames	9,350	3,380	6,933	3,669	1,110	24,529
North East Thames	12,906	4,635	6,341	2,416	1,510	27,951
South East Thames	10,786	4,088	6,170	2,843	1,226	25,260
South West Thames	7,386	2,975	6,295	5,446	860	22,994
Wessex	7,421	3,477	3,920	2,223	999	18,074
Oxford	5,837	1,974	2,287	1,735	778	12,722
South Western	8,726	3,807	4,796	4,162	1,049	22,676
West Midlands	14,071	6,235	7,454	3,943	1,897	33,761
Mersey	7,165	3,180	5,654	2,122	859	19,028
North Western	12,767	5,175	6,618	3,490	1,624	29,756
Special health authorities and boards of governors	2,468	127	450	8	183	3,236
Total‖	137,193	55,571	78,911	43,985	17,198	334,513

*"Acute" is defined as all specialties except geriatrics, younger disabled, GP maternity, obstetrics, mental handicap and mental illness.
†Includes all mental illness specialties.
‡Includes GP maternity and obstetrics.
‖Regional figures may not sum to national totals due to rounding.

Mental Handicap (Homes and Hostels)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers of voluntary homes and hostels in England for people with mental handicaps in each year from 1970 to the most recent year for which data are available, giving the total numbers of places and the numbers of persons aged under 65 years and aged 65 years and over accommodated in each year.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers requested for the years 1975 to 1985 are given in the table. Prior to 1975, figures are only available centrally for the mentally handicapped and the mentally ill combined.

Voluntary Homes and Hostels for Mentally Handicapped people England

Year	Homes	Places	Residents Under 65	Residents 65 and Over
1975	56	1,784	n.a.	n.a.
1976	70	1,933	1,566	70
1977	77	1,968	1,659	44
1978	92	2,185	1,846	50
1979	99	2,120	1,783	60
1980	99	2,129	1,728	61
1981	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1982	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1983	161	3,054	n.a.	n.a.
1984	200	3,996	n.a.	n.a.
1985	232	3,991	n.a.	n.a.

n.a. data not available.
1985 figures are provisional.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers of private homes and hostels in England for people with mental handicaps from 1970 to the most recent year for which data are available, giving the total number of places and the numbers of persons under 65 years and aged 65 years and over accommodated in each year.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers requested for the years 1975 to 1985 are given in the table. Prior to 1975, figures are only available centrally for the mentally handicapped and the mentaly ill combined.

Private Homes and Hostels for Mentally Handicapped people England

Year	Homes	Places	Residents Under 65	Residents 65 and Over
1975	73	1,101	n.a.	n.a.
1976	74	1,137	865	126
1977	77	1,298	1,050	165
1978	84	1,410	1,098	164
1979	92	1,653	1,172	216
1980	93	1,617	1,205	196
1981	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1982	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1983	131	1,992	n.a.	n.a.
1984	163	2,275	n.a.	n.a.
1985	231	3,105	n.a.	n.a.

n.a. data not available.
1985 figures are provisional.

Mental Illness (Homes and Hostels)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers of voluntary homes and hostels in England for people with mental illnesses in each year from 1970 to the most recent year for which data are available, giving the total numbers of places and the numbers of persons aged under 65 years and aged 65 years and over accommodated in each year.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers requested for the years 1975 to 1985 are given in the table. Prior to 1975, figures are only available centrally for the mentally handicapped and the mentally ill combined.

Voluntary Homes and Hostels for Mentally Ill People England

Year	Homes	Places	Residents Under 65	Residents 65 and Over
1975	41	894	n.a.	n.a.
1976	52	1,149	740	152
1977	61	1,268	848	178
1978	68	1,363	978	151
1979	67	1,360	931	126

Year	Homes	Places	Residents Under 65	Residents 65 and Over
1980	68	1,381	948	138
1981	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1982	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1983	118	1,603	n.a.	n.a.
1984	127	1,693	n.a.	n.a.
1985	148	1,952	n.a.	n.a.

n.a. = data not available
1985 figures are provisional

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers of private homes and hostels in England for people with mental illnesses in each year from 1970 to the most recent year for which data are available, giving the total numbers of places and the numbers of people aged under 65 years and aged 65 years and over accommodated in each year.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers requested for the years 1975 to 1985 are given in the table. Prior to 1975, figures are only available centrally for the mentally handicapped and the mentally ill combined.

Private Homes and Hostels for Mentally Ill People England

Year	Homes	Places	Residents Under 65	Residents 65 and Over
1975	26	472	n.a.	n.a.
1976	27	473	279	191
1977	33	596	222	233
1978	37	531	345	153
1979	46	655	409	202
1980	54	761	461	234
1981	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1982	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1983	53	764	n.a.	n.a.
1984	62	865	n.a.	n.a.
1985	102	1,219	n.a.	n.a.

n.a. = data not available
1985 figures are provisional

Personal Social Services

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out the total gross expenditure, current and capital, on personal social services, deflated by gross domestic product, retail price index and the index of social services pay and prices for each year since 1970.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Pensions

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the rise in the basic state pension rate at each uprating from 1979 up to and including July 1986 *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* as a percentage increase above or below the retail price index increase during the same period.

Mr. Major: The information requested is as follows:

Uprating	A Per cent. increase	B Cash Increase Single/Couple	C RPI Increase*	D Difference between A and C
November 1979	19·5	£3·80/£6·10	17·4	+2·1
November 1980	16·5	£3·85/£6·15	15·3	+1·2
November 1981	9·0	£2·45/£3·90	12·0	−3·0
November 1982	11·0	£3·25/£5·20	6·3	+4·7
November 1983	3·7	£1·20/£1·95	4·8	−1·1
November 1984	5·1	£1·75/£2·80	4·9	+0·2
November 1985	7·0	£2·50/4·00	5·5	+1·5
July 1986 (interim uprating)	1·1	40p/ 65p	†n.a.	†n.a.

* Movement in the RPI November—November (1974 = 100).
† Not available until July 1986 RPI is published.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the information on National Health expenditure provided in his answer of 1 July 1985, *Official Report*, column 47, to include 1985-86 and an estimate for 1986-87.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Departmental Offices

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to reply to the letter of 17 June from the hon. Member for East Lothian concerning advice from the East Edinburgh office of his Department about the delay in processing applications for single payments.

Mr. Major: I am writing to the hon. Member.

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to increase staff complements in his Department's offices in Glasgow to handle the growth in the number of benefit claims.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the reply from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) on 7 March at column *322*, in which he announced a major improvement to DHSS manpower. Over 5,000 staff have been made available in addition to the normal complement. Glasgow's share of the increase is 250. A full complement review of staffing in social security local offices is currently being carried out and the results will form the basis of the 1987-88 complement.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current average time for clearing *(a)* new claims for supplementary benefit, *(b)* claims for additional weekly supplementary benefits, *(c)* claims for single payments and *(d)* urgent needs claims for each of the Department of Health and Social Security ILOs of Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool, Redcar and Eston.

Mr. Major: Claims are determined as soon as possible after all the information required has been collected; urgent claims are given priority.

Precise information about clearance times is not available but the local offices concerned estimate the present position to be as follows:

Average clearance time for	*Middlesbrough ILO*	*Eston ILO*	*Redcar ILO*	*Hartlepool ILO*	*Stockton ILO*
New/repeat claims for supplementary benefit	2-14 days	1-9 days	4 days	2-14 days	5-7 days
Claims for additional requirements	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known
Claims for single payments	Up to 13 weeks	Up to 13 weeks	8½ weeks	Up to 16 weeks	Up to 13 weeks
Claims for urgent needs payments	Cleared on day of receipt	Cleared on day of receipt	Cleared on day of receipt	Cleared on day of receipt	Cleared on day of receipt

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many requests have been received, and how many such requests have been given favourable consideration under the discretionary power conferred upon the Secretary of State to exempt young people from the board and lodging time limits where exceptional hardship would otherwise be caused to the claimant or the claimant's partner under the Supplementary Benefits (Requirements) Regulations, Schedule 2A, paragraph 4 (m); and how many of the above figures relate to the Department of Health and Social Security ILOs of Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool, Redcar and Eston.

Mr. Major: One hundred and twenty-six requests have been received, of which 26 were successful. In respect of the individual offices mentioned by the hon. Member, four requests have been forwarded all from the local office in Middlesbrough. Of these, one was withdrawn as the claimant found rented accommodation and one was successful.

Severe Disablement and Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 14 July to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North, he will list separately the net and gross costs of the increases in severe disablement allowance and invalid care allowance there specified.

Mr. Newton: The available information is as follows:

£ million

		Gross additional cost in a full year	*Net additional cost in a full year*
Severe Disablement Allowance	(i)	200	120
	(ii)	2	*
Invalid Care Allowance	(i)	65	*
	(ii)	about ½	*

* I regret there are insufficient data available for a reliable estimate to be made of the net cost.

Member's Correspondence

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow can expect to receive a substantive answer to his letters of 28 April and 28 June concerning a constituent's unemployment benefit.

Mr. Major: My noble Friend replied to the hon. Member today.

Supplementary Benefit Single Payments

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what savings, in a full year, he estimates will arise as a result of the proposed changes to each of the supplementary benefit single payments, regulations Nos. 3, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 17, 19, 27, 28 and 30; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: On the basis of expenditure in the 1985-86 financial year, it is estimated that the broad effect of all the changes will be to reduce the level of expenditure on single payments by about £100 million in a full year. Information on expenditure on individual regulations is available only from the annual statistical inquiry, but this under-records the total number of payments made, and does not distinguish payments made on moving to a new home from payments made for replacement items to those who are not moving. For these reasons, and because the changes to some regulations are interrelated, it is not possible to provide details of savings for individual regulations.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single payments, and the amount thereof, were made in the last year for which figures are available under each of the supplementary benefit, single payments, regulations Nos. 7, 9, and 10, 12, 13, 17, 19, 27, 28 and 30 both nationally and for each of the Department of Health and Social Security ILOs of Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool, Redcar and Eston.

Mr. Newton: The latest available information on single payments made in Great Britain, identifying the regulation under which the payment was made, is shown in table 1. Local office statistics do not record the individual regulation number under which each single payment has been made, other than those made under regulation 30. Table 2 shows the latest available information on single payments under regulation 30, both nationally and for the local offices requested.

Table 1: Single payments made in Great Britain (by regulation)

Regulation No.	No. of payments (thousands)	Amount paid (£ million)
7	142	10·2
9 and 10	1,075	90·3
12	467	29·2
13	46	3·2
17	12	1·5
19	131	4·8
27	204	11·6
28	4	0·2

Source: 1984 annual statistical inquiry (provisional).
Note: Information relates to single payments made in the 12 months preceding the ASE to those in receipt of benefit at the time of the inquiry. As a result it does not record all the single payments made during the year.

Table 2: Single payments under regulation 30 in 1985-85

	Number of payments	Amount paid £
Nationally	21,440	1,171,804
Middlesbrough ILO	246	18,938
Stockton ILO	48	4,109
Hartlepool ILO	43	2,835
Redcar ILO	65	2,686
Eston ILO	9	2,177

Source: Management Returns (100 per cent. count) for 12 months to 8 April 1986. (Provisional).

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to make any changes in the supplementary benefit single payments regulations with effect from 28 July.

Mr. Newton: [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *417*]: I refer the hon. Member to my statement in the House today.

Rates Contributions

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he proposes in Scotland to give effect to that part of his social security proposals relating to rates contributions; if, in the light of Her Majesty's Government's proposals for abolition of rates in Scotland, such arrangements are likely to be of a transitional nature only; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have always made it clear that our proposals on rates would need to be developed in the light of consultations and discussions on the wider proposals for the reform of local government finance. That remains the position.

Benefits

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has given local offices any guidance or instructions on co-operating with local authority run benefits take-up campaigns.

Mr. Major: Local offices are encouraged to discuss with local authorities any plans which they may have to run benefits take-up campaigns. Officials are considering whether more detailed guidance can usefully be provided.

Factor VIII

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the standard of factor VIII supplied by the manufacturers of Factorate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Supplementary Benefit and Pensions

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each region the latest estimate of the numbers claiming *(a)* supplementary benefit and *(b)* supplementary pensions: and if he will give the figures for 1979.

Mr. Major: The table shows the number of people receiving *(a)* supplementary allowance and *(b)* supplementary pension in each region on 6 May 1986.

	Supplementary Allowance	Supplementary Pension
Scotland	380,625	148,209
North East	549,110	254,294
North West	528,427	234,065
Midlands	567,520	266,274
Wales and Southwest	411,690	221,543
London North	527,098	281,704
London South	460,937	254,131

No direct comparison with 1979 can be made as a change in regional boundaries in 1982 reduced the total number of regions from 12 to seven.

The table shows the number of people receiving *(a)* supplementary allowance and *(b)* supplementary pension in each of the twelve regions on 15 May 1979.

	Supplementary Allowance	Supplementary Pension
Scotland	145,312	147,693
Northern	94,629	107,073
Yorks and Humberside	117,958	169,720
Merseyside	113,026	111,709
North Western (Manchester)	87,068	127,388
West Midlands	126,331	160,288
East Midlands and East Anglia	105,441	155,299
Wales	85,236	95,412
South Western	88,516	129,743
London North	112,758	169,618
London West	98,864	135,689
London South	121,667	191,742

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to *(a)* efficiency savings, and *(b)* savings from competitive tendering achieved by (i) each regional health authority and (ii) each district health authority in each financial year 1979-80 to 1985-86.

Mr. Whitney: [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986, c. *427*]: For the years 1981-82 to 1984-85, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to him on 14 February 1986, at column *596*. Information on savings achieved in 1985-86 is not yet available for all regions, but we anticipate that regions collectively will have achieved

their agreed target of releasing £120 million cash together with significant increases in activity within existing resources.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Neale asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has as to how many non-British European Economic Community citizens claimed board and lodging allowances during the months of June on the purported grounds that they were looking for employment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he is taking to prevent non-British EEC citizens from coming to the United Kingdom for the purpose of claiming board and lodging benefits; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what records are kept by his Department of the numbers, country of origin and sums paid to non-British EEC citizens in board and lodging allowances on the basis of claims purported to be related to the search for jobs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *420*]: In June 1986, 90 claims for supplementary benefit from non-United Kingdom European Community nationals were recorded, compared with 116 in June 1985. Centrally collected figures do not identify board and lodging claimants separately within this total. Measures were strengthened last year to ensure that benefit is paid only to those EC claimants who are entitled to receive it. We have also recently stepped up action to combat hotel fraud.

Nurses and Doctors

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* state registered nurses and *(b)* medical doctors are currently employed.

Mr. Hayhoe: [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986]: The Department of Employment is the source of statistical information on the unemployed, but I understand that information by occupation has not been available since the introduction of the voluntary registration procedure in October 1982.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 22 July 1986

ENVIRONMENT

Northern Ireland Flag

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange for the flag of Northern Ireland to be flown alongside the flags of Wales, Scotland and England on public buildings in Whitehall for future state visits to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and on other suitable state occasions.

Mr. Tracey: The St. Patrick's flag is flown along side those of St. Andrew, St. George and the Red Dragon of Wales.

Water Authorities (Pollution)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if there have been any occasions in the last five years on which water authorities have been prosecuted for pollution offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department has not prosecuted any water authority in the last five years for pollution offences.

The comprehensive controls over discharges contained in part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 were brought into force only two years ago. The major review of consents undertaken as part of the implementation of the 1974 Act led to certain consents being granted subject to review after a specified period and to the water authority undertaking capital investment to improve effluent quality.

Islington

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the detailed criteria used to determine *(a)* grant-related expenditure assessments, *(b)* targets and *(c)* rate limits, for the London borough of Islington fo. each of the past four years.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the rate support grant reports and supplementary reports approved by the House for those years; and to the Department's annual publications "Grant-Related Expenditure, how the expenditure needs of local authorities are assessed for block grant" and "The Technical Handbook of Grant-Related Expenditure"—respectively the "Blue Book" and the "Green Book".

The criteria used to determine expenditure guidance (targets) are set out in annex E to the Rate Support Grant Report 1983-84 and in annex D to the Rate Support Grant Reports of 1984-85 and 1985-86 expenditure guidance was not issued for 1986-87.

Rate limitation first operated in 1985-86. Rate limits are determined in accordance with section 4 of the Rates Act 1984.

Copies of all these documents are in the Library.

Grant-Related Expenditure Allocation

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to make any changes in the factors used in assessing grant-related expenditure allocation.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is considering a number of options for change arising from the grants working group's report to the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on the grant-related expenditure development programme for 1987-88. His final decisions will take account of his consultations with local government.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will bring up to date the information concerning the Exchequer contribution to local government expenditure published in the *Official Report* on 1 March 1984, *Official Report*, columns *330-31*, in reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is as follows:

Aggregate Exchequer grant as a percentage of relevant expenditure

England	*(a) At settlement**	*(b) At outturn†*
1981-82	59·1	54·9
1982-83	56·1	51·7
1983-84	52·8	49·8
1984-85	51·9	49·6
1985-86	48·7	46·8
1986-87	46·4	44·1

* Percentages as given in the rate support grant settlement report.

† Aggregate Exchequer grant from latest supplementary report, or, in the case of 1986-87, as given in the rate support grant settlement report. Relevant expenditure from outturn forms returned to the Department, except 1985-86 (local authorities' revised estimates) and 1986-87 (budgets). Outturn percentages between 1981-82 and 1985-86 are affected by holdback of block grant.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he now proposes to accept the recommendation in the Widdicombe report for an immediate increase in the financial limit on spending under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 for metropolitan district and London borough councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I have decided to study whether special provision for local authorities to spend on economic development is desirable or necessary. The proper level of spending authority under section 137 is obviously dependant on decisions taken about economic development. I hope to be able to come to conclusions about this by early in the new year. Meanwhile, I have no plans for interim measures.

Local Authority Local Plans

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discretion a local planning authority has to introduce alternative proposals to those contained in its deposited local plan.

Mr. Tracey: A local planning authority has discretion to introduce alternative proposals to those contained in its deposited local plan before, during or after any public

local inquiry. The code of practice says that if this is done before the inquiry and time allows, the planning authority may advertise the changes and its reasons for them and allow a reasonable period for objections and representations. If there is insufficient time to advertise potential changes, the planning authority should still try to give objectors and any third parties a chance to comment on them in the inquiry context. All proposed modifications to a deposited local plan need to be advertised following the planning authority's consideration of the inspector's report.

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether local planning authorities are required to make provision for the public to have access to objections to a deposited local plan.

Mr. Tracey: The code of practice makes it clear that copies of objections sent to the planning authority should be placed on deposit along with the plan, so that others may know of them. Copies of the plan will have been deposited for inspection at the planning authority's office and other suitable places. The provisions in the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 would also have to be complied with in so far as they are relevant.

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discretion the inspector at a local plan public inquiry has to restrict those appearing and giving evidence solely to those who have lodged objections and whose objections have been deemed valid by the programme officer.

Mr. Tracey: Procedures for public local inquiries into local plans are set out in a booklet, "Local Plans: Public local inquiries—a guide to procedure 1984" published by this Department and the Welsh Office. Anyone whose objections are made in writing and submitted by the specified date has the right to appear at the inquiry. People whose objections are not duly made, for example because they are late, do not have a right to appear, but the planning authority may agree to ask the inspector to hear such objections. The inspector may decide whether to hear late objections, whether or not he has been asked to do so by the planning authority.

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was his role in setting the date for the Cartmel and Furness local plan public inquiry.

Mr. Tracey: The normal practice is for the local planning authority to ask the Planning Inspectorate to provide an inspector to hold an inquiry at a time requested by the authority. Subject to the availability of inspectors, the inspectorate try to meet this request. I understand that in this case the local authority asked for an inquiry in early August and that the date agreed for the inquiry to start is 11 August.

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discretion a local planning authority has to negotiate with objectors to a deposited local plan to meet their concerns and to seek withdrawal of their objections.

Mr. Tracey: A local planning authority has discretion to negotiate with objectors to a local plan. The code of practice provides that a planning authority may undertake informal discussions with an objector to consider ways in which the plan might be changed to meet his concerns. The code advises

"Any objector who would be satisfied by the changes proposed by the planning authority may be content to submit a statement saying so and not take part in discussion of the objection at the inquiry. However, the objection should not normally be withdrawn at this stage, since it may well still be of assistance to the Inspector."

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what remedies exist under his Department's code of practice for local plan inquiries for an aggrieved person to challenge the procedures followed by a local planning authority in preparing for and holding a local public inquiry.

Mr. Tracey: In most cases, a pre-inquiry meeting is arranged at which the inspector will discuss the proposed timetable and any queries about the way in which the inquiry is to be conducted. An aggrieved person could make representations then, or at the start of the inquiry. Any aggrieved person who questions the validity of a local plan can apply, on certain grounds, to the High Court to have the plan quashed. This must be within six weeks of the advertisement of the notice to adopt the plan. Any person who considers that he or she has suffered injustice because of maladministration by a local authority in connection with a local plan can ask for the matter to be investigated by the local ombudsman.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice his Department gives to local authorities on the treatment and disposal of polychlorinated biphenyl waste.

Mrs. Rumbold: The main source of advice my Department gives to local authorities on the treatment and disposal of PCB waste is Waste Management Paper No. 6, which is due to be extended and updated.

In September 1985 my Department provided local authorities with more up-to-date and definitive guidelines in respect of landfill disposal of PCB-contaminated wastes. This advice is set out in some detail on pages 13 and 14 in the second report of the Hazardous Waste Inspectorate published yesterday. Copies of this report have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many inquiries he has had concerning the disposal problems of polychlorinated biphenyls in the last five years.

Mrs. Rumbold: Over the last five years my Department has received inquiries concerning only some half a dozen incidents which involved the disposal of PCBs.

Homes Insulation Grant Scheme

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what sums were allocated to the English homes insulation grant scheme reserve fund for 1985-86; what proportion of these funds were spent; and what sums have been allocated for the reserve fund for 1986-87.

Sir George Young: The homes insulation scheme reserve in 1985-86 was £7 million; the proportion spent is not yet know. The reserve in 1986-87 is £2·5 million.

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will continue to make available

additional moneys to the reserve fund allocated for the English homes insulation grant scheme during the first quarter of 1987.

Sir George Young: The homes insulation scheme reserve for the financial year 1986-87 is £2·5 million.

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will communicate to each local authority his commitment to make available additional moneys to the reserve fund allocated for the English homes insulation grant scheme for 1986-87 Energy Efficiency Year.

Sir George Young: Local authorities have been informed there is a homes insulation scheme reserve of £2·5 million for 1986-87.

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee (Report)

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received the seventh annual report of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. The report is being published today, and copies have been placed in the Library of the House. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are grateful to the chairman, Professor Paul Matthews, CBE, FRS, and to the committee for their valuable work on this vital subject. We will consider their advice carefully.

Urban Programme

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the total urban programme for the financial years 1978-79 to 1986-87 (estimated); and if he will list the outturn uroan programme grants paid to each partnership, programme and designated authority and the estimated figure for 1986-87, comparing for each authority the level of funding in each year with *(a)* housing subsidy receivable and *(b)* block grant.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1986, c. *545*]: I have placed a copy of the information in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cling Film

Mr. Silvester asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends to restrict the use of cling film as a food wrapping material in view of the recent publicity about its safety.

Mrs. Fenner: A working group in my Department is studying plasticisers in all forms of plastic packaging materials. It is due to report on its evaluations next year, but it has noted that some of the plasticiser di-2-ethyhexyladipate (DEHA) used to soften plasticised polyvinyl chloride film (commonly called cling film) will migrate into closely wrapped foodstuffs. None of the levels of DEHA so far found in food give any cause for concern on health grounds, but the work of the group is continuing. There is therefore no reason for me to restrict the use of the film as a food wrapping material. Nevertheless, the results so far do show a markedly higher level of migration when the film is used in cooking in microwave ovens or conventional ovens. I am advised that even this does not indicate the existence of any hazard to human health, but that it does seem to be prudent to avoid such usage if possible. I am therefore proposing to ask manufacturers of this film to ensure that a statement is made on the packaging of the film that it is not suitable for use in cooking. I am also approaching oven manufacturers to advise them to make similar adjustments in their publicity literature.

Bourgoin S A and Others (Court Case)

Mr. Hunter asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether there have been any developments in the case of Bourgoin S A and Others *v.* the Minister.

Mr. Jopling: A negotiated settlement of this case has been reached. Parliamentary approval for the relevant payment will be sought in a Supplementary Supply Estimate for class IV, vote 5. Pending that approval, this urgent payment of about £3·5 million to cover damages, interest and costs will be met by a repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund.

Dairy Herds (Disease)

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many dairy herds or parts thereof have been purchased by his Department following outbreaks of cornebacterium pyogenes mastitis within the last 12 months; and where these were located.

Mr. Jopling: Part of one dairy herd has been purchased in the last 12 months to try to establish the cause of disease problems on a holding in Kirkby Lonsdale, Cumbria.

Radioactivity

Mr. Corbyn asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of occasions and the quantities involved in cases of the mixing of high radioactivity milk with unaffected milk since April.

Mr. Jopling: The results of monitoring since the Chernobyl accident have indicated that radioactivity in milk has always been well below the levels at which the Government would need to consider taking action. I am not aware of any cases involving the mixing of milk containing high levels of radioactivity.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if all food supplies with a higher level of radiation than 350 becquerels have now been withdrawn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Butter Production

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of the milk held by the Milk Marketing Board was allocated to the production of butter in each of the last five years; and what is the estimate for 1986.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what price the Milk Marketing Board receives for supplying milk to dairies and for allocation to butter production, respectively, on a comparative basis.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Pollution (Compensation)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is Her Majesty's Government's policy regarding claims for compensation to United Kingdom farmers from the Government of the polluting country in the case of pollution from a foreign source; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *1*]: The Government believe in the "polluter pays" principle. However, we recognise that individual circumstances will need to be considered in the light of a full assessment of the nature and extent of any damage caused.

Chernobyl Incident

Mr. Kennedy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with other European Community member states on the question of agricultural compensation arising from the income losses associated with the Chernobyl incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *1*]: None to date.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he proposes to take, in his capacity as President of the European Community Council of Ministers, to co-ordinate claims on behalf of European Community agriculture against the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for income loss associated with the Chernobyl incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *2*]: I understand that one member state has plans to make assistance available to some farmers whose produce had to be destroyed through radioactive contamination.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to steps taken by other European Community member states to aid financially the agricultural sectors in those respective states for income losses associated with the Chernobyl incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *2*]: I have no plans to co-ordinate any such claims. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has, however, reserved the rights of Her Majesty's Government with the Government of the USSR.

PRIME MINISTER

Sir Peter Marychurch

Q45. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister on what grounds Sir Peter Marychurch, director of Government Communications Headquarters, Cheltenham has had his tenure of office extended; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Sir Peter Marychurch was invited to extend his tenure of office as director of the Government Communications Headquarters in order to provide continuity at a time when a number of retirements are due among senior GCHQ management.

Commercial Whaling

Q65. **Dr. Godman** asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government have had any recent discussions with other countries over implementation of the International Whaling Commission's declarations on commercial whaling.

The Prime Minister: At the International Whaling Commission's (IWC) annual meeting, held in Malmo, Sweden from 9 to 13 June this year, the United Kingdom commissioner participated in discussion of matters associated with the implementation of the IWC's decision, taken in 1982, for a moratorium on commercial whaling with effect from the 1985-86 seasons. Three countries, Japan, Norway and the USSR, currently maintain formal objection to this decision under the terms of the convention which governs the IWC, but each has now indicated that it will move towards a cessation of commercial whaling. Japan has formally notified the IWC that it will conditionally withdraw its objection so that all its commercial whaling will cease by April 1988; Norway has announced its intentions to phase out commercial operations by 1988 and the USSR stated last year that it plans to cease Antarctic whaling in 1987.

Granborough, Rugby

Q79. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Granborough, near Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Q154. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her engagements for 22 and 23 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell). Tomorrow I shall be attending the wedding of His Royal Highness Prince Andrew to Miss Sarah Ferguson. I shall also be having meetings with ministerial colleagues and others.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 July.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later

today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen. Tonight I shall be attending a dinner at the United States embassy in honour of Mrs. Reagan.

Warnock Report

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister what representations she has had concerning the report of the Warnock committee on human fertilisation and embryology, Cmnd. 9314; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations, mostly about research involving human embryos. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) on 5 June 1986, at column 1082.

EC Budget

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the question of the procedure which will require to be adopted to implement section 1.4 of the Fontainebleu European Council conclusions following the agreement on the revised European Economic Community budget; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I see no need for this question to be raised at the next meeting of the European Council.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister why Her Majesty's Government agreed to a revised European Economic Community budget for 1986 which did not conform to the provisions of the 4 December 1984 agreement negotiated in the European Council; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government took the view that the abnormally large depreciation of the dollar was an exceptional circumstance which justified some excess over the budget discipline guideline figure for agricultural guarantee expenditure. The Government made clear their profound concern about the increases in non-obligatory expenditure, which in our view could only partly be justified by the enlargement of the Community. The new budget will, however, reduce the United Kingdom's net contribution by some £250 million compared with the Council's Second Reading draft budget, and the United Kingdom's VAT rate will be reduced to 0·68 per cent.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the policy of the Council on the making of intergovernmental agreements to balance European Economic Community budgets under article 199 of the treaty in light of the determination by the Court of Auditors in its annual report for 1984; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government, in common with the Governments of the other member states, do not accept the Court of Auditors comments about the 1984 intergovernmental agreement. Article 4 of the 1970 own resources decision provided that the Community might finance expenditure from "other revenue" as well as from "own resources" revenue. The same provision has been repeated in article 1 of the own resources decision of 7 May 1985. It would seem therefore the reimbursable advances paid under the 1984 IGA could properly be regarded as "other revenue".

President Mubarak (Meeting)

Mr. Wareing asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent discussions with President Mubarak of Egypt indicating the subjects which were discussed.

The Prime Minister: I had a useful talk with President Mubarak about the Egyptian economy and regional issues.

TRANSPORT

Greater Manchester PTA (Asset Transfers)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking in regard to the greater Manchester passenger transport authority's request to him to amend the asset transfer scheme, under the Transport Act 1985, so as to provide for the retention of the Northenden bus garage and those other bus garages scheduled for closure in areas of high unemployment.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend will be discussing the terms of the transfer scheme with the passenger transport authority and the passenger transport executive. It will be his objective, when approving the scheme, to ensure that the new company has the right asset base to enable it to trade successfully and efficiently.

Drinking and Driving

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department last consulted senior police officers or magistrates on the problem of drinking and driving.

Mr. Moore: We are in regular contact with the traffic committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers and the road traffic committee of the Magistrates Association to discuss matters of mutual interest, including drinking and driving.

Tolled Estuarial Crossings

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to respond to the Transport Committee's report on tolled estuarial crossings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I have sent to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Bagier) the Chairman of the Committee, the Government's response to its report.

I regret that the Government have been unable to accept the Select Committee's recommendations that tolls should be abolished on crossings linked to motorways and trunk roads, that we should write off the debts of tolled crossings that are owed to the Exchequer, and that we should discharge over a fixed period the debts owed to private sources. The Government take the view that the debts on the tolled crossings were freely incurred by the authorities concerned. These cannot be written off without financial penalty.

The Government recognise the special financial problems of the Humber bridge: my predecessor acknowledged them in his oral evidence to the Select Committee. My officials are discussing with the Humber Bridge board possible measures to resolve the financial problems of the bridge. In addition, our response to the

Select Committee states that where other crossing authorities consider that they face similar problems, the Government would be willing to consider their financial projections and related proposals for alleviating those problems, provided the authorities have exhausted the possibilities of their own enabling legislation.

Publication of the Government's response is a matter for the Committee.

Passenger Transport Authorities

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has determined expenditure levels for the passenger transport authorities for 1987-88.

Mr. Moore: I have today notified the authorities of my determinations as follows:

	£ million
Greater Manchester	74·1
Merseyside	67·7
South Yorkshire	45·7
Tyne and Wear	56·6
West Midlands	55·1
West Yorkshire	57·9

Under section 3(4) of the Rates Act 1984 any authority may apply for a redetermination of its expenditure level at a greater amount. I have invited such applications to be submitted by 15 October, and before reaching decisions on them will carefully consider any representations made or information provided.

Redundant Land and Property

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the valuation criteria used by his Department for the disposal of redundant land and property in United Kingdom ports, docks and transport undertakings for inner city and urban renewal purposes in cases where the cost of reinstating the land is very high in relation to its likely developed value.

Mr. Moore: The valuation of any land or property disposed of by any port or other transport undertaking is a matter for that undertaking and the purchaser.

ENERGY

Onshore Exploration Licences

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements he is making for the award of further onshore exploration licences.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have today placed in the Libraries of both Houses copies of the text announcing the invitation to apply for landward petroleum licences. The invitation is directed only to those with exploration licences awarded under the previous regulations and I have specified that applications may be made on 30 September 1986 and 7 May 1987. These are the transitional arrangements necessary to give the opportunity to such licensees who wish to apply for the new style exploration licences needed to proceed to the drilling stage. Any wells to be drilled on the new licences will need both the agreement of the landowner and occupier and planning permission.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Magistrates Courts (Crown Prosecutors)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Attorney-General if he is able to give any figures for the amount of money spent hitherto by Crown prosecutors on the employment of solicitors as agents in the magistrates courts; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service was introduced into the six former metropolitan counties of Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire, and in the counties of Durham and Northumberland, on 1 April 1986. Payments by the Crown Prosecution Service in respect of the engagement of solicitors as agents in the magistrates courts in those areas during the period 1 April to the 11 July was £225,824. This figure does not include outstanding accounts for solicitors engaged during the period quoted which have either not yet been submitted or await payment.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Register of Companies

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) on what date *(a)* Clyde Buildings and *(b)* Clydeside Holdings were struck off the companies register at Companies house; for what reason; who were the directors of those companies at that time; and if he will make a statement;

(2) on what date *(a)* the Elmrace Group and *(b)* Elmrace Motors were struck off the register of companies at Companies house; for what reason they were struck off; if he will list the directors of the company at that date; and if he will make a statement;

(3) why Gordons Fashions was struck off the register of companies at Companies house; on what date this was done; who were the directors of that company at that time; and if he will make a statement;

(4) why D. Broadhead Ltd. was struck off the register of companies at Companies house on 7 December 1981; who were the directors of the company at that time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Elmrace Group Ltd. was struck off the Register of Companies on 27 September 1984, Elmrace Motors Ltd. on 28 September 1984, Gordons Fashions Ltd. on 29 November 1984 and Clydeside Holdings Ltd. on 8 April 1986. The Registrar expects to strike off Clyde Buildings Ltd. on 25 July 1986 and, subject to satisfactory completion of the statutory procedures, he will strike off D. Broadhead Ltd. during August 1986. The latter company has not previously been struck off the register.

Strike off action was initiated for all the companies named because the Registrar had reasons to believe, on the basis of information supplied by the companies themselves, that they were not in business or operating.

The directors of all companies are, or were at the time of strike-off, Mr. A. B. Kiley and K. T. Secretaries Ltd. Additionally, Mrs. S. Miller was a director of Gordons Fashions Ltd. when it was struck off.

Grosvenor Management Services (Scotland) Ltd.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied that the accounts of Grosvenor Management Services (Scotland) Ltd. have been lodged in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Acts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The accounts of Grosvenor Management Services (Scotland) Ltd. have been filed with the Registrar of Companies for Scotland in accordance with the Companies Act 1985 and are available for inspection at the Companies Registration Office, Edinburgh.

Redundant Steelworkers

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will ensure that there is parity of consideration and support for redundant steelworkers whether these are supported under the arrangements covered by the treaty of Rome or the treaty of Paris.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No. The Government operate a statutory scheme, partly funded by the European Community, for redundant workers who come under the special provisions of the treaty of Pars. The coverage and terms of this scheme have been agreed with the European Commission and are prescribed in regulations.

The British Steel Corporation operates a broadly similar scheme for its redundant workers who do not qualify for benefits under the statutory scheme. The terms of this scheme are a matter for the corporation.

As a rule, private sector steel companies do not operate any schemes for redundant workers who do not qualify for the statutory scheme.

Export Controls

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the criteria used in deciding whether to permit the export of military and para-military equipment under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1985.

Mr. Butcher: In considering applications to export military and paramilitary equipment all relevant factors are taken into account, including the type of equipment, its proposed destination and the use to which it might be put.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the countries to which military and paramilitary equipment has been exported under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1985 to the latest available date.

Mr. Butcher: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to supply details of exports of military and paramilitary equipment. However, total values of exports of defence equipment are contained in table 2.8 of volume II of The Defence Estimates 1986, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the total value of military and paramilitary equipment which has been exported under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1985 to the latest available date.

Mr. Butcher: An answer could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the working of the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Yes.

Trade Marks (Inquiries)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much his Department charges inquirers by post or telephone for providing the name and address of the owner of a trade name in a given class of trade marks.

Mr. Pattie: No charge is made for this simple information.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will carry out any investigations to find *(a)* the form in which trade name information would be most widely acceptable to inquirers throughout the UK; and *(b)* to evaulate the cost of each of the possible alternative forms of providing access to trade name information held at the Trade Marks Registry, with a view to keeping down the costs to industry and the public; and if he has carried out any similar evaluation in the past.

Mr. Pattie: I do not propose to commission any investigations. The Patent Office is to be hived off from the Civil Service and is charged to conduct its operations in an entrepreneurial fashion and with the needs of its users in mind. It will be for the office to keep under review how best to provide access to its various stores of information, including trade mark information.

Disabled People (Telephones)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made in his consideration of the proposal for a design of modular exchange equipment suitable for hearing-impaired people emanating from the Advisory Committee for Telecommunications for Disabled and Elderly People; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The proposals submitted through the advisory committee are in outline only. The Royal National Institute for the Deaf is being invited to discuss them in more detail with officials in the Department.

Takeover Bids

Mr. Pollock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to seek to amend the law relating to offer documents and their role in hostile takeover bids; whether he has examined the nature and extent of the undertakings given in the original offer documents by Guinness plc for DCL; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I would refer my hon. Friend in particular to parts IV and V of the Financial Services Bill. I am considering the case to which my hon. Friend refers.

International Tin Council

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what payments Her Majesty's Government have

made to the International Tin Council in each of the last three financial years and the current financial year to date; and what are Her Majesty's Government's commitments in respect of the remainder of the financial year.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following payments were made by the United Kingdom during the last three financial years to the International Tin Council:

	£
1983-84	40,036
1984-85	41,030
1985-86	55,701

All the above payments were in respect of the administrative budget. The United Kingdom's share of the 1986-87 administrative budget is £76,117.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many staff were employed by the International Tin Council in each of the last three financial years and the current financial year to date; and what are the prospective levels of employment for the remainder of the financial year.

Mr. Alan Clark: I am advised by the International Tin Council that the number of staff employed were:

	Number
1983-84	37
1984-85	39
1985-86	39

Current employment is 19.

Textiles (State Aids)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what date his Department was notified of the official notice 85/C18/05 of the European Community Commission regarding its intention to investigate state funding by the French Government to a major manufacturer of textile, packaging and personal hygiene products; what representations his Department has made in response to that notice, and on what date; and what information he has now received from the Commission on its findings.

Mr. Butcher: The Government were formally notified by the European Commission on 4 January 1985 of the opening of an article 93(2) procedure on the state aid in question. The Government made representations to the Commission on 11 March 1985. The Commission has recently told officials that its investigations are complete and that a decision should be issued in the near future.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received from the British Textile Confederation regarding specific state aids to the textile industry in France and Greece; and what response he has made.

Mr. Butcher: The British Textile Confederation wrote to officials in June about state aids granted to textile manufacturers in France and Greece. In response, officials have made inquiries of the Commission and reported back to the confederation.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give details of the representations which his Department has made to the European Community Commission regarding the allegation that the Greek Government have given subsidies to the textile company Piraiki Patraiki, in breach of European Community rules; and whether he has pressed for a formal notice to be issued under article 93(2) of the treaty to investigate these allegations.

Mr. Butcher: Officials have made inquiries of the Commission regarding allegations that subsidies have been granted. The Commission is seeking information from the Greek Government in order to assess the case for opening an article 93(2) procedure.

Textiles, Clothing and Footwear

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the official reasons given by the European Community Commission for the rejection of his Department's proposed CLOFT scheme to encourage investment in new manufacturing technology by small firms in the textile, clothing and footwear industries.

Mr. Butcher: The European Commission set out the reasons for its decision on the CLOFT scheme in document C(85) 319 final of 13 February 1985. A copy is available in the Library of the House.

South Africa

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has circulated companies with new guidelines on the interpretation and application of the EEC code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government have today published a White Paper which commends the revised EC code of conduct to British companies with interests in South Africa. Copies will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The White Paper includes explanatory guidance in confirmation of the informal guidelines which were sent to companies on 20 June as stated by the Prime Minister in her reply for 7 July, at column 7, to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field).

It is now intended for the first time that all EC companies should observe identical procedures and reporting requirements, many of which will already be familiar to United Kingdom companies.

Weights and Measures

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to announce the action he intends to take on the recommendations of the Eden committee on the metrological control of weighing and measuring equipment for use for trade.

Mr. Howard: The Government's response to the Eden committee's recommendations has been published today (Cmnd. 9850). The response sets out the actions the Government propose to take, having carefully considered the committee's report and the many comments received since its publication. Copies of the document have been placed in the Library.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Birkbeck College

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of the University Grants Committee's additional allocation of funds for Birkbeck college for 1986-87 and the likely reduction in grant for the years up to 1990.

Mr. Walden: The University Grants Committee has allocated an additional £600,000 to the University of London for 1986-87 in respect of students of Birkbeck college. Provisional decisions about grants to all universities for 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 will be determined in the autumn.

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations from Birkbeck college he has received over the last four weeks; and if he has any meetings planned to discuss the future of the college.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has received over 500 representations about the funding of Birkbeck college. Neither he nor I have any meetings about the college planned at present.

Medical Research Council

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of the Medical Research Council's budget, including administration, was spent in Scotland in 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Walden: The information requested is as follows:

Financial year	*Percentage of the MRC's total expenditure spent in Scotland*
1983-84	10·6
1984-85	11·3
1985-86	10·7

University Statistics (Scotland)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total number of students attending each Scottish university in the academic year 1984-85; what were the numbers of full-time staff at each university; and what were the staff-student ratios in each case.

Mr. Walden: Information is provided in the following table:

Academic year 1984-85

Scottish universities	*Full-time and sandwich students*	*Part-time students*	*Full-time equivalent student load (provisional)*	*Full-time staff paid wholly from university funds (provisional)*	*Student/staff ratio* (provisional)*
Aberdeen	5,496	353	5,611	583	9·6
Dundee	3,185	128	3,211	333	9·6
Edinburgh	9,798	946	10,406	1,040	10·0
Glasgow	10,084	2,279	10,724	1,017	10·5
Heriot-Watt	3,166	431	2,902	263	11·0
St. Andrews	3,473	135	3,525	333	10·6
Stirling	2,569	340	2,698	241	11·2
Strathclyde	7,502	821	7,631	671	11·4
Total Scottish universities	45,273	5,433	46,708	4,481	10·4

* The staff-student ratio for universities is defined as the full-time equivalent of undergraduate and postgraduate students divided by full-time academic staff funded wholly from university funds.

School Meals

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children in the county of Buckinghamshire *(a)* received school meals, *(b)* took sandwiches and *(c)* ate out, for each year since 1982.

Mr. Dunn: The annual school meals census for 1982, 1983 and 1984, reports of which are in the Library, show for each local education authority the number of pupils present on the day of the census, the number taking a school meal and the number bringing their own food. It was not possible to collect this information in 1985.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is *(a)* the cost per meal and *(b)* the price charged for school meals in Buckinghamshire for each year since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: The price charged for a school meal in each local education authority is shown in the annual census of school meals for the years in question, copies of which are in the Library. Information on the cost per meal in each local education authority is not collected centrally.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is *(a)* the average cost of providing a school meal and *(b)* the average staff numbers per 100 meals served for (i) England and (ii) Buckinghamshire.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect the information from which to calculate the average cost of providing a school meal. In the October 1984 school meals census, the only occasion when this information has been collected centrally, 13 LEAs, including Buckinghamshire, did not provide figures for the number of staff per 100 meals served.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to require local education authorities to provide a school meal service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: No.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations have been received by his Department concerning the future of the school meals service in Buckinghamshire.

Mr. Dunn: To date, the Department has received 10 letters from members of the public.

Dovecot Community Comprehensive School, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received calling for more resources to be provided for the Dovecot community comprehensive school in Liverpool; what his response was; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend have received any representations about this particular school. The matter is in any case one for Liverpool LEA.

Student Grants

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the current review of student grants includes the special needs of medical students in their clinical years.

Mr. Walden: The review will cover all aspects of financial support for students studying at first degree or equivalent level.

University Grants

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list grants made available to universities in Great Britain in the financial year 1985-86 on the advice of the University Grants Committee and of the computer board.

Mr. Walden: The information requested is as follows:

1985-86

Grants to universities and colleges etc.

For Recurrent Grants

	General Purposes	*Overseas Research Student Awards Scheme*	*Restructuring**	*Total Subhead A1*	*Computers Subhead B2*
	£ thousand	*£ thousand*	*£ thousand*	*£ thousand*	*£ thousand*
Aston University	15,746	22	—	15,768	152
Bath University	13,623	69	—	13,692	1,450
Birmingham University	39,501	56	—	39,557	344
Bradford University ¶	15,315	18	—	15,333	158
Bristol University	31,346	35	—	31,381	246
Brunel University	13,613	24	—	13,637	137
Cambridge University	44,407	722	—	45,129	465
City University ¶	13,026	24	—	13,050	124
Durham University	18,414	32	—	18,446	108
East Anglia University	15,480	20	—	15,500	186
Essex University	9,064	61	—	9,125	182
Exeter University	16,091	17	—	16,108	95
Hull University	15,236	9	—	15,245	161
Keele University	9,345	5	—	9,350	136
Kent University	11,005	16	12	11,033	211
Lancaster University	14,163	23	—	14,186	208
Leeds University ¶	44,028	154	—	44,182	382
Leicester University	19,131	13	—	19,144	180
Liverpool University ¶	40,047	76	13	40,136	286
London Business School	2,215	3	—	2,218	—
London University, including its Colleges and Schools ¶	250,631	1,018	46	251,695	5,232
Loughborough University of Technology	19,253	20	—	19,273	241
Manchester Business School	1,236	—	—	1,236	22
Manchester University	49,555	122	—	49,677	
Manchester University Institute of Science and Technology	17,525	174	—	17,699	2,838
Newcastle upon Tyne University	34,762	65	—	34,827	325
Nottingham University	28,971	22	—	28,993	417
Oxford University ¶	45,241	428	—	45,669	575
Reading University	19,754	37	—	19,791	174
Salford University	13,765	19	—	13,784	294
Sheffield University	34,058	65	—	34,123	228
Southampton University	26,670	79	—	26,749	315
Surrey University	13,873	32	—	13,905	186
Sussex University ¶	14,706	65	—	14,771	124
Warwick University	19,525	20	—	19,545	270
York University	11,899	15	—	11,914	111
University of Wales, including University Colleges and Institute of Science and Technology ¶	74,310	99	1	74,410	791

Grants to universities and colleges etc.

For Recurrent Grants

	General Purposes £ thousand	*Overseas Research Student Awards Scheme* £ thousand	*Restructuring** £ thousand	*Total Subhead A1* £ thousand	*Computers Subhead B2* £ thousand
Aberdeen University	25,044	39	—	25,083	304
Dundee University	16,874	30	—	16,904	117
Edinburgh University	50,064	122	—	50,186	801
Glasgow University	47,824	84	—	47,908	328
Heriot-Watt University	12,165	21	—	12,186	140
St. Andrews University	13,146	23	—	13,169	123
Stirling University	9,814	8	—	9,822	91
Strathclyde University	26,138	94	—	26,232	287
Other payments	† 614	‡ 215	—	829	‖ 607
Total	1,278,213	4,315	72	1,282,600	20,152

* Payments in respect of redundancy compensation only.

† £576,759 paid direct to the University Central Council on Admissions, and £37,229 in respect of the National Engineering Laboratory, East Kilbride.

‡ £144,325 paid to Cranfield Institute of Technology, £61,064 to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals for administration of the overseas research student fees support scheme and £9,600 to the Royal College of Art.

‖ £607,380 paid to the Rutherford and Appleton Laboratories (SERC)

¶ In addition to the payments tabulated alongside, the following in respect of subhead B1, compensation for loss of fee income were also made: Bradford £3,830, City £2,475, Leeds £7,530, Liverpool £10,132, London £4,640, Oxford £24,600, Sussex £15,620 and Wales £11,300.

1985-86

Grants to universities and colleges

	For capital expenditure			
	Universities etc. Subhead A2(2) £ thousand	*Medical and dental schools Subhead A3*** £ thousand	*Furniture and equipment Subhead A3* £ thousand	*Computers Subhead B3* £ thousand
Aston University	—	—	1,545	1,330
Bath University	170	—	1,203	30
Birmingham University	—	—	3,051	52
Bradford University	—	—	1,329	266
Bristol University	—	6	1,991	5
Brunel University	13	—	1,133	165
Cambridge University	—	64	4,486	21
City University	—	—	741	338
Durham University	—	—	1,166	16
East Anglia University	109	—	881	21
Essex University	—	—	592	01
Exeter University	29	21	918	71
Hull University	—	—	879	6
Keele University	241	—	560	27
Kent University	—	—	708	4
Lancaster University	—	—	796	306
Leeds University	—	272	2,968	19
Leicester University	175	120	1,599	8
Liverpool University	771	90	2,502	4
London Business School	—	—	61	—
London University, including its Colleges and Schools	3,842	3,818	21,097	3,897
Loughborough University of Technology	—	—	1,745	209
Manchester Business School	—	—	37	—
Manchester University	—	2	3,240	1,189
Manchester University Institute of Science and Technology	351	—	1,601	
Newcastle Upon Tyne University	—	1,115	2,352	1,805
Nottingham University	—	838	2,19?	96
Oxford University	—	127	4,044	158
Reading University	245	—	1,720	—
Salford University	847	—	1,223	206
Sheffield University	—	482	2,297	1,404
Southampton University	510	197	2,307	19
Surrey University	25	—	1,312	1
Sussex University	—	—	1,150	2
Warwick University	38	—	1,059	912
York University	—	—	832	2
University of Wales, including University Colleges and Institute of Science and Technology	228	—	4,766	456

	For capital expenditure			
	Universities etc. Subhead A2(2)	*Medical and dental schools Subhead A3***	*Furniture and equipment Subhead A3*	*Computers Subhead B3*
	£ thousand	*£ thousand*	*£ thousand*	*£ thousand*
Aberdeen University	99	332	1,563	45
Dundee University	—	—	854	—
Edinburgh University	—	6	3,560	110
Glasgow University	999	61	3,494	129
Heriot-Watt University	1,418	—	1,082	80
St. Andrews University	—	—	649	232
Stirling University	—	—	394	14
Strathclyde University	150	—	1,797	71
Other payments	—	—	4,863	† 546
TOTAL	10,260	7,551	100,344	14,513

* The sums provided from subhead A3, earmarked for individual universities as shown, were transferred to a deposit account with the Paymaster General from which issues were made as required towards meeting the cost of furniture and equipment. The balance remaining in the deposit account at 31 March 1986, which is not liable to surrender to the Consolidated Fund, was £13,634,011.

† Other payments comprise £205,364 fees paid to the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency for negotiating contracts and £340,252 paid to the Rutherford and Appleton Laboratories (SERC) for networking projects.

1985-86

Grants and loans for long term capital projects: Universities etc., (Subhead A2(1))
Details of expenditure on works services costing more than £1 million shown in Table 1 to the Estimate

Project	*Provision*	*Expenditure*	*Expenditure compared with Provision*	
			Less than Provided	*More than Provided*
	£ thousand	*£ thousand*	*£ thousand*	*£ thousand*
Building projects and purchases of existing buildings:				
1. New and on-going projects originally expected to cost £1 million or more				
East Anglia University: Education Building	60	48	12	—
Reading University: Library II	110	223	—	113
Glasgow University: Library III	950	974	—	24
Reading University: Food Studies Building II	20	22	—	2
Salford University: Physical Restructuring	1,795	263	1,532	—
London University: Bedford/Royal Holloway Merger				
(a) Earth Sciences Building	1,700	2,034	—	334
(b) Life Sciences, Arts and Mathematics	1,490	1,565	—	75
Liverpool University: Faculty of Education and Extension Studies	675	771	—	96
Heriot-Watt University:				
(a) Building Engineering	1,075	924	151	—
(b) Chemical and Process Engineering	485	55	430	—
(c) Library II/Arts	320	49	271	—
(d) Biochemistry	75	21	54	—
Southampton University: Library	910	510	400	—
Bath University: Building 6 East	285	170	115	—
London University	—	—	—	—
Queen Mary College: Library	160	183	—	23
Umist: Library	655	351	304	—
Dundee University: Library	370	—	370	—
Sub total	11,135	8,163	3,639	667
2. On-going projects	502	1,921	—	1,419
3. Purchase of sites and building scheduled for demolition	—	176	—	176
4. End-year flexibility	616	—	616	—
Total (Universities etc.) (Subhead A2(1))	12,253	10,260	4,255	2,262

1985-86

Grants and loans for long term capital projects: medical and dental schools, (Subhead A2(2)
Details of expenditure on works services costing more than £1,000,000 shown in Table 2 to the Estimate

Project	*Provision*	*Expenditure*	*Expenditure compared with Provision*	
			Less than Provided	*More than Provided*
	£000	*£000*	*£000*	*£000*
Building projects and purchase of existing buildings:				

Project	Provision	Expenditure	Expenditure compared with Provision	
			Less than Provided	More than Provided
	£000	£000	£000	£000
1. New and on-going projects originally expected to cost the UGC £1 million or more				
London University: St. Mary's HMS, Phase 1B	1,100	1,436	—	336
Aberdeen University: Medical School Reconstruction	540	322	218	—
London University: Institute of Child Care, Cardiac Wing, Remedial Works	1,965	889	1,076	—
London University: Royal Postgraduate Medical School, Cyclotron Building, Remedial Works	270	173	97	—
Manchester University: Royal Infirmary, Phase II	710	—	710	—
Sheffield University: School of Clinical Dentistry	125	—	125	—
Newcastle University: Royal Victoria Infirmary, Phase V	300	450	—	150
2. New and on-gong phased medical projects, the total UGC contribution to all phases expected to be £1 million or more				
London University: Royal Postgraduate Medical School, Redevelopment of Hammersmith Hospital, Phase 1	150	104	46	—
London University: St. George's HMS, Block H	100	53	47	—
Sub Total	5,260	3,427	2,319	486
3. Projects expected to start in 1985-86 on which the UGC contribution not yet agreed	1,050	—	1,050	—
4. On-going projects costing the UGC less than £1 million	4,610	4,124	486	—
5. Furniture on Health-controlled schemes	1,450	—	1,450	—
6. Purchase of sites and buildings for demolition	500	—	500	—
7. End-year flexibility	*660	—	660	—
Total (Medical and Dental Schools) (Subhead A2(2))	13,530	7,551	6,465	486
Total (Universities, etc.) (Subhead A2(1) (Table 1))	12,253	10,260	4,255	2,262
Total Subhead A2	†25,783	17,811	10,720	2,748

* This amount was allocated to the A2(1) sub-head.

† In accordance with Treasury requirements, 5 per cent. of this total (£1,289,000) was retained in the A2 sub-head at the end of the financial year for end-year flexibility. In addition, Treasury agreement was given for £2,717,00 of this total amount to be vired from sub-head A2 to A1 for distribution as capital-in-recurrent grant.

1985-86

Grants for expenditure long term capital computer projects (Subhead B3)
Details of expenditure on computer projects costing more than £1,000,000 shown in Table 3 to the Estimate

Project	Provision	Expenditure	Expenditure compared with Provision	
			Less than Provided	More than Provided
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Projects costing £1 million or more*				
London University (Imperial College) New computer	60	97	—	37
Manchester University Front end computer	154	159	—	5
Strathclyde University New computer	229	11	218	—
Liverpool University New computer	199	—	199	—
Sheffield University New computer	1,375	1,404	—	29
Newcastle University New computer	1,500	1,749	—	249
Aston University New computer	1,100	1,330	—	230
London (ULCC)—New Computer	—	2,000	—	2,000
Sub Total	4,617	6,750	417	2,550
Projects costing less than £1 million	9,261	7,763	1,498	—
End-year flexibility	635	—	635	—
Total (Subhead B3)	14,513	14,513	2,550	2,550

* These purchases are made on the basis of fixed price contracts

Inner London Education Authority

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what expenditure level he proposes to determine for the Inner London education authority in respect of 1987-88.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1985 the Inner London education authority is automatically subject to designation under part I of the Rates Act 1984 for three years from 1 April 1986. For the year beginning 1 April 1987 I have decided to determine an expenditure level of £915 million; this is equal to the expenditure level for the year beginning 1 April 1986 as redetermined and notified to the authority on 13 December 1985. The ILEA has today been notified of this determination.

Lecturers

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide figures to show the numbers of *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time lecturers employed in the public sector in further and higher education for each of the last five years in each local education authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *356*]: The numbers of full-time and part-time (shown as full-time equivalents) lecturers in maintained and assisted establishments in each local authority in England and Wales are as follows:

Authority	*1982*		*1983*		*1984*		*1985*		*1986*	
	Full time	*Part time*	*Full time*	*Part time*	*Full time*	*Part time*	*Full time*	*Part time*	*Full time*	*Part time*
Barking	915	86	871	119	866	135	790	127	769	123
Barnet	240	85	248	94	272	103	269	95	272	103
Bexley	214	85	213	81	209	96	202	86	194	76
Brent	558	115	572	136	495	242	483	133	483	140
Bromley	237	132	240	155	238	149	233	153	234	142
Croydon	319	191	307	185	350	184	360	146	358	180
Ealing	590	394	570	485	537	268	538	283	583	106
Enfield	799	206	793	194	782	237	744	223	755	225
Haringey	231	91	236	96	286	98	309	141	320	150
Harrow	287	153	280	163	276	183	245	112	279	121
Havering	230	73	224	67	213	81	220	82	226	70
Hillingdon	118	80	127	78	125	85	119	76	113	84
Hounslow	234	135	236	117	252	137	250	143	238	143
Kingston-upon-Thames	621	163	615	133	626	151	642	151	624	168
Merton	143	57	144	73	149	57	144	57	148	57
Newham	361	2	352	2	356	2	357	1	360	1
Redbridge	104	53	107	59	122	73	123	102	121	95
Richmond-upon-Thames	271	99	262	104	259	137	253	158	240	122
Sutton	134	86	137	79	137	72	130	85	124	88
Waltham Forest	241	114	260	71	254	62	259	62	260	72
ILEA	6,635	3,901	6,751	3,296	6,855	2,762	7,030	2,746	6,617	2,479
Birmingham	1,765	398	1,692	455	1,800	402	1,812	377	1,779	446
Coventry	1,074	147	1,053	146	1,066	101	1,020	140	1,039	164
Dudley	368	78	420	79	459	141	488	83	515	83
Sandwell	598	77	578	65	561	69	563	66	570	57
Solihull	220	33	233	63	231	65	258	65	249	50
Walsall	374	117	384	123	365	184	352	199	348	381
Wolverhampton	876	210	882	142	868	143	847	182	876	136
Knowsley	131	26	151	26	124	29	156	28	162	34
Liverpool	1,825	19	1,796	23	1,572	36	1,654	44	1,669	52
St. Helens	334	112	354	126	352	131	344	118	340	89
Sefton	293	98	302	105	306	112	293	93	300	92
Wirral	501	92	480	82	468	134	445	144	451	149
Bolton	564	138	536	134	537	124	531	112	539	107
Bury	134	92	144	86	155	101	153	95	144	97
Manchester	2,010	528	1,968	479	1,855	510	1,875	535	1,934	443
Oldham	187	52	202	110	203	81	214	83	230	95
Rochdale	170	101	176	104	175	87	177	60	177	60
Salford	450	91	438	99	445	121	451	129	455	130
Stockport	324	171	326	181	324	160	323	152	337	166
Tameside	235	5	250	5	247	7	253	7	259	6
Trafford	300	52	310	82	308	77	303	81	282	70
Wigan	444	92	493	114	529	155	525	135	526	134
Barnsley	226	82	237	105	250	78	255	77	233	81
Doncaster	415	56	384	92	384	96	374	97	357	79
Rotherham	300	132	343	105	351	109	346	102	335	92
Sheffield	1,428	377	1,482	339	1,530	321	1,558	374	1,570	372

Authority	1982		1983		1984		1985		1986	
	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time
Bradford	720	170	698	163	728	183	719	180	725	215
Calderdale	144	102	173	107	179	105	183	104	186	107
Kirklees	943	262	964	315	954	272	956	284	956	336
Leeds	1,481	559	1,504	496	1,473	483	1,513	467	1,481	478
Wakefield	451	106	475	105	478	161	470	112	474	104
Gateshead	205	47	210	56	213	47	211	27	203	25
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,049	138	1,039	134	1,135	160	1,079	143	1,076	158
North Tyneside	124	27	133	40	133	49	142	43	148	45
South Tyneside	466	53	458	53	442	58	406	52	393	56
Sunderland	696	23	686	20	684	85	688	87	709	60
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Avon	1,624	416	1,731	437	1,721	387	1,672	446	1,681	493
Bedfordshire	816	191	782	165	782	463	784	202	732	239
Berkshire	1,061	321	1,161	302	1,134	325	1,156	311	1,144	302
Buckinghamshire	652	214	662	201	698	216	722	235	739	265
Cambridgeshire	908	170	891	151	921	180	922	181	928	182
Cheshire	1,143	226	1,029	209	1,212	218	1,212	218	1,244	218
Cleveland	1,051	380	1,082	408	1,106	411	1,091	368	1,070	367
Cornwall	405	51	416	44	421	83	434	128	479	131
Cumbria	527	207	546	206	566	210	599	174	613	241
Derbyshire	936	287	999	289	946	256	996	240	1,016	252
Devon	1,555	407	1,674	421	1,703	315	1,660	384	1,763	331
Dorset	668	243	670	336	684	311	681	325	718	338
Durham	729	159	713	174	706	147	733	164	698	201
East Sussex	1,081	242	1,204	246	1,033	277	1,043	263	1,064	237
Essex	1,434	537	1,590	591	1,585	610	1,593	591	1,617	606
Gloucestershire	612	162	628	218	617	161	647	143	631	169
Hampshire	2,547	595	2,620	756	2,715	392	2,874	462	2,790	468
Hereford and Worcester	1,030	207	961	182	946	222	949	239	986	227
Hertfordshire	1,673	402	1,724	402	1,777	433	1,793	381	1,736	270
Humberside	1,169	436	1,225	489	1,300	457	1,252	421	1,247	376
Isle of Wight	117	37	118	61	134	43	133	43	135	46
Kent	1,287	654	1,368	554	1,356	732	1,361	697	1,379	677
Lancashire	2,230	758	2,289	578	2,370	810	2,461	743	2,478	652
Leicestershire	1,573	60	1,641	173	1,614	412	1,695	574	1,670	479
Lincolnshire	540	149	566	207	582	197	568	197	579	238
Norfolk	710	305	722	179	755	181	761	168	766	166
North Yorkshire	616	259	638	262	685	287	696	297	698	351
Northamptonshire	691	142	778	159	810	145	813	89	804	222
Northumberland	169	11	200	18	199	14	184	11	199	3
Nottinghamshire	1,863	584	1,895	619	1,878	719	1,869	595	1,778	612
Oxfordshire	1,044	196	1,059	149	1,026	155	1,031	163	1,027	168
Salop	386	109	396	112	403	109	452	72	440	106
Somerset	478	177	482	177	620	149	627	213	648	215
Staffordshire	1,533	418	1,449	447	1,546	429	1,546	444	1,561	500
Suffolk	539	221	582	234	618	266	622	240	610	216
Surrey	950	518	961	547	960	516	955	538	995	433
Warwickshire	581	220	623	244	617	342	633	377	666	378
West Sussex	505	163	518	152	517	148	527	214	547	200
Wiltshire	726	98	757	105	774	106	843	111	808	122
Clwyd	587	124	586	184	626	147	642	100	643	106
Dyfed	392	92	417	64	411	72	359	49	378	43
Gwent	682	120	752	93	753	120	718	119	705	179
Gwynedd	158	29	168	28	181	46	183	57	189	53
Mid-Glamorgan	780	52	849	63	883	55	891	58	908	64
Powys	113	78	128	24	118	27	113	30	123	34
South Glamorgan	736	166	750	147	753	114	721	124	715	113
West Glamorgan	464	168	538	137	547	136	554	89	598	86

SCOTLAND

Lothian Region

89. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people under the age of 25 years are unemployed in Lothian region.

Mr. Allan Stewart: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which information is available, there were 17,786 young people under the age of 25 years unemployed and claiming benefit in Lothian region.

Archaeologically Important Sites

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to appoint an advisory

committee to co-ordinate protection of archaelogically important sites which are approved for private and public afforestation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so. My right hon. and learned Friend is advised by the Ancient Monuments Board for Scotland on the exercise of his responsibilities under the Ancient Monuments and Archaelogical Areas Act 1979, including the protection of sites of national importance. In addition, as I made clear in the reply to the hon. Member on 18 June, at column 480, Scottish Office and Forestry Commission officials liaise closely on forestry developments which might have implications for archaelogy and on consultation machinery to minimise inadvertent damage to ancient monuments.

Sheep (Radiation)

Sir Adam Butler asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* individual sheep and *(b)* flocks have had to be destroyed in Scotland as a result of radio-activity from the Chernobyl fallout.

Mr. John MacKay: Apart from animals taken for monitoring purposes, no individual sheep or flocks have been destroyed.

Beef (Intervention Stocks)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much beef is currently held in cold storage in Scotland by the European Economic Community's intervention board: and at what locations it is held.

Mr. Rifkind: As at 31 May 1986 there were 7,063 tonnes of intervention beef in Scottish cold stores at the following locations.

Aberdeen	Fraserburgh
Bellshill	Glasgow
Bridge of Allan	Glenrothes
Dundee	Inverness
Edinburgh	Peterhead

Dundee

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of notified redundancies in the Dundee jobcentre area in 1985; and how many new jobs were created in the city during the year.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Comprehensive information on redundancies and new jobs created is not available. In 1985, 799 redundancies affecting 10 or more workers were notified to the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur in the Dundee jobcentre area. Offers of regional selective assistance made to businesses in Dundee city in 1985 were associated with the creation of some 390 jobs and the safeguarding of a further 2,090 jobs. Approvals of new regional development grant were associated with the creation of 850 jobs, although some projects may have received both forms of assistance. Many jobs are also created without such assistance.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the change in *(a)* manufacturing output and *(b)* productivity in Scotland in 1985 compared with 1984; and how the figures compare with the figures for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Manfacturing output increased by 4·2 per cent. in Scotland in 1985 and productivity by 4·8 per cent. Broadly comparable figures for the United Kingdom are 3·1 per cent. and 2·8 per cent. respectively (exact comparison is not possible since the Scottish output index is not adjusted for stock change, whereas the United Kingdom index is, and the Scottish figure for productivity does not take account of the self-employed, whereas the United Kingdom figure does).

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

International Institutions and Organisations

Mr. Normanton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the international institutions and organisations of which the United Kingdom is a member; and if he will indicate, in each case, what are the actual annual costs of membership paid or incurred out of public funds.

Mr. Eggar: A list of international organisations for which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is responsible and the costs of membership for 1986-87 were published in class II, vote 2, sections A and B and class II, vote 5, section A of the Supply Estimates. The estimated costs of membership of the European Communities is to be found in the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702-II) at part 3.3. The costs of membership of other international organisations for 1986-87 will be found in the appropriate Supply Estimates, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Voting Rights

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to publicise the new rights to vote given to British citizens abroad in the Representation of the People Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: In addition to various articles, interviews and press notices, arrangements have been made to advertise the terms of the Representation of the People Act 1985 in certain British publications with a wide readership overseas and also in leading newspapers in countries with the largest British expatriate communities. A number of major multinational employers have agreed to inform their overseas staff. Diplomatic posts and consulates are arranging widespread publicity both about the new voting rights and local arrangement for registration. This includes advertisements in the local press, the placing of press notices, informing British clubs and orgainsations and, where practical, writing to all Britons on consular registration lists.

Drug Liaison Officers

Mr. Rathbone asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in posting drug liaison officers in Bombay and Delhi.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend informed the House on 11 June that the Government of India had

agreed in principle to the posting of drug liaison officers. This reflected assurances in a letter from the Indian high commissioner to me dated 3 June, which also said that the modalities of the posting and the parameters of work for the officers should be worked out between the two Governments. Our acting high commissioner in New Delhi obtained oral confirmation from the Indian Ministry of External Affairs shortly afterwards that no questions relating to the modalities or parameters of the officers' postings were outstanding. Visas were issued for two officers on 12 June. On 24 June we heard from the Indian high commission that the designated officers should not take up their postings without written consent, pending the resolution of certain commercial matters unrelated to drugs co-operation.

We regret the fact that obstacles have been placed in the way of these postings. We are pursuing this matter vigorously in the hope of an early and satisfactory solution. We remain committed to close international co-operation, which is the only way to defeat drug traffickers. We have accordingly made plain to the Indian Government at the highest level our hope that this issue, which ought not to be a matter of difficulty between us, can be speedily resolved in our mutual interest.

NATIONAL FINANCE

714 Certificates

90. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to change the current procedure for issuing 714 certificates in respect of the electrical contracting industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There are no plans to change the current procedure for issuing 714 certificates.

Treasury Advisory Group (Report)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to publish the Treasury Advisory Group's report on accounting for economic costs and changing prices.

Mr. MacGregor: The advisory group's report will be published shortly by HMSO. I will arrange for copies to be placed in the Library on publication. No decisions have been taken on the extent to which the report's recommendations should be implemented.

Cash Limits

Mr. Maples asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give revised cash limits for 1986-87 resulting from the carry forward of capital underspends allowed under the end-year flexibility scheme for central Government and for local authority expenditure.

Mr. MacGregor: A list of revised cash limits is shown in the table. The increases in cash limits on central Government votes are subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates.

The total increase classified as public expenditure is £303,227,000. This sum will be met from the Reserve and will therefore not add to the public expenditure planning total.

Revisions to 1986-87 cash limits resulting from the carryforward of capital underspend
Cash limits on voted expenditure

Class limit	*Vote*	*Accounting Department*	*Description of expenditure*	*Current cash limit £000*	*Increase £000*	*Revised cash limit £000*
I	*2	Ministry of Defence	Defence procurement	8,520,180	242,218	8,762,398
II	1	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	Overseas representation	388,140	5,120	393,260
II	3	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	British Broadcasting Corporation: external broadcasting and monitoring	111,636	1,643	113,279
V	2	Department of Trade and Industry	Support for Industry	445,933	459	446,392
V	†5	Department of Trade and Industry	International trade: export credit services insurance of investment overseas (central services)	43,154	315	43,469
VII	1	Department of Employment	Labour market services	1,309,406	90	1,309,496
VIII	1	Department of Transport	National roads, England	893,517	680	894,197
VIII	2	Department of Transport	Transport services and central administration	174,561	681	175,242
VIII	4	Department of Transport	Driver and vehicle licensing	113,105	600	113,705
X	2	Department of the Environment	Central environmental services, etc.	179,841	805	180,646
X	4	Department of the Environment	Royal palaces, royal parks, historic buildings, ancient monuments and the national heritage	81,836	65	81,901
XI	2	Home Office	Prisons, England and Wales	639,111	2,916	642,027

Class limit	Vote	Accounting Department	Description of expenditure	Current cash limit £000	Increase £000	Revised cash limit £000
XI	3	Home Office	Central, administrative, miscellaneous and community services and civil defence, England and Wales	363,237	2,000	365,237
XII	1	Department of Education and Science	Schools, further education and other educational services	209,094	2,000	211,094
XII	3	Department of Education and Science	Universities, etc.	1,562,274	2,015	1,564,289
XIV	3	Department of Health and Social Security	Miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England	389,421	1,164	390,585
XV	5	Department of Health and Social Security	Administration and miscellaneous services	1,168,648	2,540	1,171,188
XVI	6	Scottish Development Department	Roads, transport and environmental services, Scotland	148,874	1,783	150,657
XVI	14	Scottish Home and Health Department	Prisons, hospitals and community health services, etc., Scotland	1,604,152	2,220	1,606,372
XVI	21	Scottish Office	Scottish Office administration	106,492	56	106,548
XVII	5	Welsh Office	Civil defence, tourism roads and transport, housing, other environmental services, education and science, arts and libraries, and centrally funded health services and personal social services, Wales	186,260	787	187,047
XVI-II	1	Northern Ireland Office	Law, order, protective and miscellaneous services, Northern Ireland	474,366	260	474,626
XIX	11	Department for National Savings	Economic and financial administration	156,919	58	156,977
XIX	14	Her Majesty's Treasury	Central management of the civil service: computers and telecommunications	17,335	624	17,959
XX	‡10	Land Registry	Records, registrations and surveys	1	1	2
XX	11	Ordnance Survey	Records, registrations and surveys	18,709	450	19,159
XX	18	Property Services Agency	Civil accommodation, administration and miscellaneous services	147,503	2,626	150,129

* The four cash-limited defence votes are each separate cash limits, but by agreement with the Treasury, are managed as a global cash limit. Underspend on expenditure eligible for the scheme in these cash limits has been carried forward to Class I Vote 2.
† Capital expenditure on this Vote is not classified as public expenditure.
‡ This vote is a token one; carryforward will be taken in the form of increased appropriations-in-aid of £0·196 million.

Cash limits on non-voted expenditure

Cash block	Department	Description of expenditure	Current cash limit £ million	Increase £ million	Revised cash limit £ million
NID1	Northern Ireland Departments	Services broadly analogous to Great Britain services covered by cash limits but including family practitioner services.	2,288·5	3·6	2,292·2
SO/LA1	Scottish Office	Capital expenditure in Scotland by local authorities on roads and transport, water and sewerage, general services, urban programme, police and social work, schools, further education and teacher training.	419·3	0·2	419·5
DOE/HC1	Department of the Environment	Capital expenditure in England on housing financed through the Housing Corporation.	585·0	1·5	586·5
HO/LA1	Home Office	Local authority public expenditure for capital projects on magistrates courts probation and police service.	127·0	5·0	132·0

Cash block	Department	Description of expenditure	Current cash limit £ million	Increase £ million	Revised cash limit £ million
DOE UA1	Department of the Environment	External financing requirements of Urban Development Corporations, capital expenditure on the urban programme and derelict land reclamation.	349·5	18·8	368·3

Private Pensions

Mr. Stern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of changes in private pension provision as a result of proposals in the Finance Bill.

Mr. Norman Lamont: This will depend on how the trustees of over-funded schemes decide to deal with excessive surpluses. It is too early to judge to what extent trustees will seek to deal with excessive surpluses by improving benefits, rather than reducing contributions or making a payment to the employer.

Correspondence (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of his Department when letters are sent in Welsh to offices in Wales of the Inspectorate of Taxes as to the sending of replies in Welsh.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Inland Revenue's policy is that Her Majesty's Inspectors of Taxes in Wales will write in Welsh in reply to letters written in that language.

Public Expenditure

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a comparison of the subventions provided by the United Kingdom as a whole to its various regions, including Northern Ireland, showing, in the latter case, security expenditure separately.

Mr. MacGregor: It is only possible to identify the subvention from the United Kingdom in the case of Northern Ireland, which has a separate Consolidated Fund. Details of that subvention for 1985-86 were given in the House of Lords by my noble friend Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Lord Lyell on 30 June at column 742. It includes expenditure of £43·7 million by the Northern Ireland Office, mainly on security. There is also the extra cost of the Army's task which, as shown in that reply, is £135 million.

Income Tax

Mr. Clay asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of each £100 increase in the basic personal allowances if the wife's earned income relief and the married man's allowance were both replaced by a single non-transferable tax allowance.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *436*]: About £750 million in a full year at 1986-87 prices.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give figures for the financial years 1983-84, 1984-85, and 1985-86 to show the gross domestic product of the United Kingdom continental shelf region.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986]: The estimates in current prices of the gross domestic product of United Kingdom continental shelf region are:

	£ billion
1983-84	17·0
1984-85	20·6
1985-86	16·5

HOME DEPARTMENT

Deportations

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were recommended for deportation with no custodial sentence during 1985; and in how many such cases the courts directed release *(a)* subject to conditions and *(b)* without conditions.

Mr. Waddington: Three hundred and sixty two, of whom 78 were released subject to conditions and 154 were released unconditionally.

Immigration

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost per day of detaining a person under Immigration Act powers in *(a)* prison department establishments and *(b)* immigration service detention accommodation.

Mr. Waddington: The total cost per day of detaining a person under Immigration Act powers in Prison Department establishments is estimated at £34. The cost of immigration service detention centres is estimated at £115. Immigration detention centres are fairly small and for a variety of reasons they cannot reasonably be operated below certain minimum levels of staffing. We are therefore unable to achieve the same economies of scale as in Prison Department establishments.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he has decided in what form he will publish extended information on the number of persons detained under Immigration Act powers, as announced in the reply to the hon. Member for Hammersmith on 23 July 1985, *Official Report*, column *466*;

(2) whether he has decided in what form he will publish extended information on the number of persons detained under Immigration Act powers.

Mr. Waddington: Information is held centrally on the number of passengers, by nationality, seeking entry at ports and detained overnight in approved detention accommodation and is available on request. No decision has been taken about regular publication pending resolution of difficulties which have been encountered in

extending this information to cover all those held in detention under Immigration Act powers, irrespective of the length of detention.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to make a decision on whether Mr. Olorunfemi's children (HO Ref. No. 0108282/3(S)) will be permitted to join him in the United Kingdom; and how long this case has been outstanding.

Mr. Waddington: I wrote to the hon. Member yesterday informing him of my decision on the case. The application form was originally submitted on 19 May 1985. Since then arrangements have had to be made to interview the eldest applicant in Lagos and Mr. and Mrs. Olorunfemi in the United Kingdom, and for documents provided by Mr. Olorunfemi at his interview to be verified in Lagos.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers were refused leave to enter the United Kingdom as visitors in the last 12 months for which figures are available; how many of these were granted temporary admission pending hon. Members' representations; in how many cases the immigration officers' decision to refuse leave to enter was overturned by a Minister; and in how many cases the passenger made a voluntary departure prior to the Minister's decision.

Mr. Waddington: Information is not available in the form requested, but the following gives such relevant information as can be readily supplied. Between April 1985 and March 1986, the latest date for which such figures are currently available, 20,374 passengers were removed from the United Kingdom after having been refused leave to enter; it is not possible to say how many of them were seeking entry as visitors. During the same period temporary admission was granted to passengers on 8,543 occasions following refusal of leave to enter and on 8,402 occasions pending further examination; it is not known how many of these were subject to hon. Members' representations. Also, refusal of leave to enter was withdrawn on 685 occasions although it is not known how many of these were as a result of a decision by a Minister. A total of 5,700 representations in port cases were received from hon. Members in 1985 and a further 1,850 in the first four months of 1986.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to increase the numbers of bilingual staff at ports of entry.

Mr. Waddington: The immigration service arranges full-time language training courses for immigration officers for six months each year. The choice of languages depends on the priority needs of the major ports and the availability of suitable courses and tutors. Arrangements are currently being made for courses in two languages of the Indian subcontinent for around 20 officers next winter.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he intends to take to investigate allegations of investigation harassment by immigration officers at ports of entry.

Mr. Waddington: All complaints against the way the immigration control operates, including any of harassment by immigration officers, are thoroughly investigated and action taken if necessary. Where complaints are justified supervisory action is always taken and disciplinary action may follow.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will investigate the reasons for the upward trend in the number of visitors to Britain refused entry in the first six months of 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply later this week.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure that immigration officers adhere to departmental guidelines when dealing with visitors to the United Kingdom from Pakistan, India and the Caribbean.

Mr. Waddington: Immigration officers are required to adhere to the immigration rules and to departmental instructions in respect of all arriving and departing passengers. I have no evidence to suggest that they are not doing so, but any failure to comply with these requirements which is brought to the notice of the Department will be thoroughly investigated and if the criticism is justified action will be taken.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have taken place since 1 April for breaches of Sunday trading laws.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that this information is not yet available centrally.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he proposes to monitor the enforcement of the existing Sunday trading laws.

Mr. Waddington: The enforcement of the existing law is a matter for local authorities. Statistics of prosecutions will be collected in the normal way.

Parole Statistics

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those who have been released on parole were recalled to prison in 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is published annually in "The Report of the Parole Board" (table 4, appendix 4 of the latest issue for 1985, House of Commons Paper No. 428) and is given in the following table. The increases reflect the extensions of the use of parole in August 1975 under section 35 of the Criminal Justice Act 1972 and in July 1984 under section 33 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982.

Offenders recalled from parole from determinate sentences

	Number
1970	138
1975	311
1980	445
1985	803

Prison Population

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total prison population in England and Wales at the present time.

Mr. Mellor: On 30 June 1986, about 46,600 persons were held in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales.

Life Sentences

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average number of years served in the case of life prison sentences.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 3 December, at column 163. More detailed information on the time served under sentence by those received under sentence for life in the years 1965 to 1985 will be included in chapter 4 of "Prison Statistics, England and Wales 1985", which will be published later in the year.

Public Houses (Assaults on Staff)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to increase the maximum penalties available to the courts for assaults upon licensees or staff.

Mr. Mellor: The maximum penalties available to the courts for assault, including life imprisonment for causing grievous bodily harm, seem already adequate.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of staff in the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, dealing with applicants for the criminal injuries award, for each of the years from 1978-79 to 1985-86.

Mr. Mellor: The number of staff in post at the board on 1 April of each year from 1978 to 1985 was as follows (part-time staff being each counted as one-half):

Date	*Staff in post*
1 April 1978	126
1 April 1979	132·5
1 April 1980	156·5
1 April 1981	155
1 April 1982	163
1 April 1983	163
1 April 1984	182
1 April 1985	189

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of applications to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in each year from 197879 to 1985-86.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested was published in respect of the financial years 1978-79 to 1984-85 in the 17th and 21st reports of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (Cmnd. 8401 and Cmnd. 9684). The provisional figure for applications to the board in 1985-86 is about 39,700.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how much money was set aside for compensation in the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in each year from 1978-79 to 1985-86.

(2) how much money was set aside for administration in the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in each year from 1978-79 to 1985-86.

Mr. Mellor: The amounts included in Budget estimates and supplementary estimates for grant-in-aid to the board were:

Financial year	*Compensation* £	*Administration* £
1978-79	13,761,000	1,674,000
1979-80	20,691,000	2,234,000
1980-81	27,244,000	3,000,000
1981-82	23,400,000	3,662,000
1982-83	29,000,000	3,689,000
1983-84	33,000,000	3,955,000
1984-85	38,000,000	4,747,000
1985-86	41,497,000	5,000,000

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of applications which have been unresolved by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board after *(a)* one year, *(b)* five years and *(c)* over five years.

Mr. Mellor: The precise information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. As stated in the most recent annual report of the board (Cmnd. 9684, paragraph 5), three quarters of the cases resolved in the financial year 1984-85 were resolved within a year of receipt.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average length of time for compensation claims to be fully assessed in the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in each year from 1978-79 to 1985-86.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not available about the average length of time taken to deal with applications.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of applications dealing with assaults on public transport staff to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in each year from 1978-79 to 1985-86.

Mr. Mellor: Statistics are no longer kept on the categories of applicants to the board. The latest available figures are for 1978-79 and 1979-80. In these years, 455 and 421 applications respectively were made to the board in respect of assaults on public transport staff in the course of their duties.

Metropolitan Police Vehicles

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the operational mileage of Metropolitan police vehicles in *(a)* 1984 and *(b)* 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The total mileage of all Metropolitan police vehicles during 1984 was 53,944,007 miles, and in 1985 it was 51,240,324 miles.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers and how many members of the public were killed in accidents involving Metropolitan police force vehicles in *(a)* 1984 and *(b)* 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The number of police officers and other members of the public killed in accidents involving Metropolitan police force vehicles in 1984 and 1985 is as follows:

	1984	*1985*
Metropolitan police officers	2	0
Other members of the public	3	7
TOTAL	5	7

Special Constables

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider some form of remuneration for special constables.

Mr. Giles Shaw: All special constables receive out-of-pocket expenses. The possibility of paying in addition some form of bounty is kept under regular review, but there is no satisfactory evidence that such a payment would make it easier to recruit and retain special constables.

Asylum

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to make a decision on the granting of asylum for *(a)* Mr. Mohammed Hussein Abi (HO Ref.: M5 16237) and *(b)* Mr. Mohammed Saeed Ahmed (HO Ref.: M5 16400); and for how long these cases have been outstanding.

Mr. Waddington: I wrote to the hon. Member yesterday giving my decisions. The applications for asylum were made in December 1984 and January 1985 respectively. I regret the delay in these cases.

Television Licence Fees (Hotels)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to change the present arrangements for the number of television licence fees payable by hotels.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many names have been removed from the police national computer under the new criteria for the recording of such names announced in March 1986.

Mr. Giles Shaw: All records which have been considered for weeding under the old criteria are being re-examined in the light of the criteria announced in March 1986. As of 30 June 1986, 8,147 names had been removed from the police national computer by this process.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what security safeguards exist for the procedures introduced to identify the originator of an inquiry to the police national computer; and what are the categories used to record the reasons for the inquiry.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is the responsibility of individual chief officers to determine the procedures used in their forces to identify the originator of an inquiry to the police national computer and the categories used to record the reasons for an inquiry. Information is not held centrally as to the practices adopted in relation to these matters in each force.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has anything to add to his answer of 9 July, *Official Report*, column *184*, as regards the current number of entries on the criminal names index of the police national computer.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I regret that the answer of 9 July, *Official Report*, column *184* contained an error with regard to the current number of entries on the criminal names index of the police national computer. Index 6 should have read:

	Number of Accesses	*Maximum Number of Entries*	*Minimum Number of Entries*	*Current Number of Entries*
6. Criminal Names	1,108,803	5,119,354	4,977,206	5,119,354

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the status of the fingerprints scene of crime category on the police national computer.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The fingerprint scene of crime mark searching application on the police national computer offers the police service the facility of comparing a fingerprint "mark" taken from a crime scene against a national database of fingerprint records. The service is currently available through 11 access points, but the PNC board is shortly to consider a proposal that all force fingerprint bureaux should have direct access to it.

Metropolitan Police (Rewards)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the past 12 months a complaint that a reward has been improperly offered or paid has been recorded by the Metropolitan police; and how many *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions have resulted.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner that in the past 12 months there have been no such complaints, prosecutions or convictions.

Metropolitan Police (Social Functions)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many social functions organised by (i) the Conservative party, (ii) the Labour party and (iii) the Social Democratic and Liberal parties Metropolitan police force representatives have attended in an official capacity in each of the last three years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that this information is not available.

Crime (Clear-up Statistics)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has any proposals for the introduction of a code of practice for the preparation of crime clear-up statistics in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any proposals for the introduction of formal guidelines on the basis of preparation of crime clear-up statistics in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Home Office has issued guidelines on the preparation of clear-up statistics, which specify the criteria by which an offence is recorded as cleared up. These are given on page 7 of the manual on Home Office requirements "Criminal Statistics Volume IV, Annual and Miscellaneous Returns", a copy of which is available in the Library. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary collects information on the number of offences cleared up in various ways by each force and from 1985 the Home Office has introduced a more detailed return designed to collect additional information, the publication of which will be considered in due course. The allocation of police resources to different ways of clearing up offences is an operational matter for chief officers to decide.

Racial Attacks

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide figures for the number of reported racial attacks in London, broken down by police division, for 1985 and 1986 to date.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Kevin Taylor

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Greater Manchester as to the anticipated date of completion of inquiries into Mr. Kevin Taylor, and as to the current state of the investigation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of Greater Manchester that the investigation into the affairs of Mr. Kevin Taylor is continuing; it is being conducted as quickly as possible, but the chief constable cannot estimate when it will be completed.

Housing Estates (Riot Risk)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a summary of the report on the London housing estates with a high risk of riot, compiled by A8 branch of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. Police assessments prepared for operational purposes are not normally published.

Alcohol (Young Persons)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when was the last occasion on which his Department talked with either senior police officers or magistrates on the problems of under-age drinking;

(2) what further steps his Department intends taking to enforce the laws regarding under-age drinking and the sale of alcohol to young people.

Mr. Mellor: Enforcement of the law relating to the sale of alcohol to, and purchase and consumption of alcohol by, young people on licensed premises is a matter for the police. Recent discussions with the police or magistrates have not focused specifically on the problems of under-age drinking, but if the hon. Member has a particular point in mind I will be glad to consider it.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions for selling alcohol to those under-age were initiated in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is given in the following table. Corresponding information for 1985 and 1986 is not yet available.

Persons proceeded against in magistrates courts in England and Wales for selling intoxicating liquor to persons under 18

Year	*Number of persons proceeded against*
1980	439
1981	410
1982	323
1983	307
1984	314

Dangerous Substances

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many accidents involving polychlorinated bi-phenyl substances were notified to his Department by the police or fire brigades in the last five years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: During 1984 and 1985 three incidents were attended by local authority fire brigades in England and Wales in which these substances were specified as involved in the brigades' reports. Corresponding information for 1981-83 could be made available only at disproportionate cost. There is no requirement on police forces to notify such incidents to the Department.

Police (Expenditure)

Mr. Lightbown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of police expenditure he proposes should be met by central Government through police grant in 1987-88.

Mr. Hurd: I propose that the rate of police grant should remain at 51 per cent. for 1987-88 and, for future years, subject to decisions on the rate support grant settlement in those years. I believe that police grant should continue at this level in order to ensure that the police service has the resources it needs to cope with the increasing demands placed upon it. As part of the consultations on the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement the views of the relevant local authority associations will be sought on my proposal.

Civil Defence

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will give an assessment of local authorities' civil defence preparedness; and if he will make a further statement on the planned programme for the implementation of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A number of local authorities are making encouraging progress in meeting their civil defence responsibilities, but the rate of progress varies considerably and there is a great deal still to be done before there is a satisfactory and balanced state of preparedness across the country. I therefore propose to require local authorities to pursue a rolling three-year programme setting priorities and a timetable for implementation of the

1983 regulations. The programme emphasises the central importance of detailed operational civil defence plans. It sets six-monthly target dates for their staged completion in all counties within two to three years. New guidance on the preparation of plans and on the all hazards approach will also be issued to accompany the programme.

I have placed in the Library copies of a report on the present state of local authority civil defence preparedness; the proposed three-year planned programme for implementation of the 1983 regulations; and drafts of the new guidance.

In the context of the programme, and as part of the discussion of civil defence grant estimates, my Department will review progress annually with individual authorities and agree detailed objectives for the following year. Officials are writing today to the local authority associations seeking comments, and I intend that the final programme should be issued to local authorities in October.

The Government intend that all local authorities shall carry out their statutory civil defence responsibilities, and I hope the programme will be recognised as a constructive and necessary focus for this vital work. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is making broadly similar arrangements in Scotland.

Passports (Proof of Identity)

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to change the requirements for documentary proof of identity which must be produced with applications for a British visitor's passport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: At present, only one document from a prescribed list need be produced as evidence of identity. But there have been instances in which British visitor's passports have been obtained by people not entitled by identity or nationality to use them. I have therefore decided to introduce changes in the documents that applicants for the British visitor's passport have to produce. As from September of this year, save where someone can produce an expired uncancelled standard British passport all applicants will be required to produce one document from each of two groups. The groups of documents, which will, of course, be listed on the application form for the British visitor's passport are as follows:

A. a birth certificate or adoption certificate showing full names issued in the United Kingdom or abroad by a United Kingdom authority
an uncancelled British visitor's passport in present name (or husband's/wife's if included on it)
a certificate of naturalisation or registration as a British citizen/British Dependent Territories citizen/British Overseas citizen/citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies showing full names
a British passport or British visitor's passport on which previously included as a child
a retirement pension book or pension card in present name

B. Identifying documents such as:
a National Health Service medical card in your present name
a driving licence
a valid bank cheque card, Eurocheque card, girobank card, credit card, bus or rail card
a recent gas, telephone or electricity bill
a child benefit book showing present name and including any children to be included on the passport.

I believe that this change will reduce, though it cannot entirely prevent, the opportunity for abuse of the passport, while causing only minimum inconvenience to members of the public.

Central Drug Squad

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the central drug squad was established; what was its original establishment size and what has been the central establishment of both civilian and uniformed personnel each year since its creation.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *336*]: The central drug squad was formed in January 1978 with an establishment of 37 police officers and five civil staff. The police establishment rose to 38 during 1981; and last year the establishment was increased to 57 police officers and six civil staff.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown by rank of the officers in the central drug squad, the national drugs intelligence unit and the divisional drugs squad.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *336*]: The strengths of the central drug squad and the national drugs intelligence unit on 16 July were 57 and 39 respectively. The Commissioner considers that to give a breakdown by rank of their strength could compromise their operational effectiveness.

For divisional drugs squads the breakdown by rank as at 16 July 1986 was as follows:

	Number
Detective inspector	3
Detective sergeant	14
Police sergeant	5
Detective constable	24
Police constable	35
TOTAL	81

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many drugs raids were carried out by the district-divisional drugs squads in each year since 1979;

(2) for the most convenient recent period, what was the percentage of referrals for investigation of drug offences emanating from *(a)* the police, *(b)* the public and *(c)* other agencies and institutions in the Metropolitan police area;

(3) if he will estimate the number of Metropolitan police working hours spent on drugs-related investigations in the past 12 months;

(4) if he will estimate the number of Metropolitan police officers involved in drug raids during the past 12 months.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his replies*, 14 July 1986, c. *336*]: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has informed me that this information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many drugs raids were completed by the central drug squad in each year since 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *336*]: Figures for the number of premises searched by officers of the central drug squad are available only from 1982 and are as follows:

	Number
1982	108
1983	278
1984	172
1985	268
*1986	195

* to 30 June.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will detail the number of prosecutions in respect of offences relating to each listed and prohibited drug within the Metropolitan police district for each of the past five years.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *336*]: The information requested for the years 1980 to 1984 is given in the table. Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available.

Persons proceeded against in the Metropolitan police district for offences under drugs legislation or other offences involving controlled drugs*

	Number of persons				
Type of drug	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Cocaine	194	228	195	267	344
Heroin	392	376	388	546	894
Methedone	185	282	288	297	294
Dipipanone	85	101	183	120	55
LSD	73	99	101	93	93
Cannabis	5,004	5,390	6,609	7,448	6,518
Amphetamines	227	291	407	536	637
Other controlled drugs	502	533	581	684	643
All drugs	6,012	6,554	7,977	9,104	8,541

* As the same person may be proceeded against for offences involving more than one drug, rows cannot be added together to produce totals.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many black and Asian personnel are employed in the central, national intelligence and divisional drug squads.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *336*]: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that there are no ethnic minority police officers or civil staff assigned to the central drug squad or divisional drug squads at the moment. Two police officers and three civil staff attached to the national drugs intelligence unit are from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many weeks' training are given to officers in *(a)* the central drug squad, *(b)* the national drugs intelligence unit and *(c)* the divisional drugs squads.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *336*]: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that all recruit and probationer training programmes cover drugs and that further drugs training is given to detectives. Officers joining the central drug squad undergo an intensive one-week induction course; a similar course is provided for officers posted to the national drugs intelligence unit, followed by three weeks of intelligence analysis and computer training. No additional training is provided for divisional drugs squad officers.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total amount of *(a)* cannabis, *(b)* heroin, *(c)* cocaine and *(d)* LSD, seized by police officers in the Metropolitan police area for each of the past five years.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. 336]: The information for the years 1980 to 1984 is given in the table. Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available.

Seizures of controlled drugs by police officers in the Metropolitan Police district by drug type*

	1980		*1981*		*1982*		*1983*		*1984*	
Type of Drug	*Number*	*†Quantity (grammes)*	*Number*	*†Quantity (grammes)*	*Number*	*†Quantity (grammes)*	*Number*	*†Quantity (grammes)*	*Number*	*†Quantity (grammes)*
Cannabis‡	4,613	469,422	5,374	221,764	6,357	290,506	7,320	212,455	7,351	267,743
Heroin	344	1,149	351	5,128	331	3,247	586	8,335	1,144	33,413
Cocaine	191	3,336	205	3,565	157	6,201	320	4,057	438	23,904
LSD	73	0·3	81	0·2	95	0·3	97	0·2	112	0·6

* As the same seizure can involve more than one drug type, rows cannot be added together to produce totals.
† Seizures of unspecified amounts are not included.
‡ Includes cannabis plants, cannabis saliva, cannabis resin, cannabis liquid and extracts of cannabis.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what personnel are employed by the Metropolitan police on maintaining liaison between the drugs squads and Customs and Excise officers.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *337*]: No officers are deployed by the Commissioner to act solely in an operational liaison capacity with Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. There is, however, continuing close liaison: drugs squads officers work in close co-operation with Customs officers where operational needs so require; and central drug squad officers visit Her Majesty's Customs and Excise as part of their induction course. The national drugs intelligence unit, which is staffed by officers from the Metropolitan police, provincial forces and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, acts as a point of liaison between police forces and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, in addition to its intelligence functions.

Dr. Skuse

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 26 June, *Official Report*, column 279, if he will say whether, during his Department's review

of cases in which Dr. Skuse gave evidence, anything emerged to suggest that Dr. Skuse's evidence was not reliable.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 July 1986, c. *57*]: The Department reviewed the written evidence given by Dr. Skuse in a number of cases. Nothing emerged to suggest that the evidence was unreliable. So far as the case of the Birmingham bombings is concerned, all the forensic evidence given at the trial is still under review in the context of representations about the case, in particular about the reliability of the forensic test used.

DEFENCE

Spitfires (RAF Biggin Hill)

Mr. John Hunt asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will arrange for an inspection of the condition of the two Spitfire aircraft at the gates of RAF Biggin Hill, with a view to sanctioning any necessary repairs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: These aircraft were inspected about a year ago and we are aware of their condition. An internal review is being undertaken of the maintenance programme needed for gate guardian aircraft and how such a programme should be financed.

Bomb Incident, Lincolnshire

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the circumstances surrounding the dropping of a practice bomb in a field near Friskney, Lincolnshire, on 11 July.

Mr. Freeman: I shall answer this question shortly.

RAF Bentwaters

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any change is proposed in the use by the United States air force of RAF Bentwaters: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: No change is proposed in the planned use of RAF Bentwaters.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications of the new system of storage of nuclear weapons proposed for RAF Bentwaters for the verification of present and future arms control agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The possible storage facilities under discussion with the United States Government have no implications for the verification provisions of current arms control agreements. Whether there are any implications for future agreements would depend on the ambit of those agreements.

Porton Down (Animal Experiments)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* dogs and *(b)* rhesus monkeys have been used for testing for the effects of nerve gas at Porton Down over the most recent period of 12 months for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: It is not our practice to make available detailed information on the usage of particular species in animal experiments at the chemical defence establishment Porton Down, as to do so could in many cases enable an informed observer to gain a useful insight into the scope and direction of CDE's work to the detriment of national security.

The total number of experiments subject to the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 carried out at CDE in 1985 was 6,600, a decrease of 4,300 on 1984. The vast majority of these experiments involved mice, rats and guinea pigs.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence why LD-50 tests are considered necessary for nerve gas experiments on dogs and rhesus monkeys at Porton Down; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Animal experiments involving nerve agents that might be used against our service men are intended to determine the toxicity of those agents and to assess the efficiency and safety of possible antidotes. Formal LD-50 tests are not conducted on rhesus monkeys or dogs for this purpose. In order to minimise the use of animals an estimate of lethal toxicity is derived from tests on as small a number of rhesus monkeys as possible.

Military Base, Caerwent (Protest)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether, during the protest at the military base at Caerwent on 5 July, military police operated outside the base on land owned by Monmouth district council.

Mr. Freeman: No.

United States Army Vehicles

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence under what circumstances United States army vehicles are driven outside the perimeter of the establishments at which they are usually used.

Mr. Freeman: No special restrictions apply to United States army vehicles. They are subject to British law in the same way as vehicles of the British armed forces.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the driver of the United States air force vehicle used to carry civilians to the police station at Caerwent on 5 July held a British driving licence.

Mr. Freeman: The eight protestors arrested at RAF Caerwent on 5 July were transported in a United States army vehicle driven by an officer of the Ministry of defence police to a point within the base in order to be charged. The driver held a British driving licence.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence why a United States army vehicle was used to convey arrested protestors to the police station at Caerwent on 5 July.

Mr. Freeman: Where Ministry of Defence police are stationed at a base used by United States forces in this country provision of transport for them is the responsibility of the United States forces.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy of 11 July, *Official Report*, columns *303-5* those companies and academic institutions in Wales which have expressed an indication to seek United States-funded work in the strategic defence initiative research programme.

Mr. Lee: No. It is for the companies and academic institutions to decide themselves whether and at what stage to make their expressions of interest known in public.

Recruitment (Scotland)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many persons were recruited in Scotland for each of the armed services in 1985-86; and if he will break down the figure by careers office areas.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of service personnel recruited at careers information offices in Scotland

between 1 April 1985 and 31 March 1986 are set out in the following table. The figures exclude the recruitment of officers and Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service who are recruited centrally.

CIO	*RN/RM*	*Army*	*RAF*	*All Services*
Aberdeen	40	134	88	262
Dundee	47	444	125	616
Edinburgh	127	460	82	669
Glasgow	152	1,208	225	1,585
Inverness	23	172	*—	195
Total	389	2,418	520	3,327

* Attestations of entrants to the RAF from the Inverness CIO were made at Aberdeen and are included in the Aberdeen numbers.

Winston Barracks, Lanark

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 14 July, *Official Report*, column *428*, if he is in negotiation with the United States armed services concerning the future of Winston barracks, Lanark.

Mr. Freeman: As I said in the answer I gave to the right hon. Lady on Monday 14 July, at column *428*, the future of the barracks is still being considered. Until decisions are taken it would be inappropriate to give details of any interested parties.

Forces (Land and Establishments)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the establishment of, and land owned by, or leased by, or in which an interest is held by *(a)* the Territorial Army, *(b)* the Home Service Force, *(c)* the Royal Observer Corps, *(d)* recruitment offices of the armed forces and *(e)* the cadet forces in Wales.

Mr. Freeman: I shall answer this question shortly.

EMPLOYMENT

British Tourist Authority

12. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the present funding levels of the British Tourist Authority.

Mr. Trippier: The British Tourist Authority received Government funding of £20·3 million in 1986-87. This was an increase of £3·2 million (20 per cent.) over the 1985-86 level.

Community Programme

13. **Dr. M. S. Miller** asked the Paymaster General what is the current average allowance paid on the community programme; and if he has any plans to increase it in line with the retail prices index.

Mr. Lang: Community programme participants are paid wages which reflect the local rate for the job and managing agents and sponsors of projects are reimbursed for wage costs up to a maximum average of £67 per participant per week. This was raised from £63 on 1 April 1986 and is kept under review.

28. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of community programme participants now obtain a job on leaving the programme.

Mr. Lang: The results of the latest survey of former community programme participants (in autumn 1985), show that 54 per cent. of those responding had had at least one job within 10 months of leaving and that 28 per cent. obtained a job immediately on leaving.

85. **Dr. Godman** asked the Paymaster General what percentage of community programme workers are employed full-time.

Mr. Lang: At 30 June 1986, the latest date for which statistics are available, 25 per cent. of those working on the community programme were employed full time.

Adult Training

14. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Paymaster General what plans he has to seek to increase the spending of industry on adult training.

Mr. Trippier: The primary aim of the adult training strategy is to convince employers that increased investment in the training and development of the nation's work force is vital to business success.

The Government, through the Manpower Services Commission are pursuing this strategy through a range of measures, which include both direct provision of training and measures to encourage and help employers to undertake more training.

42. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Paymaster General when he intends to review the Government's strategy of funding adult training.

Mr. Trippier: The White Paper "Training for Jobs" sets out the Government's conclusions on the funding of education and training generally and the roles and responsibilities of the different parties involved. Within this framework the Government accepted in April 1986 the plan of work for a major study by the Manpower Services Commission of the funding of vocational education and training, including adult training.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list each adult retraining scheme, the numbers on it, projected numbers for 1987, 1988 and 1989, and the most recent estimate of the cost per place.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986]: The following table provides the forecast number of starts and expenditure for each adult training scheme for 1986-87. Information is not available by calendar year because our training schemes are administered and funded on a financial year basis. Plans for future financial years will be announced in due course.

Planned numbers of people to be helped under adult training programmes 1986

Adult training programmes	*1986-87 Forecast number of starts*	*1986-87 Forecast expenditure £ million*
Job training programme		
Priority skills national grants	9,400	13·2
Local skills action		
Local training grants	50,400	22·8
Job training scheme	51,350	148·4
Access to information technology	25,000	1·1
Training for enterprise	46,300	18·8

Adult training programmes	*1986-87 Forecast number of starts*	*1986-87 Forecast expenditure £ million*
Special groups		
Industrial language training	13,500	2·3
Residential training for disabled	1,100	6·1
Wider opportunities training programme	44,700	26·0
Open Tech (open learning)	50,000	10·9

Note:
Because of widely different course lengths it is not possible to calculate a meaningful average cost per trainee for the individual schemes.

High-tech Training

15. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Paymaster General what plans he has to increase the availability of high-tech training and re-training required for modern manufacturing jobs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Through a series of promotional initiatives the Government are encouraging employers to recognise the importance of investment in training and retraining for improving the skills of their work force at all levels. The Government are also making a direct contribution to meeting industry's current and future skill needs through their training provision for employed and unemployed young people and adults.

Skillcentres

16. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Paymaster General what recent representations he has received about the provision of skillcentres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Since April 1986, I have received one letter about the provision of skillcentres.

The Skills Training Agency is moving forward on the basis of plans agreed by the Manpower Services Commission. I have every confidence that it is well on target to meet its objectives.

Tied Accommodation

17. **Mr. Freud** asked the Paymaster General how many people working in the public sector live in tied accommodation as a condition of employment.

Mr. Lang: I regret that the information requested is not held centrally.

Graduates

18. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Paymaster General what assessment he has made of the current employment prospects of graduates; and how these compare with previous years in the current decade.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am pleased to say that according to information published recently by the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, the standing conference of employers of graduates and the central services unit of the university and polytechnic careers services, employment prospects for new graduates this year are better than they have been in any year since 1980. In 1980 49 per cent. of new graduates from both universities and polytechnics went directly into permanent employment in the United Kingdom. In 1981 this fell to 46 per cent. for university graduates and 45 per cent. for polytechnic graduates. By 1985 it had risen to 55 per cent. for university graduates and 59 per cent. for polytechnic graduates. However, by December 1985 only 9·5 per cent. of new graduates were still seeking employment and the majority of those people are likely to find employment within a year of graduating.

This year vacancies are 5 per cent. above the 1985 level and this increase affects graduates across all disciplines. Young people leaving higher education for the labour market this summer have very good job prospects, especially if they are prepared to be flexible and mobile.

Tourism

19. **Mr. Coombs** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans for the promotion of tourism by the provision of increased indoor leisure and recreational facilities in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have asked the English Tourist Board and the British Tourist Authority to give particular attention in their development work to extending the tourist season. This includes encouraging the provision of indoor leisure and recreational facilities.

61. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to improve training schemes in the tourism industry.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 16 April at columns 386-87. Fuller information about education and training provision for tourism and improvements planned in this area is set out in paragraphs 29 to 33 and part 3 of "Action for Jobs in Tourism" which was published on 16 July. Copies are available in the Library.

62. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Paymaster General if he has any estimate as to whether the number of American tourists visiting Britain this summer has been increased by the recent British Airways marketing initiative in the United States of America.

Mr. Trippier: There is no doubt that the "Go for it America" campaign generated much positive publicity and good will. Together with the efforts of the British Tourist Authority and many others it has had a major effect on the market, and British Airways reports that its current level of forward bookings is now back to normal for the time of year.

70. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking together with his counterparts in other European Economic Community countries to co-ordinate and improve tourism within Europe as a whole.

Mr. Trippier: On 5 February 1986 the European Commission put forward a number of proposals for Community action in the field of tourism. I welcome the Community's interest in this important sector and the Government will certainly support work in areas in which the Community can play a useful role. A resolution inviting member states to encourage the seasonal and geographical spread of tourism was adopted by the Council on 23 June. We plan to carry forward discussions

on the Commission's other proposals during the United Kingdom Presidency and to seek to reach agreement on them.

84. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Paymaster General what legislative barriers to the development of the tourist industry he has identified.

Mr. Trippier: The Government's report "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs—The Business of Tourism," published in July 1985, identified a number of obstacles, including legislative barriers, to the faster development of the tourism industry and suggested, in a series of action points, how these might be overcome. "Action for Jobs in Tourism" published on 16 July describes the progress over the past year in implementing these recommendations.

Job Creation

20. **Mr. Adley** asked the Paymaster General what further steps he is taking to encourage the creation of employment in areas of high unemployment.

Mr. Lang: The country as a whole is benefiting from the Government's policies to stimulate enterprise and encourage job creation. Severe problems remain in some areas and these problems are being addressed through our regional industrial policy and other locally targeted measures, including our inner city initiatives. We are also tackling unemployment as it affects individuals through a wide range of measures detailed in our booklet "Action for Jobs", a copy of which is available in the Library.

21. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Paymaster General what funds have been received in the past 12 months from European Community funds to assist in creating new employment opportunities; and how these moneys have been disbursed.

Mr. Lang: During the calendar year 1985 new allocations totalling some £65·5 million were approved under the European social fund (ESF) for projects in the United Kingdom specifically related to employment creation. In addition, a further £238·5 million was approved under the social fund for other, mainly training, projects in the United Kingdom which will also help to create new employment opportunities. ESF funds are paid to the sponsors of the particular projects for which assistance is sought. Apart from social fund support, the United Kingdom also received considerable assistance under the European regional development fund (ERDF) towards projects which will increase overall employment opportunities.

Labour Statistics

22. **Mr. Parry** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures.

Mr. Lang: On 12 June 1986, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,229,400.

23. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Paymaster General what are the latest unemployment figures for the Sheffield travel-to-work area, in total and as a percentage.

Mr. Lang: On 12 June 1986, there were 46,689 unemployed claimants in the Sheffield travel-to-work area, which represents 16·1 per cent. of the sum of employees in employment and unemployed.

29. **Mr. Cockeram** asked the Paymaster General what were the numbers of males, the numbers of females and the total number of persons in work in the month of May in each of the years 1979 to 1986, inclusive.

Mr. Lang: Figures are not available for May. The available information is as follows:

Employed Labour Force in Great Britain
Seasonally Adjusted: thousand

	Males	*Females*	*Total of Males and Females*
June of each year			
1979	14,974	9,801	24,775
1980	14,889	9,820	24,709
1981	14,234	9,521	23,756
1982	13,900	9,439	23,339
1983	13,659	9,398	23,057
1984	13,823	9,702	23,525
1985	13,937	9,919	23,856
March			
1986*	13,957	10,073	24,030

* The latest date for which an estimate is available.
The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and HM forces.

34. **Mr. Ralph Howell** asked the Paymaster General why the self-employed are not at present taken into consideration when the percentage of the working population which is unemployed is compiled.

Mr. Lang: Last week we introduced new national and regional rates which express the unemployed as a percentage of the whole working population including the self-employed and the armed forces. Unemployment rates for travel-to-work areas and counties continue to be expressed as a percentage of the unemployed plus employees because information on the self-employed and armed forces needed to calculate the wider based rates is not available frequently enough below regional level.

40. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

51. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Paymaster General how many people were unemployed at the latest available date.

55. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures.

Mr. Lang: On 12 June 1986. The number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,229,372.

41. **Mr. Welsh** asked the Paymaster General how many people have been unemployed for more than 12 months; and what percentage of the total unemployed this figure represents.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 1,356,509, which represents 40·8 per cent. of the total.

49. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Paymaster General what is the average rate of unemployment for all the regions of the United Kingdom outside the south-east.

Mr. Lang: On 12 June 1986 unemployment in the United Kingdom excluding the south-east region represented 13·3 per cent. of the working population.

56. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Paymaster General what is the present rate of unemployment; and how this compares with the rate for June 1979.

Mr. Lang: Seasonally adjusted unemployment in the United Kingdom on 12 June represented 11·7 per cent. of the working population. The estimate on the same basis for June 1979 was 4·2 per cent.

59. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Paymaster General if he is satisfied that the official employment statistics accurately reflect the levels of unemployment nationally and in areas of high unemployment, such as the Wentworth constituency.

Mr. Lang: I am satisfied that the monthly unemployment count is an accurate record of those claiming benefits, although the figures do not necessarily reflect the number of people seeking work. Preliminary results of the labour force summary conducted in spring 1985 showed some 1,080,000 people included in the monthly count who either had a job or were not seeking work. While 760,000 people without jobs and seeking work were excluded from the claimant total.

I am also satisfied with the accuracy of the allocation of unemployed claimants to local areas. Such as constituencies.

64. **Mr. Barron** asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of unemployed in the Rother Valley; how many have been unemployed over 12 months and 24 months respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, there were 6,447 unemployed claimants in the Rother Valley parliamentary constituency. Of these, 2,293 and 1,452 had been unemployed for over 12 months and 24 months, respectively.

71. **Mr. Alton** asked the Paymaster General how many people in the Liverpool travel-to-work area have been unemployed for periods longer than three years.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the latest date an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of claimants in the Liverpool travel-to-work area who had been unemployed for over three years was 27,845

76. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Paymaster General how many people have been unemployed for more than 12 months, 24 months and 36 months, respectively, at the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April, 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the numbers of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over 12 months, 24 months and 36 months, were 1,356,509, 845,168 and 566,965, respectively.

Mr. Leadbitter asked the Paymaster General if he will provide figures to the latest date on the numbers out of work between the ages of 16 years and 21 years, 21 years and 45 years and 45 years and 65 years in Hartlepool, stating in each category, the numbers unemployed for more than one year, between six months and one year, and below six months; and what is the total number in each category receiving training under Government training schemes and the number between 16 years and 18 years who never had a job or any training.

Mr. Lang: The following table gives the available information, which is also in the Library, in respect of unemployed claimants on 10 April 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available, for the Hartlepool local authority district.

	16-19 years	*20-44 years*	*45 years and over*
Total unemployed	1,426	5,652	2,280
Unemployed over one year	246	2,866	1,392
Unemployed 6 months to one year	404	874	335
Unemployed under 6 months	776	1,912	553

Information about the numbers of people in training is not available in the form requested, because the Manpower Services Commission does not record the age or length of the period of previous unemployment. However, on 30 June 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, in the Hartlepool local authority district there were 1,012 young people in training on YTS, all of whom would normally be under 21 years of age and the vast majority of whom would be 16 to 17 years old. There were also 50 people in training, on various Government adult training schemes. All of these trainees were 18 years old or over.

On 12 June 1986 there were 590 unemployed claimants in the Hartlepool local authority district under 19 years of age who had never had a job since leaving full-time education. It is not known how many of those have received training.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Paymaster General what are the latest figures for seasonally adjusted unemployment in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Great Britain; and what information he has about the latest figures for Sweden, Finland, Austria and Switzerland.

Mr. Lang: The following table gives the available information for the countries requested. The figures are based on national definitions, using different methods of compilation, and are therefore not fully comparable.

	Latest Month	*Total (Thousands)*	*Percentage*
Scotland	June 1986	342	13·6
Great Britain	June 1986	3,094	11·5
Sweden	December 1985	131	2·9
Finland	February 1986	180	7·1
Austria	May 1986	†143	†4·9
Switzerland*	March 1986	25	0·9

* not seasonally adjusted.
† estimated.

Small Firms (Loan Guarantee Scheme)

24. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Paymaster General how many small firms have borrowed through the loan guarantee scheme in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: In the year April 1985 to March 1986, 522 guarantees were issued to small businesses under the loan guarantee scheme. Since the scheme's renewal, that is between 1 May and end of June this year, 251 guarantees have been issued.

Youth Training Scheme

25. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Paymaster General what is the estimated total demand for two-year YTS places for 1986-87 and 1987-88; and how many such places have so far been offered by managing agents and approved.

Mr. Trippier: We estimate that around 360,000 young people will join two-year YTS in 1986-87 and 1987-88 made up of 315,000 16-year-olds and 45,000 to 50,000 17-year-olds. To cater for these numbers the Manpower Services Commission will need around 371,000 places; to date all 1986-87 places have been offered and at 1 July 1986 332,189 places have been approved.

46. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of *(a)* black and *(b)* white young people currently obtain employment after leaving YTS.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission conducts a regular follow-up survey of all YTS leavers. The latest results, covering those who left YTS schemes between April 1985 and January 1986, show that 57 per cent. of white young people, 35 per cent. of those of Black/African/Caribbean descent and 34 per cent. of those of Indian sub-continent descent were in work some three months after leaving. At the same stage, a further 3 per cent. of white young people, 9 per cent. of those of Black/African/Caribbean descent and 10 per cent. of those of Indian sub-continent descent were on a full-time course of education/training.

50. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Paymaster General how many YTS places have been taken up in tourism and leisure industries.

Mr. Trippier: I am unable to give up-to-date information as our system of collecting statistics based on occupations is at present being revised. But YTS does make a significant contribution to training in tourism-related industries, and at the end of last year was providing around 11,000 places in hotels and catering and the travel trade.

54. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Paymaster General what training has been given to Manpower Services Commission staff employed as programme managers and programme assessors at the area offices to enable them to carry out the monitoring role required by the two-year YTS.

Mr. Trippier: Staff of the Manpower Services Commission receive a comprehensive range of training designed to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to operate effectively.

Staff involved in monitoring YTS undertake a six-month training programme linked to individual training needs. In addition, a special intensive training programme has been mounted to train staff for their role in the approval process for training organisations in two-year YTS.

57. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Paymaster General if he will give the actual number of YTS places in the United Kingdom, the east midlands and Leicester, with the respective percentage take-up rate and the number of young people who have been taken into full-time employment.

Mr. Trippier: The table gives the following information for Great Britain, the east midlands and Leicester:

1. The planned number of YTS places for 1986-87;
2. The number of places already contracted as at 1 July 1986;
3. The proportion of young people who completed YTS in April 1985 to January 1986 who responded to the follow-up survey by reporting that they were, firstly, in full-time employment, and, secondly, in full-time employment or further education and training.

	Great Britain	*East Midlands*	*Leicester*
Planned places 1986-87	456,594	36,495	11,301
Contracted places as at 1 July 1986	332,480	23,076	7,100
Proportion of young people in full-time employment —percentage	53	57	64
Proportion of young people in full-time employment or further education and training—percentage	66	72	78

60. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to how many YTS trainees are learning administrative skills; and what type of training they are receiving.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that I cannot give all the information requested. The system of collecting statistics based on occupations is at present being revised and therefore the number of people receiving training in administrative skills is not available at the moment.

YTS trainees learning administrative skills normally enter broad-based business. Clerical and office schemes which cover a wide range of basic clerical skills as well as introducing trainees to computers, information technology and commonly used office equipment and systems.

63. **Mr. Mark Hughes** asked the Paymaster General what is the retention rate for young people finishing YTS programmes.

Mr. Trippier: The results from the Manpower Services Commission's regular follow-up survey of all YTS leavers are placed in the Library each month. The latest results covering those who left YTS between April 1985 and January 1986 show that 28 per cent. of all leavers and 41 per cent. of all who completed their time on YTS were in work with the same employer who provided their training some three months later. Altogether 57 per cent. of leavers were in employment and two thirds either in work or full-time education or training.

74. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Paymaster General how many young people are presently employed under the YTS.

Mr. Trippier: At the end of June 1986, the latest date for which statistics are available, the Manpower Services Commission management information system had recorded 280,194 young people in training on YTS in Great Britain.

Inner Cities Initiative

26. **Mr. Sayeed** asked the Paymaster General what progress has been made with the inner cities initiative.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Encouraging progress has been made since the initiative was announced on 6 February.

We are tackling a number of major issues including the need to ensure that urban development projects in inner cities produce more work and training opportunities for residents.

We are also taking various measures to encourage enterprise, particularly among the ethnic minorities. We are aiming to set up enterprise agencies, particularly for ethnic minorities, managed workshops and skill training facilities. We are also exploring other ways of giving more positive help to small businesses in partnership with the private sector.

Highfields Task Force (Leicester)

27. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the progress of the work of the Highfields task force in Leicester.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our Highfields task force was established towards the end of March. It has now completed its initial work in establishing contact with the residents and appraising the problems of the locality. It has held discussions with a wide variety of local community and voluntary organisations, with the local authorities and with the private sector. Plans are now being drawn up aimed at tackling the urgent problems of the area.

We would be able to make faster progress in Highfields if the city council and local activists felt able to take a constructive and co-operative approach to our work.

Payment of Bills

30. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the response to the guidance booklet on payment of bills published on 20 May.

32. **Mr. Knowles** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the response to the guidance booklet on payment of bills published on 20 May.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friends to my reply earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Ottaway).

Restart Scheme

31. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Paymaster General what progress has been made in extending restart nationwide.

Mr. Lang: Jobcentre staff have now started counselling long-term unemployed people in all areas of the country.

Up to 12 June 7,469 people have been counselled; 998 were submitted to jobs; 1,214 were submitted to community programme places; 65 were submitted to a voluntary projects programme place; 401 were submitted to a jobclub; 901 were referred for training; 1,232 were allocated to restart courses; 471 were offered an opportunity under the enterprise allowance scheme; and 868 were referred to other services.

36. **Mr Butterfill** asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to ensure that counsellors under the restart scheme are adequately briefed on job opportunities in tourism.

Mr. Lang: Care has been taken to ensure that jobcentre staff counselling the long-term unemployed under the restart scheme have a full knowledge of all opportunities including those in tourism.

They have access to all notified vacancies, current local labour market information and guidance literature to enable submission to be made to jobs or training.

College of the Air

33. **Mr. Malins** asked the Paymaster General what plans have been developed to introduce a College of the Air.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. and learned Friend's statement on Friday 18 July at column 1358.

Adult Education

35. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to increase the availability of open and distance learning for adults, particularly unemployed adults.

Mr. Trippier: Yes. The Manpower Services Commission's Open Tech programme is increasing the amount of open learning material available to individuals for retraining and updating of their skills. Over 18,000 hours of Open Tech material is now available, and over 25,000 people have benefited from it. These figures are likely to double by March 1987. MSC is increasing the use of open learning within all its training schemes, including schemes which help unemployed people. The Government are considering plans for the further development of open learning beyond 1987.

Long-term Unemployed Persons

37. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest progress of the Government's measures to help the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Lang: The new restart programme which was extended nationwide from 1 July and under which all long-term unemployed people will be invited for a jobcentre interview by the end of next March has been widely welcomed, notably by the long-term unemployed themselves. In the period to 12 June, in those areas where the programme started early, 95 per cent. of those invited to be interviewed in the period responded positively by attending for their interview. We are also continuing to expand the community programme which will provide worthwhile job opportunities for over 300,000 long-term unemployed people in a full year. The range of our employment, training and enterprise measures is set out in our booklet "Action for Jobs" which has been widely distributed and positively received.

45. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Paymaster General what new initiatives his Department is taking to assist the longer-term unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The restart programme for the long-term unemployed was extended nationwide on 1 July. Everyone

who has been unemployed for a year or more will be invited for a jobcentre interview and offered one or more of eight positive opportunities designed to help them back into employment.

67. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Paymaster General how many of the long-term unemployed have been interviewed under the Government's measures to help the long-term unemployed; and how many have been found full-time jobs.

Mr. Lang: 35,644 people have been interviewed under the Government's measures to help the long-term unemployed; 28,175 under the pilot initiatives in nine selected areas of the country and 7,469 under the national restart programme.

Four thousand three hundred and twenty-two in the pilot areas have left the unemployment register since being interviewed; 1,605 of these were placed in jobs or community programme vacancies as a direct result of submissions made during the counselling interviews. It is not known how many of these were full-time jobs or full-time places on the community programme.

In addition, 166 people were placed in jobs or community programme places under the national restart programme.

It is not known how many of those who left the register did so as a result of referrals made by the normal jobcentre services subsequent to their restart counselling.

Manpower Services Commission

38. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about the role of the Manpower Services Commission in education and training over the next three years.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) on 15 July at column 455.

86. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Paymaster General if he plans to reply to the Employment Committee's recent report on the Manpower Services Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government's response to the Employment Select Committee's report on the Manpower Services Commission's corporate plan 1986-90 was sent to the Chairman of the Employment Select Committee on 6 May.

Travel-to-Work Areas

39. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Paymaster General if he will consider changing the name of travel-to-work areas to employment information areas.

Mr. Lang: No. Travel-to-work areas are so called because they are areas within which a substantial proportion of those who live also work, and vice versa.

Industrial Relations

43. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Paymaster General what plans his Department has for legislation in the field of industrial relations.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no plans at present for further legislation in the field of industrial relations but we are keeping the situation under review.

National Dock Labour Scheme

44. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Paymaster General what discussions he has had, and with whom, about the future of the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have had no discussions about the future of the national dock labour scheme. It has been made clear—most recently by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 22 April at column 121—that we were not proposing to change the national dock labour scheme.

Local Enterprise Agencies

47. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Paymaster General if he will give the up-to-date position on the number of local enterprise agencies.

Mr. Trippier: There are currently 342 local enterprise agencies throughout the United Kingdom, of which 261 are approved under the terms of the Finance Act 1982 which allows business sector sponsors tax relief on their contributions to such bodies.

Job Release Scheme

48. **Mr. Knox** asked the Paymaster General how many people were in receipt of allowances under the job release scheme in each of the past three years.

Mr. Lang: The numbers of people in receipt of a job release allowance in each of the past three years are as follows:

April	*Number*
1984	94,000
1985	67,000
1986	40,000

Local Employment Initiative

52. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about his Department's support for local employment initiative.

Mr. Trippier: Much of my Department's work to stimulate enterprise and small firms and to promote job creation is delivered at the local level. Indeed, local networks of support are an important contributor to local economic development and I am anxious to see my Department's programmes contribute fully to such networks.

At the international level, both the European Community and the Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation are studying local employment initiatives among their member states. The United Kingdom is, through my Department, playing an active part in that work.

Disabled Persons (Adaptations to Premises)

53. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Paymaster General if he is satisfied with the level of take-up of grants for the adaptations to premises and equipment scheme for the purpose of improving the employment prospects of disabled people.

Mr. Lang: I am pleased with the current, substantially increased, level of take-up and satisfied that the scheme is being vigorously marketed.

Young Workers Scheme

58. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Paymaster General what is the current rate of retention among young people employed under the Government's young workers scheme.

Mr. Lang: A survey of the young workers scheme in 1985 suggested that employers expected at least 90 per cent. of young workers would continue in their current job beyond the period of eligibility for young workers scheme support. Preliminary results from a more recent survey, carried out between three and 11 months after the end of the support period, found that the original young worker post still existed in 82 per cent. of cases (although not necessarily filled by the same young worker), while more than 50 per cent. of the young workers continued to be employed by the same firm (although not necessarily in the same post).

Out-of-town Shopping Centres

65. **Mr. Favell** asked the Paymaster General what assessment he has made of the implication for employment in inner cities of the growth of out-of-town shopping centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department has not made a detailed assessment. However, my hon. Friend will be aware that the Government announced the setting up of the inner city initiative on 6 February, which aims to improve the employment prospects of residents in eight inner city areas in England. We have set up task forces in each area and we will take account of such developments in preparing our local plans of action.

Disabled People

66. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of the staff employed by his Department are disabled.

Mr. Lang: At the end of May 1986 1·7 per cent. of the staff of the Department of Employment were registered as disabled.

Jobcentres

68. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Paymaster General by what criteria he judges the efficiency of jobcentres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The MSC annual report details the aims, objectives and achievements of jobcentres nationally and by region.

A number of measures exist for determining the efficiency and effectiveness of jobcentres: for example, the number of people (including disabled people) placed in work or on the community programme; the number of training course applications; the MSC costs and staff numbers associated with these activities; the proportion of vacancies notified to jobcentres which they succeed in filling; jobclub performance.

I am pleased to note that jobcentre efficiency generally continues to improve.

New Businesses (Basildon)

69. **Mr. Amess** asked the Paymaster General how many new businesses have been started in Basildon in each of the last five years.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that the information requested is not available.

School Leavers (Stoke)

72. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Paymaster General what information he has regarding the prospect of jobs for school leavers in the Stoke-on-Trent travel-to-work area.

Mr. Trippier: Job prospects for young people in the Stoke-on-Trent travel-to-work area depend on a sustained improvement in the performance of industry, business and the economy as a whole. Our economic policies are designed to create the conditions for that improvement and we are making substantial progress. We also need levels of pay which ensure the competitiveness of our industry.

In 1986-87 two-year YTS will provide 11,580 places in Staffordshire, with a further 2,060 continuation places being provided for young people who entered training last year. The job prospects of those completing YTS and those ineligible for training will be further enhanced by the new workers scheme.

Those young people who have been unemployed for some time will be able to benefit from temporary employment under the community programme. At June 1986, 4,775 places were available in Staffordshire and the target is to increase this figure to 4,945 by October this year. Our other employment measures will also directly or indirectly benefit young people.

Action for Jobs Programme

73. **Mr. Latham** asked the Paymaster General whether he will make a statement on progress on the action for jobs programme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In the first three months of the action for jobs campaign. We estimate that some 1·25 million members of the public have picked up a copy of the "Action for Jobs" booklet. In addition, some 500,000 copies have been directly distributed. Our research shows that the booklet has been very positively received both in terms of its clarity and layout and its usefulness in telling people about the wide range of opportunities provided by our employment, training and enterprise measures.

Parental and Family Leave

75. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Paymaster General what recent representations he has received concerning parental and family leave.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 12 June at column 417.

Between 12 June and 10 July we had received 122 representations.

Wandsworth

77. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Paymaster General what is the present number of people registered as unemployed in the London borough of Wandsworth and the number of job vacancies registered at local jobcentres.

Mr. Lang: On 12 June 1986, the number of unemployed claimants in the London borough of Wandsworth was 16,280. On 6 June 1986 the number of unfilled vacancies at the Balham, Clapham Junction and Tooting jobcentres, which cover an area closely corresponding to the London borough of Wandsworth, was 892.

Manufacturing Industry

78. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the estimated future opportunities for employment in the manufacturing sector of the economy.

Mr. Lang: Future levels of employment in manufacturing depend on the quality of the sector's response to market change.

80. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the proportion of the working population currently employed in manufacturing industry and give the comparable figures for 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Lang: In March 1986 (the latest date for which an estimate is available) 20·6 per cent. of the working population in Great Britain were employed, as employees in employment or self-employed, in manufacturing industry. The comparable figures for March 1984 and March 1985 were 21·3 per cent. and 21 per cent., respectively.

On-site Factory Inspectors

79. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Paymaster General how many on-site factory inspectors were employed by the Health and Safety Executive at the latest available date.

Mr. Trippier: On 1 July 1986, 514 of Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectors were employed on inspection duties in the field.

EC Presidency

81. **Mr. Lord** asked the Paymaster General what assessment he makes of the scope, now that the United Kingdom has the presidency of the European Community, for European co-operation in tackling unemployment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I think that there are now better prospects for European co-operation in tackling unemployment than there have been at any time since we became a member of the European Community. Following the meeting of the Council of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers on 5 June, at which I tabled the paper "Employment Growth into the 1990s—A strategy for the Labour Market" in conjunction with the Employment Ministers of Italy and the Republic of Ireland. I consider that there is now a substantial prospect of the Council adopting an employment strategy along the lines of the paper during the United Kingdom Presidency. Our aim is that such a strategy should be based on the need to encourage enterprise and self-employment; flexible employment patterns and conditions of work; training; and help for long-term unemployed people.

TVEI

82. **Mr. Stern** asked the Paymaster General if, in appropriate circumstances, he will accept less than three years as a trial period for any education authority before permitting that authority to enter the national technical and vocational education initiative scheme.

Mr. Trippier: We believe that it would normally be appropriate for an education authority to have had at least three years experience of participation in the technical and vocational education initiative before beginning to extend the initiative across all authorities' educational institutions. There are no plans at present to make any exceptions.

83. **Mr. Hancock** asked the Paymaster General how much money the technical and vocational education initiative will provide per pupil; and what was the comparable figure on the pilot scheme.

Mr. Trippier: Maximum allocations of funds will be determined for individual local education authorities, but authorities will have considerable freedom to propose how they allocate the funds available to meet the aims of the initiative. In contrast to the pilot phase there will be no requirement for separate cohorts of TVEI students of a particular size. It is not therefore possible to quote a meaningful figure for direct expenditure per pupil.

Sandwell

87. **Miss Boothroyd** asked the Paymaster General what plans he has to increase the level of employment of young people in Sandwell.

Mr. Lang: An increase in the level of employment of young people in Sandwell will depend on a sustained improvement in the performance of industry, business and the economy as a whole. Our economic policies are designed to create the conditions for that improvement and we are making substantial progress. We also need levels of pay which ensure the competitiveness of our industry.

In 1986-87 two-year YTS will provide 6,941 places in Dudley/Sandwell, with a further 1,397 continuation places being provided for young people who entered training last year. The job prospects of those completing YTS and those ineligible for training will be further enhanced by the new workers scheme.

Those young people who have been unemployed for some time will be able to benefit from temporary employment under the community programme. At June 1986, 4,090 places were available in Dudley/Sandwell and the target is to increase this figure to 4,328 by October this year. Our other employment measures will also directly or indirectly benefit young people.

Careers Service

Mr. Lawler asked the Paymaster General what output and performance indicators are used to measure the effectiveness of the careers service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Responsibility for the effectiveness of careers services rests primarily with the local education authorities. Information about the variety of ways in which they assess the output and performance of their services is not collated centrally.

However, my Department, through the work of the Careers Service Inspectorate, aims to ensure that authorities provide an effective properly managed service in accordance with the guidance of a general character issued to them by the Secretary of State.

In addition, authorities are required to provide statistical information on the work of their services to the Department. A revised and improved return is being introduced in October.

Gosport

Mr. Viggers asked the Paymaster General what is the current level of unemployment in Gosport.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. On 12 June 1986 the number of unemployed claimants in the Gosport parliamentary constituency was 4,003. The corresponding number in the Gosport local authority area was 3,654.

US Tourists

Mr. Chapman asked the Paymaster General what is his latest estimate of the number of United States tourists expected to visit Britain in 1986.

Mr. Trippier: Following record levels of incoming tourism in 1985 the upward trend was sustained during the first quarter of 1986 when visits from north America were up by 15 per cent. However, during April visits from north America to Britain fell by 19 per cent. over the corresponding period last year. We have no firm predictions for the rest of the year but the British Tourist Authority reports that traffic is now picking up again. This should be reflected in the figures for the number of visitors to Britain which will be available later this year.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Remands in Custody

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were remanded in custody before trial for scheduled offences, non-scheduled offences, and both together, in the first six months of 1986.

Mr. Scott: The numbers are 611 persons for scheduled offences and 449 persons for non-scheduled offences.

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of Patrick Kelly in Fermanagh on 10 August 1974; and if he will give details;

(2) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of William Hutchinson in South Tyrone on 23 August 1974; and if he will give details;

(3) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Mary Bingham in South Tyrone on 7 September 1974; and if he will give details;

(4) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of Joseph Falls in South Tyrone on 20 November 1974; and if he will give details;

(5) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Joseph Arthur Maddocks in Fermanagh on 2 December 1974; and if he will give details;

(6) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of George Coulter in South Tyrone on 31 January 1975; and if he will give details;

(7) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of William Robson in Fermanagh on 7 February 1975; and if he will give details;

(8) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Chris Mein in South Tyrone on 11 February 1975; and if he will give details;

(9) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of Owen Boyle in South Tyrone on 11 April 1975; and if he will give details;

(10) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of Michael McKenna in South Tyrone on 21 April 1975; and if he will give details;

(11) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of Seamus McKenna in South Tyrone on 21 April 1975; and if he will give details;

(12) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of Marian Bowen in South Tyrone on 21 April 1975; and if he will give details;

(13) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of Patrick O'Reilly in Fermanagh on 27 May 1975; and if he will give details;

(14) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Margaret Elizabeth Kilfedden in Fermanagh on 1 June 1975; and if he will give details;

(15) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republic Army of George McCall in South Tyrone on 2 August 1975; and if he will give details;

(16) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of Peter McKearney in South Tyrone on 23 October 1975; and if he will give details;

(17) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of Jane McKearney in South Tyrone on 23 October 1975; and if he will give details;

(18) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Stanley Irwin in South Tyrone on 6 November 1975; and if he will give details;

(19) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Paddy Maxwell in South Tyrone on 25 November 1975; and if he will give details;

(20) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Samuel Clarke in South Tyrone on 25 November 1975; and if he will give details;

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave on 7 July 1986 at columns *17-19*.

Michael Tighe

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether Mr. Sampson has been given access to either of the two tape recordings from the shed where Michael Tighe died in Northern Ireland in 1982 in the course of his inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The progress of Mr. Sampson's inquiry is a matter for him and the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to safeguard the tape recorded by the security services on a device in the shed where Michael Tighe was shot dead in Northern Ireland in 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to a question by him on 7 July 1986 at column *84*.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many guests of his Department have been right hon. and hon. Members in the years to the end of May 1985 and 1986; and how many of those right hon. and hon. Members have visited *(a)* the Royal Ulster Constabulary stations and *(b)* military posts.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 July 1986, c. *114*]: In the years ending May 1985 and May 1986 the number of right hon. and hon. Members whose visits to the Province were either directly or indirectly organised through the Northern Ireland Office was 101 and 64 respectively. Of these 15 and 21 respectively visited the Royal Ulster Constabulary and three visited the Army in each year in question.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what information is available on the number of full-time youth training programme places allocated to each of the further education colleges in Northern Ireland at present and for each of the past three years;

(2) what information is available on the number of full-time youth training programme places allocated to each of the Government training centres, youth and community workshops and other providers currently and for each of the past three years.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1986, c. *547*]: The information specifically requested by the hon. Gentleman in regard to full-time training provision within the youth training programme is as follows.

Figures for 1983-84 are shown separately as they are not directly comparable with those for the subsequent years. The year 1983-84 was the first full recruitment year of the youth training programme. Without an established proven basis of demand there was considerable overprovision of places in both the first and second year full-time training schemes. In addition, the places provided offered training primarily based in one establishment and of a particular kind to young people; there was little complementarity in what was on offer to young people, even within one locality.

Training Centres

Training centre	*1983-84*
Ballymena	218
Boucher Road, Belfast	211
Craigavon	238
Dundonald	300
Enniskillen	140
Felden	264
Lisburn	92
Maydown	144
Newry	312
Omagh	120
Springtown	144
Total	2,183

Training centre	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Ballymena	146	159	159
Boucher Road, Belfast	110	120	88
Craigavon	158	167	163
Dundonald	220	247	240
Enniskillen	67	75	72
Felden	158	197	196
Lisburn	60	96	84
Maydown	108	118	105
Newry	234	243	243
Omagh	106	81	103
Springtown	106	108	90
Total	1,473	1,611	1,543

Further Education Colleges

College	*1983-84*
College of Business Studies	72
College of Technology	327
Rupert Stanley College	319
Antrim Technical College	110
Ballymena Technical College	141
Coleraine Technical College	111
Larne Technical College	162
Magherafelt Technical College	95
Newtownabbey Technical College	246
North Antrim Technical Area	87
Armagh Technical College	92
Banbridge Technical College	106
East Tyrone Technical College	80
Lurgan Technical College	111
Newry Technical College	100
Portadown Technical College	72
Castlereagh College of Further Education	192
Downpatrick/Ballynahinch Technical Area	174
Lisburn Technical College	162
Newcastle Technical College	85
North Down Technical College	177
Fermanagh College of Further Education	70
Limavady Technical College	136
North West College of Technology	204
Omagh Technical College	54
Total	3,485

College	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
College of Business Studies	50	60	60
College of Technology	112	150	137
Rupert Stanley College	256	206	253
Antrim Technical College	79	65	71
Ballymena Technical College	85	73	81
Coleraine Technical College	104	74	74
Larne Technical College	112	92	81
Magherafelt Technical College	76	60	72

College	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
Newtownabbey Technical College	174	166	129
North Antrim Technical College	83	54	50
Armagh Technical College	76	60	60
Banbridge Technical College	68	60	52
East Tyrone Technical Area	76		62
Lurgan Technical College	90	88	77
Newry Technical College	96	85	85
Portadown Technical College	48	34	38
Castlereagh College of Further Education	77	102	100
Downpatrick/Ballynahinch Technical Area	158	132	132
Lisburn Technical College	143	152	144
Newcastle Technical College	75	75	59
North Down Technical College	159	163	147
Fermanagh College of Further Education	35	20	20
Limavady Technical College	112	85	85
North West College of Technology	128	123	142
Omagh Technical College	38	30	32
Total	2,510	2,281	2,243

Community workshops

Workshop	1983-84
Ardoyne	84
Ballycastle	35
Ballymac	75
Bann Area Training Services	110
Beechvalley	70
Carrickfergus	88
Castlereagh	65
Clanrye	48
Clowney	116
Coalisland	55
Colinbrook	85
Cookstown	56
Craigavon	58
Crumlin Road	91
Derry	205
Erne	55
Extern	50
Fallswater	55
Federation Street	40
Glenand	130
Keady	40
Lecale	60
Limestone	75
Lisburn	100
Loughview	80
Lower Falls	116
Lurgan	48
Maydown	120
Mournecraft	140
Moyola	52
North Down	80
Omagh	39
Portadown	84
Quest ITeC	64
Scala	104
Seven Towers	45
Shankill	76
Shantallow	72
Strabane	110
VSB	60
Woodvale	72
Total	3,208

Workshop	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
Antrim	45	55	60
Ardoyne	80	80	80
Ballycastle	35	35	35
Ballymac	60	55	55
Bann Area Training Services	100	90	100
Beechvalley	60	60	60
Carrickfergus	85	85	75
Castlereagh	65	70	80
Clanrye	48	50	60
Clowney	110	105	105
Coalisland	50	55	55
Colinbrook	80	85	85
Cookstown	50	50	50
Craigavon	55	55	55
Crumlin Road	75	110	110
Derry	150	190	200
Erne	55	55	55
Extern	48	50	50
Fallswater	55	55	50
Federation Street	40	45	45
Glenand	130	130	135
Keady	40	35	35
Lecale	40	40	40
Limestone	70	70	70
Lisburn	90	70	70
Loughview	80	80	85
Lower Falls	116	123	120
Lurgan	45	50	55
Maydown	135	140	140
Mournecraft	117	125	125
Moyola	50	50	50
North Down	75	75	80
Omagh	35	35	40
Portadown	54	40	40
Quest ITeC	125	125	125
Scala	84	84	75
Seven Towers	45	55	78
Shankill	70	65	60
Shantallow	72	85	105
Strabane	110	110	105
Maydown ITeC	—	—	25
Southern ITeC	—	25	25
VSB	55	60	65
Woodvale	70	85	85
Total	3,054	3,192	3,298

	1983-84 Number
Employer Based Schemes	3,246
Other Providers	
Youth Community Projects	800
Young Help	404
National Trust	62
Enterprise Ulster	400
Attachment Training	100
Employment Rehabilitation Unit	20
GRAND TOTAL (all providers)	13,908

At the beginning of 1984 several major structural changes were made to the youth training programme which affected the way in which providers contributed to the delivery of training. Figures for 1984-85 and subsequent years are not therefore comparable to those provided for 1983-84. First of all, from 1984-85 onwards provision of training places has been matched very closely to demand. Secondly, full-time training has been delivered through partnerships of two or more training providers to give young people off-the-job training, further education and work experience. One provider acts as lead partner but all contribute to the training of the young people. Places

are not allocated to individual providers, but each lead partner is invited to meet recruitment targets for his partnership. The following statistics relate to the targets which each partner has been invited to meet, for 1984-85, 1985-86 and in the current year 1986-87; in some cases they were not met; and in other cases they were considerably exceeded.

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Employer Led Partnerships	1,212	1,101	1,299
Other Providers			
Youth Community Projects	200	236	231
Young Help	200	244	236
National Trust	35	24	—
Enterprise Ulster	50	—	—
Attachment Training	30	—	—
GRAND TOTAL (all providers)	8,762	8,678	8,850

Antrim RUC Station

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many police dogs are based at Antrim Royal Ulter Constabulary station; and what are their ages and breeds.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986, c. *617*]: None.

Explosives

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has been able to identify *(a)* the make and *(b)* the type of fertiliser used by the Irish Republican Army in explosive mixtures.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986, c. *621-22*]: Yes. For security reasons it would not be right to give further details.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to how much of the fertiliser used by the Irish Republican Army in its explosive mixtures was sold in Northern Ireland in the current year and in 1985.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986, c. *622*]: The agricultural fertiliser on which terrorists in Northern Ireland base their home made explosives is widely used in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The nature of the component parts of the fertiliser makes it impossible to distinguish accurately how much was sold in Northern Ireland.

O-Level Examination Results

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the O-level pass rate expressed as a percentage of the total school population in Northern Ireland at the latest date for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986]: Comparisons are inappropriate between O-level passes and a total school population which, for example, includes primary age pupils. However, in 1983-84 94·3 per cent. of school leavers in Northern Ireland who attempted GCE O-level examinations obtained one or more passes at or above grade E and 79·8 per cent. passes at or above grade C.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Visitors

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Lord Privy Seal what is his estimate of the increase in the numbers of the public visiting the Palace of Westminster over the last 10 years; what is his estimate of the resultant increased cost to public funds; whether he is satisfied with the necessary security arrangements; if he will raise with the Services Committee the possibility of placing a box for voluntary contributions towards the upkeep of the Palace at points of ingress and egress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Harcourt Room

Mr. Corbyn asked the Lord Privy Seal what is the average cost per meal served in the Harcourt Room and what is the average price paid.

Mr. Irving: I have been asked to reply.

In the Harcourt Room the menu is classed as a la carte. It being up to the customer to choose his own selection, it is therefore difficult to assess an average price.

WALES

Lambs (Radiation)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many lambs have been identified as having radiation levels above 1,000 bequerels/kilogram since 3 July in each of the districts of Arfon, Dwyfor, Ynys Môn, Meirionnydd and Aberconwy, respectively; and how many lambs have been sampled for radioactivity in each of these districts since that date.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information for the period from 3 July to 15 July is in the following table:

District	*Number of lambs tested*	*Number with radiation level above 1,000 becquerels/kg.*
Arfon	83	0
Dwyfor	19	0
Ynys Môn	253	1
Meirionnydd	45	5
Aberconwy	30	0

Planning Appeals

Sir Anthony Meyer asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many refusals of planning permission by local authorities in Wales have been reversed on appeal to him during the last period of 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Three hundred and forty five refusals of planning permission by local authorities in Wales were reversed on appeal during the period 1 July 1985 to 30 June 1986.

Private Rents

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the average rent in Wales charged by private landlords to tenants.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Department does not collect information on rents charged by private landlords in Wales.

Council Rents

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average rent in Wales charged by local authorities to tenants.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The average weekly rent per dwelling charged by local authorities in Wales in 1985-86 (the latest year for which information is available) was £16·47.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of council tenants in Wales receive housing benefit, distinguishing between those below and above retirement age.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Council tenants are eligible for two components of housing benefit: rate rebates and rent rebates. Information held centrally does not enable the level of rates rebates paid to council tenants to be determined. However, in 1984-85, the latest year for which figures are available, 71·3 per cent. of council tenants in Wales received rent rebates.

It is not possible to establish the proportion of recipients who are above or below retirement age.

Sheltered Accommodation

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many Welsh people have lived in sheltered accommodation in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Sheltered housing takes a number of forms in both the public and private sectors and information on the numbers of people who have lived in such housing is not available centrally.

Local Authorities (Employment)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to the number of people directly employed by each Welsh *(a)* county council and *(b)* district council in each year from 1979 to 1986.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Local authority staff numbers at March of each year, excluding employees employed under special employment and training measures, are given in the following table:

Local Authority Manpower—Wales—Numbers of staff

	Full-time employees								*Part-time employees**							
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
County Councils: †																
Clwyd	9,007	8,914	8,724	8,643	8,748	8,757	8,561	8,460	6,045	6,021	5,959	6,138	6,513	6,843	7,030	6,933
Dyfed	8,388	8,324	8,091	7,992	7,984	8,058	7,846	7,693	5,296	5,374	4,996	5,123	5,336	5,349	5,341	5,538
Gwent	10,929	10,742	10,516	10,480	10,392	10,283	10,035	9,856	7,860	7,584	7,839	7,531	7,735	7,810	8,063	8,286
Gwynedd	6,151	6,097	6,120	6,048	5,927	5,689	5,689	5,613	3,649	3,725	3,607	3,361	3,662	3,717	3,848	3,925
Mid Glamorgan	14,770	15,157	13,977	13,076	13,512	13,474	13,166	13,276	8,689	9,146	9,411	9,212	9,661	10,493	10,513	10,704
Powys	3,285	3,228	3,208	3,133	3,201	3,245	3,172	3,078	1,804	1,793	1,762	1,771	2,065	2,072	2,050	2,024
South Glamorgan	8,670	8,713	8,661	8,396	8,432	8,539	8,384	8,249	6,038	5,970	5,936	5,865	5,863	6,009	6,257	6,361
West Glamorgan	9,954	9,554	9,228	9,007	9,056	8,964	8,740	8,584	5,594	5,329	5,349	5,590	5,756	5,726	5,751	5,785
District Councils:																
Aberconwy	564	537	504	488	487	485	469	454	38	48	42	39	40	44	41	44
Alyn and Deeside	499	490	512	464	453	443	445	443	153	144	160	109	96	95	88	96
Arfon	582	542	555	551	542	524	530	502	39	41	40	56	51	57	59	64
Blaenau Gwent	1,025	1,025	980	976	1,017	955	932	924	107	100	99	93	106	129	113	120
Brecknock	239	225	221	220	299	225	223	228	32	29	24	28	23	24	20	21
Cardiff	3,770	3,665	3,573	3,576	3,625	3,370	3,177	3,153	230	200	222	211	305	308	335	366
Carmarthen	411	416	393	387	402	401	398	402	55	54	57	68	63	59	59	59
Ceredigion	453	443	428	426	440	438	441	436	28	33	28	19	24	24	26	30
Colwyn	460	464	453	404	395	362	362	347	50	56	54	52	50	47	51	45
Cynon Valley	830	822	725	731	736	718	731	731	90	89	86	95	102	95	95	95
Delyn	494	513	489	463	455	446	447	443	122	155	159	145	171	147	153	137
Dinefwr	234	230	233	235	230	244	235	236	39	27	27	26	22	21	22	21
Dwyfor	214	209	206	213	225	219	218	219	17	24	20	19	21	20	18	18
Glyndwr	320	275	266	265	269	268	269	258	35	35	26	28	32	28	28	30
Islwyn	809	808	784	768	749	751	741	746	87	62	50	48	51	54	52	50
Llanelli	797	844	776	690	655	670	675	619	80	54	63	53	51	71	64	78
Lliw Valley	500	493	475	448	441	444	463	451	46	43	38	35	28	32	37	51
Meirionydd	247	255	252	258	259	254	245	243	54	47	47	45	45	48	56	52
Merthyr Tydfil	1,071	1,079	1,048	960	932	917	917	903	80	85	84	88	88	87	89	98
Monmouth	540	561	562	555	523	519	551	505	79	82	91	85	88	68	63	64
Montgomeryshire	298	281	288	267	263	278	261	259	79	82	91	85	88	68	83	79
Neath	566	552	549	540	531	531	554	545	33	34	33	33	34	35	41	42
Newport	1,654	1,599	1,584	1,579	1,602	1,535	1,501	1,457	162	167	148	154	166	162	158	196
Ogwr	1,126	1,099	1,100	1,098	1,123	1,106	1,048	967	248	208	174	175	189	175	170	176
Port Talbot	843	843	791	720	819	752	640	604	113	112	99	100	92	94	90	87
Preseli	532	521	500	512	n.a.	504	507	503	39	42	41	41	n.a.	38	42	46
Radnor	136	135	136	138	133	137	135	136	28	27	30	30	31	31	27	26
Rhondda	1,041	1,073	853	855	849	833	818	781	125	124	142	167	169	168	182	189
Rhuddlan	446	429	454	422	435	410	406	392	97	90	104	112	85	49	65	54
Rhymney Valley	1,345	1,288	n.a.	1,298	1,270	1,195	1,185	1,185	173	181	n.a.	201	225	186	213	214
South Pembrokeshire	354	336	330	306	298	287	284	282	21	18	18	22	26	24	24	26
Swansea	2,413	2,304	2,284	2,330	2,270	2,192	2,177	2,199	194	177	212	133	118	145	143	144
Taff-Ely	969	949	911	875	847	859	797	792	94	99	98	102	105	111	120	146
Torfaen	998	995	977	975	963	895	796	786	124	134	148	150	176	150	159	173
Vale of Glamorgan	904	834	835	833	797	744	693	705	43	43	51	61	70	78	114	121
Wrexham Maelor	1,054	1,061	1,061	1,004	1,006	998	1,003	996	160	160	169	164	178	168	173	179

	Full-time employees								Part-time employees*							
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Ynys Mon	602	632	649	626	639	642	631	626	63	62	57	68	65	70	71	72
Police Authorities:																
Dyfed Powys	1,136	1,156	1,159	1,146	1,148	1,141	1,144	1,148	45	45	45	45	52	55	52	57
Gwent	1,185	1,200	1,210	1,190	1,199	1,221	1,227	1,227	57	55	57	58	58	57	58	57
North Wales	1,651	1,636	1,655	1,644	1,664	1,669	1,675	1,658	77	77	78	78	79	79	86	99
South Wales	3,922	4,080	4,069	4,058	4,080	4,082	4,091	4,039	159	153	154	154	153	149	149	166
Probation and Aftercare Committees																
Clwyd	77	79	80	83	86	90	96	96	9	9	10	12	16	20	23	25
Dyfed	37	36	37	40	43	43	50	50	7	21	24	30	29	26	23	25
Gwent	60	67	64	66	69	69	69	69	12	13	14	17	13	15	15	22
Mid Glamorgan	108	129	117	116	119	124	122	121	20	11	23	23	19	21	25	22
Powys	8	9	9	13	15	15	15	16	3	3	3	2	8	11	12	12
South Glamorgan	103	108	110	112	112	114	118	115	13	14	15	15	14	19	22	18
West Glamorgan	66	65	65	70	79	80	80	85	13	15	13	14	11	13	18	19
Magistrates Courts Committee:																
Clwyd	59	62	65	65	66	68	70	73	4	5	3	4	11	11	10	10
Dyfed	48	53	55	54	55	56	57	54	13	13	10	11	11	11	10	10
Gwent	77	78	77	80	84	82	80	79	16	16	18	13	11	13	14	14
Gwynedd	32	33	35	33	35	36	38	38	10	9	9	13	12	9	10	11
Mid Glamorgan	97	102	100	101	105	105	112	110	28	30	30	31	32	32	32	30
Powys	13	13	13	12	8	10	12	10	2	2	2	2	10	12	7	11
South Glamorgan	61	62	65	70	71	75	72	71	15	16	14	14	14	15	21	20
West Glamorgan	63	70	78	73	72	76	76	75	18	22	17	21	23	22	21	21

* There is a wide variation in the hours worked by part-time employees.
† Excludes police, staff of magistrates courts, and the probation service.
n.a. Data not available.

Leasehold Property

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to how many people in Wales occupy property under leasehold arrangements.

Mr. Mark Robinson: At the time of the 1981 census there were 310,891 residents in leasehold owner-occupied property in Wales. Information on the tenure of rented property is not available.

House Building

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many houses were constructed by the public sector in Wales in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985.

Mr. Mark Robinson: 4,351 and 1,673 dwellings were completed by the public sector in Wales in 1979 and 1985 respectively.

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Wales how the numbers of dwellings completed in Wales in May 1986 compared with the equivalent in May 1985; and how the numbers of dwelling completed from March to May 1986 compare with the number of dwellings completed in March to May 1985.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In May 1986 659 dwellings were completed in Wales, as compared with 797 in the same month of 1985. From March to May 1986, 1,839 dwellings were completed, as against 2,162 in the same period of the preceding year.

Radiotherapy (Swansea and Cardiff)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the review into the provision of radiotherapy services at Singleton hospital, Swansea and Velindre hospital, Cardiff.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The review of the radiotherapy service provided at Singleton and Velindre hospitals is being undertaken by officials to enable the Department and the district health authorities which manage the service to ensure that appropriate provision is being made. It is, therefore, an internal review which is not intended for publication.

Dairies

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many dairies are supplied by the Milk Marketing Board in Wales each year.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Twenty-four dairies are supplied by the Milk Marketing Board in Wales.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much milk is supplied by the Milk Marketing Board to dairies in Wales each year.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In the year ending March 1985, 1,640·7 million litres of milk were produced off farms in Wales and supplied mainly to dairies in Wales.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the arrangements which presently exist for the supply of milk to dairies in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The allocation of milk to dairies in Wales is a matter for the Milk Marketing Board, in conjuction with representatives of milk buyers.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many people are employed by dairies in Wales; and how this figure compares with the figures for 1979 and 1983, respectively;

(2) how many people are employed in the production of cheese in Wales; and how this figure compares with those for 1979 and 1983, respectively.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Full information is only available from the census of employment which shows that there were 3,300 employed in milk and milk products industries in 1981. Estimates—on a basis not wholly comparable with this source — made in the annual census of

production suggest that the figures for 1979, 1983, and 1984 respectively, were approximately 3,400, 3,200 and 2,700.

Butter

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how much butter is presently stored, under EEC rules, in Wales at the latest available date;

(2) how much butter is stored in each intervention store in Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: At 30 June, 19,531 tonnes of butter were held in eight cold stores at the following locations:

Location	*Tonnes*
Cardiff (3 stores)	13,448
Newport	1,180
Rhyl	951
Swansea	3,192
Milford Haven	480
Whitland	280

In addition there were 1,350 tonnes in private storage on which aid was being paid.

Llandeilo (Aid)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to make available funds from the European regional development fund in a similar arrangement to that now available through the Mid-Wales Development area to the Llandeilo travel-to-work area.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The arrangement under which the area served by the Development Board for Rural Wales qualifies for assistance from the regional development fund was negotiated with the European Commission as an exceptional measure and we see no prospect of its extension to other areas.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will take steps to make available to the Llandeilo travel-to-work area grants to communities and voluntary organisations for projects to improve social and community facilities such as are now available within the area of Mid-Wales Development;

(2) if he will take steps to make available to the Llandeilo travel-to-work area office and service industry grants similar to the ones available through the Mid-Wales Development area.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We have no plans to extend the area served by the Development Board for Rural Wales or to change the remit of other agencies. Support for areas such as Llandeilo continues to be provided in a variety of ways by the Welsh Development Agency and other bodies.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will introduce legislation to give equal official status to the Welsh language in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We are giving careful consideration to the provisions contained in the Bill introduced by the hon. Gentleman on 1 July under the ten-minute rule.

Teacher Training

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has reached a decision on the advice given by the Wales Advisory Body about the future provision of initial teacher training courses in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: At its meeting on 27 June the Wales Advisory Body recommended that there should be an urgent review of all initial teacher training in the public and university sectors in Wales and that it should be undertaken jointly by WAB and the University Grants Committee. WAB further recommended that decisions on the rationalisation of initial teacher training in the public sector should await the outcome of the review. The University Grants Committee has agreed to take part in the joint review which will produce recommendations within a period of 12 months.

It is very important that the future arrangements for initial teacher training should make the most effective use of the facilities and resources available and that teachers should receive the best possible preparation and training for a very demanding career. After careful consideration I have decided to accept the WAB's advice that rationalisation of public sector provision should await the outcome of the joint review. This will enable the strengths which exist in both sectors to be taken fully into account in shaping the future pattern of provision. In line with this decision I shall be allocating student places to public sector institutions for one year only in 1987. Allocations for 1988 and 1989 will be announced after the review has been completed and decisions on future arrangements have been taken.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Social Security Bill

88. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his best available estimate of the likely reduction in the numbers registered as unemployed as a consequence of clause 41 of the Social Security Bill.

Mr. Newton: At present some claimants who are disqualified from receiving unemployment benefit under section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975 continue to sign on as unemployed, although they are not entitled to supplementary benefit or credits. As a consequence of clause 41 (now clause 42) of the Social Security Bill, a number of these may decide not to sign on during the period of disqualification and will not therefore appear in the count of unemployed. Some 2,000 to 3,000 might cease to do so.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Livingston constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the local office of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major: Livingston is covered by two of the Department's offices, Edinburgh, West and Bathgate, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the offices is as follows:

	Edinburgh, West	*Bathgate*
Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefits (including unsuccessful)		
1979-80	12,579	13,571
1985-86	14,701	17,501
Percentage change	+16·9	+29·0
*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**		
1979-80	5,563	6,520
1985-86	9,849	14,487
Percentage change in complement	+77·0	+122·2
Supplementary benefit staff	+44·4	+100·0
All staff	+8·0	+25·1

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action in February.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of Housing Benefit and postal claim forms.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of supplementary benefit recipients by each social security office nationally for the most recent date available.

Mr. Major: I am arranging for information about the number of people receiving supplementary benefit at 11 February 1986, the latest available figures for each social security office nationally, to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of single payments awarded and the total amount paid out by each social security office for the most recent 52-week period available.

Mr. Newton: Information about the number of single payments awarded by each social security office, and the total amounts paid out, in the year ended 9 April 1985 is already in the Library. Later information for a 52-week period could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the latest figure available for the number of dependants of supplementary benefit recipients by claimant category *(a)* nationally, *(b)* for Scotland *(c)* for Strathclyde and *(d)* for Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Mr. Major: The table shows the latest available provisional estimates of the number of dependants of supplementary benefit recipients by claimant category nationally and for Scotland. These figures relate to the position in December 1984.

	Partners	*Other dependants*	*Total*
National			
Over pension age	262,000	9,000	271,000
Unemployed	580,000	1,049,000	1,629,000
Others	244,000	975,000	1,219,000
Scotland			
Over pension age	21,000	*	21,000
Unemployed	56,000	104,000	160,000
Others	25,000	98,000	123,000

* Less than 500.

Source: December 1984 Annual Statistical Enquiry.

Similar information for Strathclyde and Greenock and Port Glasgow is not available.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the expected publication date of the supplementary benefit "Annual Statistical Enquiry" for 1984.

Mr. Major: The results from the December 1984 annual statistical inquiry into supplementary benefit are expected to be available in September. The bound volume of tables will be deposited at that time in the Library and they will be made generally available on application to the Department's leaflets unit.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest available information on the take-up of supplementary benefit, broken down by category of claimants, amount unclaimed weekly by category of claimant and overall amount annually estimated to be unclaimed.

Mr. Major: The most recently published information is for 1981 and is as follows:

Estimates of take-up of supplementary benefit for 1981

	Total likely to be entitled at any one time (000's)	*Proportion receiving benefit at that time (per cent.)*	*Number eligible but not receiving benefit (000's)*	*Estimated benefit unclaimed (£ million per annum)*	*Average weekly amount unclaimed £*
i. Pensioners	2,480	67	810	210	5·0
ii. Non-Pensioners* total	2,350	75	580	550	18·10
iii. Sick and Disabled	290	67	100	70	14·30
iv. Unemployed	1,580	75	400	410	19·60
v. One-parent families not included in (iii) and (iv)	400	88	50	40	15·30
Total for all groups	4,820	71	1,390	760	10·50

* This total is slightly greater than the sum of lines (iii), (iv) and (v) because it includes a small residual group of miscellaneous cases.

Notes:

1. Estimates of those with an unclaimed entitlement are based on DHSS analysis of income and other information recorded by respondents to the family expenditure survey (FES). The estimates of those in receipt are derived from the annual statistical inquiry of supplementary benefit claimants.
2. The estimates relate only to people living in private households: families and persons in institutions are not sampled in the FES.
3. Estimates are subject to statistical error; all figures are rounded to the nearest 10,000.
4. Calculation of entitlement to supplementary benefit is based on the appropriate scale rates—ordinary for allowances and long-term for pensioners—with no allowance for additional requirements, except where heating additions would be automatically provided on age grounds. Disregards of income are allowed under the normal rules.
5. FES participants are not asked about the amount of capital they have, only about income received from capital, and assumptions have to be made from this information about capital holdings.
6. No entitlement to supplementary benefit is assumed if the family would be financially better off claiming housing rebates.

(Information for 1983 will be published shortly.)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take urgent action to ensure that supplementary benefit is paid without further delay to Mr. T. Williams of Rawsmarsh near Rotherham.

Mr. Major: A payment representing the full entitlement to benefit due was sent to Mr. T. Williams on 17 July 1986. I regret that it took so long to deal with this claim.

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Sheffield, Heeley constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the local offices of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major: Sheffield, Heeley is covered by two of the Department's offices, Sheffield, south-east and Sheffield, south-west, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

	Sheffield	
	South-East	*South-West*
Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)		
1982-83	13,810	24,653
1985-86	13,529	23,916
Percentage change	−2·0	−3·0
*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**		
1982-83	12,782	14,147
1985-86	14,183	16,778
Percentage change	+11·0	+18·6
Percentage change in complement 1982-83—1985-86:		
Supplementary benefit staff	*+22·0*	*+8·7*
All staff	*+2·9*	*−4·7*

* *Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.*

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the total number of those of working age receiving supplementary benefit, and the percentage increase since May 1979.

Mr. Major: The latest information available is as follows:

	000s
May 1979	1,157
December 1985	2,960
Percentage increase	156

Source: Quarterly Statistical Inquiries.

Deaf Persons

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assistance is available from his Department to the deaf or hard of hearing to provide them with or help them to obtain electronic equipment now available which enables such people to communicate by telephone.

Mr. Newton: The duties of a local authority under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 can include the provision of help to a disabled person in obtaining a telephone and any special equipment necessary to enable him or her to use a telephone, provided the local authority is satisfied that such assistance is necessary to meet the needs of that disabled person. This Department and the Department of Trade and Industry have made funds available for the provision of a number of Vistel machines, by which typed messages can be relayed and shown on a visual display, in places where they can be used by people whose hearing is impaired.

Doctor-Patient Ratios

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the doctor to patient ratio in the area covered by the Staffordshire, Moorlands parliamentary constituency; and what is the comparable doctor to patient ratio in England and Wales.

Mr. Hayhoe: Manpower statistics cover staff working in hospitals and are collected at a particular point in time; but they do not show what activities within the hospital the staff are engaged upon—for example, whether they are providing treatment to in-patients, out-patients or accident and emergency patients. By contrast, activity statistics show the number of cases treated during the year in National Health Service hospitals divided into day cases, in-patient and out-patient cases (including accident and emergency cases). Any overall staff: patient ratio is therefore a crude measure and does not take into account varying factors such as age of patients and types or complexity of treatment given. It is, however, possible to give a ratio in terms of the population being served although these figures cannot be broken down on the basis of parliamentary constituencies. At 1 October 1985 the number of hospital and community health service doctors, measured in whole time equivalents, was 85·8 per 100,000 population for England and Wales and 78·5 per 100,000

population for the area covered by the West Midlands regional health authority. At the same date the number of patients on a general practitioner's list in England and Wales averaged 2,059 and 2,093 in Staffordshire.

If my hon. Friend wants more detailed local information about hospital doctors and general practitioners, he may wish to write to the chairmen of the West Midlands regional health authority and the Staffordshire family practitioner committee respectively who may be able to help him.

Hospital Admissions (Staffordshire)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were waiting to be admitted to hospitals in Staffordshire at the most recent count.

Mr. Whitney: The requested information is given in the table.

Number of persons on in-patient waiting list in NHS hospitals on 30 September 1985

District Health Authority	*Total cases*
Mid Staffordshire	2,173
North Staffordshire	10,635
South East Staffordshire	2,337

Drugs and Appliances

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of drugs and appliances dispensed by chemists and appliance contractors under the National Health Service in the United Kingdom in each year since 1983.

Mr. Hayhoe: The costs, excluding fees and allowances paid for dispensing, are:

	£ million
1983	1,284·6
1984	1,344·2
1985	1,450·8

Hospital Beds (Staffordshire)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospital beds there were in the Staffordshire, Moorlands parliamentary constituency in each of the past six years.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. The numbers of beds in the North Staffordshire district health authority, within which the Staffordshire Moorlands constituency is located, are given in the table.

North Staffordshire district health authority (formerly North Staffordshire health district)

Year	*Average daily number of available beds*
1980	3,499
1981	3,504
1982	3,448
1983	3,406
1984	3,358
1985*	3,315

* provisional.

Fluoride

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what published scientific evidence is available to his Department on the effects of the addition of fluoride to the domestic water supply on the incidence of tooth decay.

Mr. Whitney: Evidence from around the world has proved conclusively that water fluoridation reduces dental decay. In this country the evidence of the efficacy of fluoridation is equally well documented. A comprehensive review of the evidence from the United Kingdom and abroad is contained in "Fluorides in Caries Prevention" by Murray J. J. and Rugg-Gunn A. J. (1982).

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of hospital waiting lists for each specialty in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district health authority area.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is as follows:

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list for admission to NHS hospitals in Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district health authority at 30 September 1985

Specialty	*Number*
General medicine	28
Paediatrics	3
Dermatology	18
Rheumatology	5
General surgery	653
ENT	744
Traumatic and Orthopaedic	222
Ophthalmology	57
Urology	419
Oral surgery	39
Gynaecology	419
Mental handicap	8
Other specialist units	61
Total	2,676

Heart Operations

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients have been on waiting lists for coronary artery bypass operations for every year for the past 15 years.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. It is not collected centrally. Information on waiting lists for admission to hospital is available centrally by the specialty of treatment and not by operation.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people at the latest date for which information is available were receiving standard housing benefit where (i) the claimant was disabled and (ii) the claimant and partner were disabled.

Mr. Newton: This information is not collected centrally and, I regret, could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Single Payments

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent on supplementary benefit single payments in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: It is provisionally estimated that expenditure on single payments in 1985-86 was £335 million.

Source: Management returns for 12 months to 8 April 1986.

Glaucoma

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of those on the blind register in England and Wales have suffered from glaucoma.

Mr. Newton: Diagnostic information about people included on local authorities' registers of blind people is not held centrally. Information is, however, collected about the causes of blindness amongst people certified as blind for the first time. It is estimated that out of the persons certified as blind in England in 1980-81, the latest date for which information is available, some 14 per cent. —that is, about 1,600 persons—had the cause of their blindness certified as glaucoma alone or glaucoma with other conditions.

Passive Smoking

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what representations he has received concerning passive smoking;

(2) what medical evidence is available to him on the effects of passive smoking;

(3) what information he has on the cost to public funds of the Health Education Council's campaign on passive smoking.

Mr. Whitney: The available evidence on the effects on health of breathing other people's tobacco smoke is being reviewed by the independent scientific committee on smoking and health, which advises the Government, with a view to updating the committee's statement on the subject in its 1983 report. The Health Education Council is spending about £450,000 this year on a campaign which deals with the social as well as the health aspects of passive smoking. Since January the Department has received about 30 written representations on this subject.

Cigarette Advertising

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many complaints he has received about cigarette advertising alleged to be in breach of his last voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry; and what were the results of his investigations of these complaints.

Mr. Whitney: One hundred and sixty seven complaints were received during the course of the agreement. In 11 cases the agreement was found to have been contravened and corrective action was taken in respect of these.

Acute Surgery Waiting List (North-West)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of people on the waiting list for acute surgery in each health authority area in the north-west region.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of persons on in-patient waiting lists for surgical specialties on 30 September 1985, North Western regional health authority

District health authority	*Number of cases*
Lancaster	1,945
Blackpool, Wyre, Fylde	3,551
Preston	4,165
Blackburn, Hyndburn, Ribble Valley	1,987
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	2,553
West Lancashire	1,734
Chorley and South Ribble	994
Bolton	2,606
Bury	981
North Manchester	2,314
Central Manchester	4,744
South Manchester	5,992
Oldham	4,526
Rochdale	2,651
Salford	3,937
Stockport	3,761
Thameside and Glossop	2,077
Trafford	1,215
Wigan	4,345
TOTAL	56,078

Health Services (London)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much is being spent on health services in the London area during the current year; how this compares with 1978-79; what is the projected expenditure on the same services in the next financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Revenue expenditure on hospital and community health services by district and special health authorities in the greater London area was £990·3 million in 1978-79 and £1,943·8 million in 1984-85 (the latest year for which information is available centrally). This represents a cash increase of 96·3 per cent. and a real terms increase over and above general inflation of 10·4 per cent. The detail of cash allocations to district health authorities is a matter for regional health authorities. My hon. Friend may wish to approach the chairmen of the Thames regional health authorities and of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals for further information relating to 1985-86 and 1986-87. The health authorities will not make firm plans for 1987-88 until the resources available nationally have been determined and allocations to regions have been announced towards the end of 1986.

Pharmacists

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current number of pharmacists in the National Health Service; how this has changed since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: At 30 September 1985, the latest date for which information is available, there were 2,830* registered hospital pharmacists directly employed by the National Health Service in England. The figure at 30 September 1983 was 2,790*.

* Figures are whole-time equivalents rounded to nearest ten.

London Lighthouse Project

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the continued funding by his Department of the London Lighthouse project for acquired immune deficiency syndrome patients.

Mr. Hayhoe: My Department has not been asked to provide financial support to this project.

Attendance Allowance

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time taken between receipt of a claim for attendance allowance and the issue of an order book *(a)* when the allowance is awarded on the initial application and *(b)* when it is awarded after a review.

Mr. Newton: *(a)* Eight and a half weeks; and *(b)* fifteen and a half weeks.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were receiving *(a)* the higher rate and *(b)* the lower rate of attendance allowance at the latest date for which figures are available; how these figures break down between (i) the standard age groups and (ii) the social security regions; and what are the rates per 1,000 of population both nationally and in each region.

Mr. Newton: The available information is in the following tables. I regret that information is not available to provide a regional breakdown of attendance allowance recipients.

*Attendance Allowance Current at 31 March 1985**

	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Great Britain*
Higher rate				
Age 2-15	20,497	1,895	1,605	23,997
16-19	4,677	480	385	5,542
20-24	4,251	424	401	5,076
25-29	3,343	427	314	4,084
30-34	3,088	376	319	3,783
35-39	3,617	423	377	4,417
40-44	3,572	415	379	4,366
45-49	3,545	501	433	4,479
50-54	5,394	536	642	6,572
55-59	7,717	806	795	9,318
60-64	11,067	1,085	1,566	13,718
65-69	12,394	1,069	1,702	15,164
70-74	17,655	1,742	2,389	21,796
75-79	22,510	1,680	2,414	26,603
80-84	24,814	1,924	2,530	29,267
+85	38,091	2,921	3,136	44,147
Total	186,242	16,704	19,387	222,329
Lower rate				
Age 2-15	30,365	3,560	1,873	35,798
16-19	7,697	1,055	491	9,243
20-24	9,055	1,173	577	10,805
25-29	6,798	902	479	8,179
30-34	5,647	767	423	6,837
35-39	5,840	798	495	7,133
40-44	5,139	697	441	6,277
45-49	5,346	796	486	6,628
50-54	6,898	819	653	8,370
55-59	9,842	1,180	964	11,986
60-64	15,595	1,812	1,586	18,993
65-69	17,977	1,747	1,787	21,511
70-74	25,809	2,348	2,140	30,296
75-79	32,435	3,195	2,618	38,247
80-84	35,718	2,407	3,346	41,470
+85	50,941	3,860	3,932	58,733
Total	271,102	27,116	22,291	320,506
Grand Total	457,344	43,820	41,678	542,835

Attendance allowance current at 31 March 1985 expressed at a rate per thousand of the population*

	Higher rate		*Lower rate*	
	Number in receipt†	*Rate per 1,000 population*	*Number in receipt†*	*Rate per 1,000 population*
England	186,000	3·7	271,000	5·4
Scotland	17,000	3·2	27,000	5·3
Wales	19,000	6·9	23,000	8·0
Great Britain	222,000	3·8	321,000	5·8

* Estimates at 31 March 1985, the latest date for which information is available.
† Estimates rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the breakdown of *(a)* attendance allowance awards in 1985 and *(b)* the number of people in receipt of attendance allowance at the latest available date, in terms of the length of time for which the award was made.

Mr. Newton: *(a)* The information is given in the table. *(b)* This information is not collected.

Attendance allowance: duration of certificates—awards 1985*

Duration of award (years)	*Higher rate awards*	*Lower rate awards*
Less than one	591	1,097
One less than two	7,923	12,574
Two less than three	12,388	18,343
Three less than four	4,417	6,369
Four less than five	1,319	2,572
Five and over	5,243	9,615
Life	67,628	101,524
Total	99,529	152,094

* Includes awards made on initial and renewal applications.

District Health Authority Chairmen

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 8 April, *Official Report*,

column 85, by what means the members of Parliament who were invited to make recommendations about the appointment of district health authority chairmen were selected; and how many from each party were contacted.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) on 18 April 1985 at column 277, in which he invited Members of Parliament to submit to him nominations for district health authority chairmen.

Bronchitis and Emphysema

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he proposes to extend the classification of industrial diseases to include bronchitis and emphysema.

Mr. Newton: Where a claimant is awarded disablement benefit for pneumoconiosis, bronchitis or emphysema may also be taken into account in assessing the amount of benefit payable. The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council is currently considering whether bronchitis or emphysema should be prescribed as industrial diseases in their own right. We shall consider very carefully any recommendations which the council may make as a result of its investigation.

Nerve Stimulators

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the provision of transcutaneous nerve stimulators on long term loan by health authorities to chronic pain sufferers.

Mr. Whitney: During the last six months we have received three inquiries about the supply of transcutaneous nerve stimulators, one from an hon. Member, one from a health authority and one from the Royal Associaton for Disability and Rehabilitation.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance his Department gives to health authorities concerning the provisions of transcutaneous nerve stimulators on long term loan to chronic pain sufferers.

Mr. Whitney: No specific guidance has been issued on the provision of transcutaneous nerve stimulators. An item of equipment such as a transcutaneous nerve stimulator may be loaned to a patient free of charge if it has been prescribed by a consultant, and if the health authority has decided to provide it from within its allocated resources.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in what form he proposes that the invalid care allowance will be paid to married women; and what is his estimate of the total cost of back-dating its payment to December 1984.

Mr. Newton: Current payments will be made by order book; arrears will be paid by means of a payable order. It is estimated that the total cost of paying invalid care allowance to married women in 1986-87, including arrears back to 22 December 1984 where appropriate, will be £125 million net.

Mrs. Enid Singer

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he hopes to answer the letter from the hon. Member for South Hams of 1 July about Mrs. Enid Singer, a constituent of the hon. Member.

Mr. Major: We are making inquiries into the points raised and I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of new cases per million population accepted for treatment for end stage renal failure in each of the regional health authorities for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: According to information supplied by the European dialysis and transplant association registry, the numbers of new patients per million population accepted for treatment for end stage renal failure in 1984 and 1985 in each regional health authority are set out in the table; the figures for 1985 are provisional only:

	1984	*1985**
Northern	40·6	45·2
Yorkshire	34·2	37·2
Trent	40·4	45·7
East Anglian	40·5	52·6
North-West Thames	30·6	40·0
North-East Thames	30·3	65·4
South-East Thames	47·5	57·8
South-West Thames	25·3	21·7
Wessex	27·9	24·6
Oxford	37·5	43·8
South-Western	32·6	42·6
West Midlands	26·3	37·3
Mersey	31·3	34·2
North-Western	31·5	42·5
England	33·8	42·4

* Provisional

The wide variation in the figures will be partially accounted for by the movement of patients across regional boundaries. The provisional data for 1985 suggest that most regional health authorities have already exceeded their targets of at least 40 new renal patients per million population to be accepted for treatment by 1987 which were announced by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) in December 1984. These increases in the level of service provided for the treatment of end stage renal failure are very encouraging.

Data have also been received from the United Kingdom transplant service on the numbers of cadaveric transplant operations performed in the United Kingdom during the six months January to June 1986, which were as follows:

	Number	*Percentage increase on previous six months*
Kidneys	797	24
Hearts	103	6
(including heart/lung) Livers	56	27

These figures are also very encouraging; in all cases they are the highest ever half-yearly totals.

The Health Service staff whose efforts enabled these increases to be achieved are to be congratulated. However further increases are still needed. Over 3,000 people are still waiting for a kidney transplant, and only if more donors become available can more transplant operations be performed and the waiting list reduced.

Nurses

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health authorities are having difficulty in recruiting nurses for high dependency areas such as intensive care units; whether such nurses are more difficult to recruit in London than elsewhere; what steps he is taking to encourage suitably qualified nurses to take up this work in areas where there is a shortage; and what effect difficulties in recruiting are having on the services provided by the hospitals which are affected.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that detailed information about nurse recruitment difficulties in high dependency areas and the effect they may be having on the services provided is not available centrally. However, I am aware of the results of a survey of a sample of health authorities conducted for the Review Body for Nursing Staff Midwives and Health Visitors which showed, that at 31 March 1985 about 5 per cent. of all whole-time equivalent funded posts for intensive care and theatre nursing staff were vacant for at least three months compared with the average of 2·5 per cent. for all nursing and midwifery staff. The total number of nursing staff employed in these areas of work however continue to increase—by 10·2 per cent. to 16,110 WTEs between September 1983 and September 1984 (the latest date for which such detail is available). Increases in these staff occurred in each region.

It is for individual health authorities to decide, in the light of local needs and priorities and the resources available to them, how many nurses they should employ who have received training in intensive care and theatre nursing and how many trainees they should second to meet those needs. Most regional health authorities have been asked to refine the manpower planning and training components of their strategic plans and in considering these the Department will pay particular attention to proposals for staff groups who may be in short supply.

There are particular problems in London regarding recruitment of nurses but these do not relate specifically to intensive therapy units and theatres. These difficulties are currently the subject of a review commissioned by the National Health Service Management Board.

Family Practitioner Services

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in reviewing the family practitioner services complaints procedure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: A consultation document setting out our proposals for changes in the arrangements for the investigation of complaints about the family practitioner services in England and Wales will be published shortly and copies placed in the Library. These proposals will develop and expand those outlined in the Government's discussion document "Primary Health Care: An Agenda For Discussion" (Cmnd. 9771) which was published in April.

Radiation (Report)

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the committee on the medical aspects of radiation in the environment (COMARE) will complete its report on new information relating to discharges from Sellafield that has become available since publication of Sir Douglas Black's report.

Mr. Hayhoe: COMARE has now completed its report and it is being published today. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

The committee concludes that it is impossible to exclude environmental radiation or indeed any other factor as a contributory cause of the cases of leukaemia observed at Seascale although they stress that there is no firm evidence for the existence of any causal relationship between environmental radiation and these leukaemias.

Although the committee expresses reservations about the adequacy and completeness of the available data and also about the conventional framework for estimating doses and risks, it concludes that the substance and essential conclusions of the Black advisory group report remain unchanged.

The Government are giving full and careful consideration to the report and will take any necessary action.

Alvada Kooken

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many previous occasions Alvada Kooken has been allowed out of Broadmoor on day trips; how many of the current total number of patients have been allowed out in such circumstances during the last five years; what criteria are used in determining whether patients should enjoy this facility; what degree of supervision is applied in such cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 June 1986, c. *356*]: Before the outing to Southsea on 23 June, Miss Kooken went on two day trips in 1982, two in 1983, three in 1984 and one in 1985. I regret that information about day trips by patients from the hospital is not available prior to 1982. For the years since then, details are available only of the number of day trips and the numbers of patients who went on each. Some patients will, of course, have gone on more than one outing, and some other patients who went on outings in the past will now have left the hospital or died. The available information is as follows:

1982: 12 trips with a total of 171 patient places
1983: 12 trips with a total of 154 patient places
1984: 19 trips with a total of 271 patient places
1985: 8 trips with a total of 94 patient places
1986: 2 trips with a total of 35 patient places

(On 30 June 1986 there were 495 patients in Broadmoor Hospital.)

As regards the criteria applied in deciding whether patients should go on outings, factors considered include the likely therapeutic benefit to the patient in the context of his or her overall treatment programme and any possible risk to the public. The level of supervision varies according to the needs of the patient and the circumstances of the outing and is considered very carefully in each case.

Pneumoconiosis Panels

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the pneumoconiosis panels were set up; on

whose recommendations and on what grounds; to whom they are responsible; if he will list their present membership; and who determines their membership and on what grounds.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *414*]: Panels of specially qualified medical practitioners known as pneumoconiosis medical panels were set up in 1948 by the then Minister of National Insurance. They replaced the silicosis medical boards which were established under the Workmen's Compensation Acts.

Panel members were appointed by the Minister to serve on pneumoconiosis medical boards (now special medical boards) to determine medical questions arising on claims under the industrial injuries scheme in connection with pneumoconiosis and certain other industrial chest diseases.

The panels were abolished in 1983. Their members were appointed by my right hon. Friend as specially qualified medical adjudicating practitioners to serve on special medical boards.

Medical practitioners appointed to serve on special medical boards are experienced in chest diseases and general medicine and have a wide experience of occupational chest diseases. The boards are statutory adjudicating authorities and are independent of the Department.

The names of all medical practitioners currently appointed to serve as special board members are as follows.

Part-time

Dr. M. C. Conroy
Dr. A. C. Morrison
Dr. W. B. Lister
Dr. D. H. Anderson
Dr. T. A. Blyton
Dr. W. H. Oldershaw
Dr. H. J. T. Ross
Dr. I. G. Jones
Dr. H. R. S. Harley
Dr. A. Little
Dr. F. C. N. Holden
Dr. G. Ashe
Dr. J. M. Gilmore
Dr. M. A. Erooga
Dr. R. L. Sadler
Dr. G. J. Ryder
Dr. G. L. Leathart
Dr. J. MacLeod
Dr. G. Johnston
Dr. N. W. Horne
Dr. R. G. B. Williamson
Dr. W. H. R. Smith
Dr. J. P. Lyons
Dr. J. A. Howarth
Dr. G. C. Whyte
Dr. J. B. Dowler
Dr. J. A. Dick
Dr. K. W. Browne

Full-time

Dr. T. J. G. Phillips
Dr. F. G. Ward
Dr. N. G. Pearson
Dr. J. E. M. Hutchinson
Dr. H. Fulton
Dr. A. N. Dempsey
Dr. G. B. Rooke
Dr. G. A. Davenport
Dr. R. S. Simpson
Dr. V. E. Sherburn
Dr. J. A. Cobb
Dr. Z. Rahman
Dr. O. Sayed
Dr. B. Simpson
Dr. E. L. F. Brazenor
Dr. A. K. Chatterjee
Dr. D. J. Jones
Dr. J. B. Harse
Dr. H. B. Tinsley
Dr. C. Vinayagamoorthy
Dr. T. J. Roy
Dr. W. R. Brown
Dr. R. S. H. Pasquel
Dr. W. R. Parkes

General Practitioners (Work Loads)

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the effect of old people being discharged from hospitals into homes in the community on the work loads of general practitioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986]: This is one of the many factors which the Doctors and Dentists Review Body takes into account each year in its assessment of general practitioners work load. Statistical evidence indicates that the average doctor is now caring for fewer patients aged 65 and over than he did in 1974.

Motor Neurone Disease

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what funding has been provided, both by central Government and others, for research into motor neurone disease, in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: I have been asked to reply.

The Department's responsibilities for the support of scientific research are discharged by the research councils, who receive annual grants-in-aid from the science budget.

I understand from the Medical Research Council that details of its funding for research into motor neurone disease in each of the past five financial years are as follows:

	Research projects exclusively on MND	*Research projects in which MND is a minor component*
	£	£
1981-82	154,408	736,404
1982-83	193,703	739,473
1983-84	174,302	833,321
1984-85	173,609	1,116,469
1985-86	219,235	953,168

In addition I understand that the Science and Engineering Research Council is funding some research which could be relevant to our understanding of MND. The council has allocated £90,981 to this work between the financial years 1983-84 and 1986-87; a year by year breakdown of this figure is not available.

Research work relevant to MND may also be taking place in universities and medical schools financed from the block grant to universities allocated for teaching and research on advice from the University Grants Committee. The voluntary charitable organisations may also be funding some work. Details are not available in either case.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 23 July 1986

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agriculture Improvement Scheme

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about grants for effluent disposal under the agriculture improvement scheme.

Mr. Jopling: Because of excessive expenditure on these grants, which has arisen particularly in Northern Ireland, I have decided, in agreement with the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland, for Scotland and for Wales, to introduce a payment limitation system in Northern Ireland under which, until further notice, grants will only be paid there on effluent disposal investments to which farmers have already committed themselves by midnight tonight. In addition, the facility under which claims for grant on effluent disposal can be made on a standard cost basis under the Agricultural Improvement Scheme 1985 and the Agriculture Improvement Regulations 1985 is being withdrawn from midnight tonight throughout the United Kingdom.

This action will not affect the rate of grant available for eligible effluent disposal investments, which will remain at the level of 60 per cent. in the less-favoured areas and 30 per cent. elsewhere.

Pigmeat

Mr. Maclennan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received from the British Veterinary Association concerning imported pigmeat products; and what response he has given.

Mr. Jopling: I have just received a letter from the British Veterinary Association about imported pigmeat products and will be replying to that as soon as possible.

Badgers

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he intends to take in response to Professor Dunnet's recommendation that the current practice of releasing lactating female badgers taken in control operations should be discontinued; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I fully understand the reasons which led Professor Dunnet to make his recommendation. Having taken the views of the consultative panel, we know that it accepts that on disease control grounds there is a strong case for its adoption. However, many panel members have expressed overriding reservations on ethical and humanitarian grounds about any change to existing policy. We know too that there is widespread public concern on this issue.

Having taken full account of these views, and after very careful consideration, we believe that, on balance, the existing policy is right and have decided that it should be continued. Thus, any lactating females taken between 1 February and 30 April will continue to be released as will any females taken after the end of April which are likely to have entirely dependent cubs.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of the milk held by the Milk Marketing Board was allocated to the production of butter in each of the last five years; and what is the estimate for 1986.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1986]: Utilisation of milk for butter in England and Wales, as a percentage of total sales off farms, was as follows:

Marketing year (April-March)	*Percentage*
1981-82	25
1982-83	31
1983-84	30
1984-85	27
1985-86	28
1986-87	n/a

Source: 1981-82 to 1984-85 Dairy Facts and Figures 1985. 1985-86 MMB estimate.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what price the Milk Marketing Board receives for supplying milk to dairies and for allocation to butter production, respectively, on a comparative basis.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1986]: In May 1986, the last month for which prices have been finalised, the Milk Marketing Board received 19·894p per litre for milk sold for the liquid market, 13·513p per litre for milk sold to make Cheddar cheese and 13·793p per litre for milk sold to make butter and skimmed milk powder.

Irradiated Food

Mr. Freeson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence there is of the effects, including those on vitamins A, B and C, of irradiation on the constituents of treated food.

Mr. Whitney: I have been asked to reply.

This and other questions about the nutritional, microbiological and toxicological aspects of food irradiation will be studied by Health and Agriculture Ministers when they formally consider the advice on these matters contained in the "Report on the Safety and Wholesomeness of Irradiated Foods" by the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods. As was announced on 10 April when the report was published, Ministers will also take into account written comments on the report from interested organisations and individuals, and these should be received by this Department by the end of this month.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Expenditure

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, columns *433-34*, if he will publish in the *Official Report* (i) the purchasing power parities used in converting foreign currencies to sterling, (ii) the comparable parities for 1976, 1979 and 1985, (iii) the actual rates of exchange in 1983 and (iv) the basis of his calculations in cases where the information is for years prior to 1983.

Mr. Bob Dunn: The information on purchasing power parities and other data used in my revised answer of 12 June, at column 278, are given in the following table. The change in the consumer price index from the year stated in the table is used to inflate the unit costs quoted for that year to 1983 prices. The 1983 purchasing power parity is then applied to the revised unit costs to bring the various local currencies to a common basis, which allows for differences in national price levels. My reply of 2 July, at column 539, gives further details.

Consumer Price Indices (CPIs), Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs) and Exchange Rates

	Year	Local currency	Unit cost in local currency		CPI change from year stated to 1983 per cent.	1983 Provisional PPPs used in earlier answer	Revised PPPs‡				Rate of exchange 1983
			1st level*	2nd level†			1976	1979	1983	1984	
France	1980	Francs	6,124	10,919	39·0	11·71	12·64	11·48	11·79	12·09	11·56
Germany, Federal Republic of	1982	Deutsche Marks	4,068	‖5,694	3·3	4·45	7·20	5·58	4·35	4·25	3·87
Japan ¶	1982	Yen	332,053	423,499	1·9	387	734	574	412	395	361
United States of America	1981	Dollars	2,658		9·5	1·82	2·64	2·24	1·99	1·96	1·52

* Equates broadly with primary (compulsory) education.
† Equates broadly with secondary school education and non-advanced further education.
‡ 1985 data not available.
‖ Excludes students in part-time vocational education, some 1·8 million, although their associated expenditure is included.
¶ Excludes public subsidies to private sector and pupils in private sector elementary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools. Includes capital expenditure, special and pre-compulsory school education.

Sources:
OECD "Purchasing Power Parities and Real Expenditures in the OECD" (1985) page 92.
Department of Employment "Employment Gazette", table 6.8 (Consumer Price Indices).
UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1985.
"Statistical Abstract of Education, Science and Culture", 1983 edition (Japan).
"Basic and Structural Data", 1984-85 (Federal Republic of Germany).

Examination Results

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the proportion of leavers from schools or colleges with two A-levels, three A-levels, no A-levels but five O-levels, one to four O-levels or CSE grade ones, and one or more graded results, in the relevant age bands at which the examinations are normally taken, in the years 1964-65, 1974-75 and 1984-85.

Mr. Dunn: Data in respect of leavers from maintained and independent schools are as follows:

School Leavers, England

Percentages

	Academic Year		
	1964-65	1974-75	1984-85
3+ A levels	6·6	8·2	10·0
2 A levels	3·7	4·1	4·1
1 A level	2·6	3·2	3·0
No A levels but			
5+ O/CSE higher grades [1]	[3]7·9	8·5	11·0
1-4 O/CSE higher grades [1]	[3]15·2	25·6	26·8
No higher grades but			
1+ other grades [2]	64·0	31·7	35·6
No graded results		18·9	9·4
Total leavers (000s)	606·66	651·71	736·21

[1]Higher grades are defined as O-level grades A-C and CSE grade 1.

[2]Other grades are defined as O-level grades D-E and CSE grades 2-5.

[3]Prior to 1975 O-level candidates were awarded either a pass grade or were deemed to have failed. Grades A-C—higher grades—are defined as equivalent to the former pass level.

Source: School Leavers Survey. Data subject to sampling error.

Information on O-level/CSE attainments in FE establishments is not available centrally. However, the proportions of young people either leaving school or who were candidates at FE establishments achieving GCE A-level passes are given in the following table. These data are derived by reference to the 17-year-old population, a different denominator from that used in the preceding table.

School Leavers and Further Education Students [1]with GCE A-level qualifications expressed as a proportion of the 17-year-old age group

	Academic Year		
	1964-65	1974-75	1984-85
3+ A levels	5·5	8·6	10·6
2 A levels	3·1	4·7	4·8
1 A level	2·5	4·2	4·1
1+ A levels	11·1	17·5	19·5

[1]Full-time home and sandwich students aged 19 or under at 31 August prior to the academic year.
[2]Derived from GAD estimates of the population.

Source:
School Leavers Survey
FE 113 Stats Survey
Data subject to sampling error

Student Awards

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what the position of students from Gibraltar

studying in the United Kingdom from 1 September 1986 will be for the purposes of fees and for mandatory and discretionary student awards.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: As I said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 1 July, at column 475, from 1 September 1986 students who are nationals of other European Community countries and are studying in the United Kingdom on courses designated for mandatory awards purposes will have their fees paid by the Government if they satisfy the same or equivalent conditions for eligibility for mandatory awards and home fee status as are applied to United Kingdom students. Gibraltar is part of the European Community and is therefore included in these new fees arrangements. The position of students from Gibraltar for the purposes of mandatory and discretionary student awards is unchanged.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide a figure indicating the percentage distribution of parents of children participating in the assisted places scheme according to the contributory scales used by his Department for each year since the scheme's introduction.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is as follows:

Relevant income bands (at 1985 prices)	*Percentage distribution*			
	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Up to £6,367	38·3	36·2	39·7	39·3
£6,377-£6,750	2·7	3·0	3·4	3·4
£6,751-£7,300	5·2	6·2	5·1	4·7
£7,301-£8,400	11·2	12·0	10·4	10·5
£8,401-£10,080	17·7	17·9	16·9	16·3
£10,081-£12,280	17·0	17·4	16·2	16·9
£12,281 upwards	7·9	7·3	8·3	8·9

The information was not collected for the first year of the scheme.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the average income represented by fees paid by his Department under the assisted places scheme for those schools participating in the scheme for which the 60 per cent. requirement has been relaxed; if he will list in the *Official Report* the fee income to each participating school as a result of the scheme; and what percentage of each school's fee income this represents for 1985-86.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is *(a)* the amount of Government expenditure on the assisted places scheme for each year since its introduction at constant and outturn prices, *(b)* the percentage it represents of Government spending on schools and non-advanced further education, *(c)* the number of people covered by the scheme and *(d)* the proportion they represent within the maintained school and NAFE population.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is as follows:

	Expenditure on assisted places Scheme (£ million financial year)		*Percentage of Government spending on*	*Number of Assisted Pupils (academic year)*	*APS pupils as Percentage of maintained*
	Constant Prices (84-85 base)	*Outturn Prices*	*schools and NAFE*		*secondary school and NAFE population*
1981-82	3·520	3·022	0·04	4,185	0·102
1982-83	9·463	8·691	0·11	8,616	0·211
1983-84	15·625	14·995	0·17	13,102	0·326
1984-85	22·152	22·152	0·24	17,386	0·444
1985-86	27·891	29·569	0·31	21,412	n/a

n/a = not available.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing the movement of the average of teachers' salaries against the retail prices index *(a)* from the implementation of the Houghton award to April 1979, *(b)* from the implementation of the Houghton award to April 1984, *(c)* from the implementation of the Houghton award to April 1986 or the most recent date for which information is available, including payments agreed by the Burnham committee since April 1985, *(d)* from April 1979 to April 1984 and *(e)* from April 1979 to April 1986 or the most recent date for which information is available including payments agreed by the Burnham committee since April 1985.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) on 17 July, at columns 576-77. The particular movements requested are:

		Percentage
(a) from the implementation of the Houghton award (24 May 1974) to April 1979	=	− 12
(b) from 24 May 1974 to 1 April 1984	=	− 4
(c) from 24 May 1974 to 1 April 1986	=	+ 1
(d) from 1 April 1979 to 1 April 1984	=	+ 10
(e) from 1 April 1979 to 1 April 1986	=	+ 15

Educational Needs (Appeals)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many appeals have been made to him under the provisions of sections 5 and 8, respectively, of the Education Act 1981, indicating how many of those appeals were allowed and, in the case of appeals under section 8, what action he took.

Mr. Dunn: Since its implementation on 1 April 1983, 56 appeals have been made under section 5(6) of the Education Act 1981. In two instances the local education authority was directed to reconsider its decision, and in 10 instances the authorities agreed to reconsider their decisions following informal discussions between officials. A decision on 11 cases has yet to be made and three cases have been withdrawn.

Sixty three appeals have been made to my right hon. Friend under the provision of section 8(6) of the Act. In 36 instances the statement of special educational need was confirmed; in 18 instances the Secretary of State amended the statement; eight cases are yet to be decided and one appeal was withdrawn.

University Revenue Accounts

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on university revenue accounts accumulated surpluses or deficits.

Mr. Walden: Universities' accounting practices vary. Information is derived from their published accounts for particular purposes, as necessary.

Royal Greenwich Observatory

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science who was initially responsible for suggesting that the Royal Greenwich Observatory move from Herstmonceaux.

Mr. Walden: The Science and Engineering Research Council.

University Departments (Classification)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, in the recent University Grants Committee's exercise in classifying departments on a basis of merit any consideration was given to the scope for rationalisation in the final classification.

Mr. Walden: The University Grants Committee has considered, and is continuing to consider, the scope for the rationalisation of university departments. Such considerations did not, however, affect the committee's judgments about the standard of departments' research.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Loans

Mr. Hawksley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Commonwealth countries are receiving aid loans from the United Kingdom in the current year; what is the value of aid or loans to each country; and how much they have received in each of the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: The information is contained in:

(a) Tables 1 and 2 of the Supply Estimates for Overseas Aid for 1986-87, which give details of financial loans and grants to each developing country; and

(b) "British Aid Statistics 1980-84", which provides the latest information available for previous years.

Copies of both these publications are available in the House of Commons Library. The 1986 edition of "British Aid Statistics", containing expenditure figures for 1985, is expected to be published by the end of August.

International Finance Corporation

Mr. Temple-Morris asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what provision he is making to pay the subscriptions due to the International Finance Corporation which are due *(a)* before 31 July and *(b)* from 1 August.

Mr. Eggar: Parliament approved these payments, totalling US$12·2 million, under the International Finance Corporation (1985 General Capital Increase) Order on 16 July. Financial provision will be sought in a Winter Supplementary Estimate for the Overseas Aid Vote. Pending that vote, urgent expenditure estimated at about £8·25 million will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Uganda

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the level of aid by Her Majesty's Government to Uganda in each of the past three years.

Mr. Eggar: British gross bilateral aid to Uganda was £6·1 million in 1983; £7·1 million in 1984; and £9·2 million in 1985.

ODA (Resources)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide details of budgetary resources made available in constant terms for each division within the Overseas Development Administration for the years 1977, 1979, 1981, 1983 and 1985.

Mr. Eggar: Information about administrative resources was not collected in the form requested before 1983 and has since been recorded by financial years. Administrative resources, in 1984-85 cash terms, available to divisions in 1983-84 and 1984-85 were:

Division	*1983-84 £ million*	*1984-85 £ million*
Africa	2·4	2·4
Asia and the Oceans	3·5	3·6
Functional	2·8	2·9
Scientific Units	10·8	10·8
International	1·3	1·3
Overseas Manpower	6·8	*5·9
Finance and Economic Services	3·6	3·8
Policy and Organisation	7·9	7·4
	39·1	38·1

* Underspend due to a strike by the staff who make payments of overseas service pensions.

The distribution of resources by region and function under the official aid programme is given in the annual publication "British Aid Statistics", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Multilateral Development Agencies

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government support a zero growth budget policy for the forestry, agriculture and environment/natural resources offices of those multilateral development agencies in which the United Kingdom has an active interest.

Mr. Eggar: We favour zero real growth in the overall budgets of those United Nations specialised agencies which are financed by assessed contributions, and generally in the administrative budgets of other multilateral agencies. We expect the pattern of expenditure within these budgets to reflect current priorities.

Development Aid Projects

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what resources are made available through the Overseas Development Administration for environmental impact assessment of development aid projects.

Mr. Eggar: The Overseas Development Administration assesses the environmental effects of all British aid activities through either the work of its own staff or use of outside consultants. The resources involved could be quantified only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the numbers, professional qualifications and positions of all staff employed, either as consultants or on a permanent basis, by the Overseas Development Administration to assess and advise on the environmental effects of proposed multilateral and bilateral development projects in the forestry, agriculture and natural resource sectors for the years 1977, 1979, 1981, 1983 and 1985.

Mr. Eggar: It is the responsibility of all staff in the Overseas Development Administration to ensure that its aid activities are environmentally sound. In practice this is achieved by the administrative staff, assisted by the professional renewable natural resources and engineering advisers. Where necessary, specialist advice is sought either from the ODA scientific units, associated bodies, other academic and research institutions or private sector consultants. In the circumstances, it is not practicable to specify or list the ODA staff resources involved. Responsibility for the assessment of multilateral aid projects rests with the staff of the multilateral institutions concerned. As a member of these institutions we seek to ensure that such assessments are properly done and fully taken into account.

Brazil

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make available the World Bank's staff appraisal reports for all projects covered by the electric power sector loan requested by Brazil.

Mr. Eggar: No. World Bank staff appraisal reports are provided to us on a restricted basis.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Kingdom executive director to the World Bank was instructed to support the electric power sector loan requested by Brazil on 19 June.

Mr. Eggar: It is not our practice to disclose the instructions which we give to our executive director in the Bank.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Beer Containers

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will introduce legislation to require all bulk beer containers to be stamped with their empty weight; and if he will take steps to introduce statutory controls regarding minimum quantities included in those bulk beer containers;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to require brewers to have the gross weight, to include the weight of the invoiced quantity of beer, and the net weight of the container, including spile, clearly stamped on all containers of draught beer.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans to introduce legislation. I believe that this is very much a practical problem to be resolved through voluntary arrangements within the trade which could provide a readier and more flexible means of resolving or avoiding disputes.

I therefore welcome the Brewers Society initiative in seeking to reach agreement with the National Union of Licensed Victuallers on a proposed code of practice which would ensure that licensees receive detailed statements of the quantities of beer delivered.

Plessey/GEC

Mr. Neil Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what assessment his Department has made of the potential job losses among suppliers to the United Kingdom defence electronic equipment industry which could result from the proposed takeover of the Plessey company by GEC; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact on the United Kingdom's technological base of the proposed takeover of the Plessey company by GEC;

(3) what assessment he has made of the effects on small businesses of the proposed merger of Plessey and GEC;

(4) what share of the market for private telephone exchanges and transmission equipment is currently held by the Plessey company and GEC.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend is considering the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on this merger. In assessing the impact on the public interest of the proposed merger between GEC and Plessey the Commission has a duty to take into account all matters which it considers to be relevant in the circumstances. My right hon. Friend will make an announcement about the report as soon as is practicable.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to make a statement on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's investigation of the proposed take-over of Plessey plc by General Electric Company plc before 25 July.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend will announce the outcome of the MMC's investigation into the proposed merger of GEC and Plessey, and publish the MMC's report, as soon as practicable.

Grosvenor Management Services (Scotland)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will undertake an investigation under the provisions of the Companies Acts, into the affairs of Grosvenor Management Services (Scotland) Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I know of no reason for doing so, but shall consider any information the hon. Member may have about this company.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has regarding new aircraft and engine developments under consideration by various manufacturers which are expected to generate noise levels which meet the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organisation, chapter 3, but do not match the noise levels of the majority of aircraft and engine types currently in production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: Annex 16 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (ICAO Annex 16) applies to complete aircraft and not to engines in isolation. The majority of the subsonic jet types now in production comply with the standards of chapter 3 of annex 16. Any subsonic civil jet aeroplane or large propeller-driven aeroplane currently under development will have to meet these same standards. Until these have flown it is not possible to compare their noise levels with those of other aircraft.

Wind-powered Shipping

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will allocate part of the energy and research and development annual expenditure to conduct research into wind-powered shipping.

Mr. Butcher: Over £200,000 has been provided to industry since 1983 under the Department of Trade and Industry's support for innovation scheme towards the cost of projects relating to the use of wind in ship propulsion. A United Kingdom device which has received such support has recently commenced sea trials on a vessel operated by Stephenson Clarke Shipping. Wind assistance is a promising approach to greater fuel efficiency. Support for further projects, as part of the efficient ship programme, will be considered if appropriate proposals are presented to the Department.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Northern Ireland (Trials)

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of persons in Northern Ireland released after the retraction of alleged accomplice witness evidence, the numbers of persons acquitted in such trials where evidence was given in court by an accomplice witness and the number of persons whose convictions were quashed on appeal for the first six months of the current year.

The Attorney-General: During the period 1 January 1986 to 30 June 1986 there have been no trials in Northern Ireland in which evidence was given by an accomplice witness. During the same period the convictions of two persons tried in 1983 were quashed on appeal to the Court of Appeal. During the same period no cases were received in the Department of the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland in which an alleged accomplice subsequently declined to give evidence for the Crown.

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of persons tried on indictment for scheduled offences and the total number of persons pleading guilty or convicted in such trials for the first six months of the current year in Northern Ireland.

The Attorney-General: The number of persons tried on indictment for scheduled offences in Northern Ireland during the period 1 January 1986 and 30 June 1986 is as follows:

	Number
Number of persons tried	331
Number of persons pleading guilty	295
Number of persons convicted on plea of not guilty	23

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the number of trials in Northern Ireland involving evidence given in court by an accomplice witness, the number of persons tried in such trials, together with the number of persons pleading guilty to, or convicted of, scheduled offences where evidence was given in court by an accomplice witness and the number of persons found guilty of or pleading guilty to, scheduled offences on the basis of accomplice witness evidence, but where the accomplice witness may not have given evidence in court, for the first six months of the current year.

The Attorney-General: During the period 1 January 1986 and 30 June 1986 there have been no trials in Northern Ireland where evidence has been given by an accomplice witness. There is no comprehensive record of, and it is not now feasible to identify without disproportionate cost, the nature of the evidence which was before the court in relation to individuals. There is no record of any person found guilty of or pleading guilty to scheduled offences on the basis of accomplice witness evidence where the accomplice witness has not given evidence in court.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General how many cases in the first six months of the current year involving persons injured by plastic bullets in Northern Ireland have been considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland; and what action was taken in each case.

The Attorney-General: Figures for cases considered between 1 January 1986 and 30 June 1986 by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland involving persons killed or injured by the alleged use of baton rounds are as follows:

	Number
Cases	7
Persons injured	7
Persons killed	1
Prosecutions directed	0
No prosecution directed	4

In two cases a final direction pends the outcome of other proceedings or the submission to the Director of additional evidence. In one case consideration of the evidence has not been completed.

Northern Ireland (Scheduled Offences)

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General how many cases concerning scheduled offences have been referred to the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal; and in how many of these referred cases the original conviction has been *(a)* quashed and *(b)* upheld, respectively, in the first six months of the current year.

The Attorney-General: During the first six months of 1986 there were 13 appeals to the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal dealt with in court against conviction for scheduled offences. The original conviction was quashed in two cases and upheld in 11 cases.

Legal Aid

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Attorney-General, for the years from 1970 to date, how many applications were made for legal aid in order to bring proceedings in respect of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970; and in how many of those cases legal aid was granted.

The Attorney-General: This information is not available. Legal aid statistics do not normally record the legislation in respect of which individual applications for legal aid are made.

Prosecutions (Criteria)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Attorney-General what criteria he uses in determining in cases in which he or the Director of Public Prosecutions has decided not to bring a prosecution and where a private prosecution is subsequently brought, whether *(a)* to take that prosecution over and *(b)* to enter a nolle prosequi; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The power to intervene and assume responsibility for the conduct of a prosecution instituted by a person in a private capacity is vested by section 4 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1979 (section 6 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 in those areas where it has been implemented) in the Director of Public Prosecutions. The criteria which he adopts in exercising that power were set out in the reply by my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 28 October 1985, at column 297. His policy is the same irrespective of whether he has himself previously decided not to prosecute. In considering whether to intervene he will have regard to any fresh evidence which may have emerged or new factors which may have arisen since the original decision was taken.

The power to direct the entry of a nolle prosequi is vested in me alone and not in the Director of Public Prosecutions. It is available only in relation to proceedings on indictment. I exercise the power sparingly in relation to cases where, having regard to all the circumstances, it appears that the public interest would best be served by discontinuing proceedings and there is no other suitable way of doing so. My approach is the same whether the application for a nolle prosequi relates to a private prosecution or one carried on by a public authority.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dubs asked the Paymaster General what were the numbers of persons unemployed by age groups in the Wandsworth area for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the numbers of unemployed claimants by age groups in the London borough of Wandsworth for April of each year from 1984 to 1986. The comparison is affected by the change in the compilation of unemployment statistics in March 1986. Statistics of unemployment for London boroughs are derived from the new ward-based system and are available only from June 1983.

Unemployment by age analysis Wandsworth local authority area

Years	*April 1984*	*April 1985*	*April 1986*
Under 17	212	173	163
17	553	501	454
18	797	747	587
19	889	851	741
20-24	3,566	3,901	3,722
25-29	2,299	2,600	2,579
30-34	1,552	1,696	1,671
35-39	1,270	1,375	1,479
40-44	1,013	1,098	1,179
45-49	1,020	1,132	1,213
50-54	993	1,035	1,121
55-59	1,057	1,123	1,234
60 and over	401	431	449
Total	15,622	16,663	16,592

Mr. Barron asked the Paymaster General if he will give, for each parliamentary constituency and local authority district, the level and rate of unemployment in June 1979 and in each December and June subsequently on a consistent basis.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not available, since statistics of unemployment for parliamentary constituencies and local authority districts are derived from the new ward-based system and are available only from June 1983 and unemployment rates are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas.

The actual numbers of unemployed claimants in parliamentary constituencies and local authority districts in Great Britain for each month from 1983 are available in the Library, although comparisons over the period will be affected by the Budget provisions (which meant that certain older men, mainly aged 60 years or over, no longer need to sign on at unemployment benefit offices in order to obtain national insurance credits of the long-term rate of supplementary benefit) and also by the change in the compilation of the unemployment statistics in March 1986.

Self-Employment

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what are the latest figures available for the number of self-employed people in the Burnley travel-to-work area; and what was the 1979 comparative figure.

Mr. Lang: Information of the type requested is available only from the decennial census of population. The 1981 census identified 3,521 self-employed persons resident in the Burnley travel-to-work area.

New Businesses

Mr. Sayeed asked the Paymaster General (1) what are the latest figures available for the number of new businesses registered in Bristol, East constituency since 1979;

(2) what has been the net change in the number of new businesses in Bristol, East between 1979 and 1983.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that this information is not available.

English Tourist Board

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what level of funding is provided by his Department for the English Tourist Board; and what percentage this represents of its budget.

Mr. Trippier: The ETB will receive £10·3 million by way of grant-in-aid to cover promotional and administrative expenses in 1986-87. Around £4·3 million is expected to be raised from other sources and grant-in-aid will therefore represent around 70 per cent. of its total budget. In addition, £9·4 million of Government funding will be made available in 1986-87 for the selective financial assistance scheme operated by the ETB under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969.

WALES

Polytechnic of Wales (Student-Teacher Ratio)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the student-teacher ratio in the Polytechnic of Wales, Treforest, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information, derived from the annual monitoring survey, is in the following table:

Student: staff ratios

	Ratios
1980-81	8·8
1981-82	10·5
1982-83	11·5
1983-84	12·0
1984-85	12·2

Welsh Development Agency

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will consider introducing legislation giving the Welsh Development Agency similar powers and responsibilities in the field of economic and social development as those at present enjoyed by Mid-Wales Development.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no plans to introduce legislation extending the range of the Welsh Development Agency's activities.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate of income for the Welsh Development Agency has been made by his Department arising out of the sale of assets during the current financial year; and what estimates have been made for such income for the next three years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The target level of receipts from the sale of agency assets in the current financial year is £15 million. Sales targets for later years have yet to be determined.

Welsh-speaking Teachers

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are being taken by the Welsh Office to meet the shortages of Welsh-speaking teachers highlighted in the report on the curriculum review recently published by his Department.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Paragraph 30 of the report "Local Authority Reviews of the School Curriculum in Wales" states:

"Particularly at a time when rolls are falling and substantial numbers of schools are undergoing organisational change the Government believes that positive action is needed by LEAs to redeploy teachers as appropriate and to allow for suitable in-service training".

Welsh language teaching is one of the national priority areas identified by the Welsh Office under its specific grant arrangements for in-service teacher training. Our officials are exploring with officers of each LEA how these grant arrangements could be used to help authorities make fuller use of the substantial number of Welsh-speaking teachers who are currently teaching only through the medium of English.

Measures are also under consideration to encourage more recruits into initial teacher training and in Wales particular attention is being given to recruiting Welsh speakers. The consultative document recently published by my right hon. Friends "Action on Teacher Supply in Mathematics, Physics and Technology" contains much that is relevant to the Welsh medium situation and I anticipate receiving some helpful and constructive comments.

Planning Permissions (Review)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will write to every local housing authority in Wales to ask them to review all the existing unimplemented planning permissions in their areas and to discuss with representatives of elderly persons, disabled persons, single homeless persons, the house building industry, social service departments and land owners the content of this review with a view to planning the construction of new houses, sheltered houses and flats to meet the needs of these people and to report back to him by 31 December.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Local authorities have already been asked to submit housing strategy and investment programmes for the next financial year based on their assessments of housing need. Copies of the programmes will, as usual, be placed in the House of Commons Library as soon as possible after the recess.

Sheep and Lamb (Contamination)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to amend the restrictions on the movement of sheep and lambs in Gwynedd currently in force as a result of the high radiation levels detected earlier to permit their movement to the North Wales Show at Caernarfon on 31 July; whether, if the relevant radiation levels have not by then dropped sufficiently to permit a general lifting of the restrictions on the relevant animals, he will exempt from the restrictions movements of animals direct to the show and subsequently direct back to the original farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The part of Gwynedd from which I announced the removal of restrictions on 17 July included the site of the North Wales Show at Caernarfon. For those parts of north Wales where restrictions still apply, a consent to move sheep for show purposes subject to their return to the original farm may be obtained from the appropriate divisional office of my Department.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales how radiation contaminated lamb carcases have been disposed of in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The carcases of sheep slaughtered for sampling purposes in the designated areas of north Wales have in most cases been buried on the farm from which they were taken. However, during a period of intensive sampling in Clwyd a number of carcases were disposed of by turning them into fertiliser. I am satisfied that this was a safe means of disposal.

PRIME MINISTER

Chequers and No 10 Downing Street

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Prime Minister (1) what was the total separately identifiable cost of maintaining and running Chequers from 1979 to 1985; and what is the estimated increase for 1986 and 1987;

(2) what was the total separately identifiable cost of maintaining and running No. 10 Downing street from 1979 to 1985; and what steps she intends to take to curb future increases in this expenditure.

The Prime Minister: Since 1979 there have been a number of developments which have affected how the costs of Downing street are assessed, including:

— Abolition of the CPRS in 1983, and the absorption of some of its staff within the No. 10 Policy Unit;

— Introduction of charging for buildings and services by the PSA in 1983-84;

— Introduction of charging for Service personnel at Chequers by the MOD in 1984-85;

— Introduction of charging for aircraft by the Ministry of Defence in 1981-82;

— and changes in the allocation of charges for the Government Car Service in 1984-85.

Column *(a)* represents the cost of Downing street and Chequers, excluding the grant in aid to the Chequers Trust, reflecting those changes. Column *(b)* gives the grant in aid to the Chequers Trust. Column *(c)* gives the total actual costs on a consistent basis excluding the effects of the changes referred to as far as it is possible to do so. Column *(d)* gives these costs at constant 1984-85 prices.

Billing delays prevent some costs from being shown in the financial year in which the goods and services were provided. The figures therefore do not necessarily reflect when the expenditure was actually incurred.

The 1986-87 grant-in-aid to the Chequers Trust is estimated at £224,000. All expenditure at 10 Downing street and Chequers is scrutinised rigorously to ensure that it is at the minimum level commensurate with the effective and efficient discharge of the responsibilities of my Office.

The cost given in column *(a)* for 1984-85 has been revised upward by £139,000 since I gave my answer to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report* 9 April, columns *112-13,* in the light of fresh information about the precise allocation of costs.

	Cost of maintaining and running 10 Downing Street and additional costs at Chequers £,000 (a)	*Grant in Aid to Chequers Trust £,000 (b)*	*Costs on a consistent basis £,000 (c)*	*Column (c) at constant 1984-85 prices £,000 (d)*
1979-80	1,299	110	2,071	3,151
1980-81	1,615	130	2,542	3,257
1981-82	2,303	112	2,937	3,421
1982-83	2,555	145	3,634	3,957
1983-84	2,885	141	2,644	2,755
1984-85	3,604	183	2,516	2,516
1985-86*	4,421	208	3,337	3,148

* Provisional.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Department Statistics

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average daily population of persons detained in prison department establishments under Immigration Act powers during 1985.

Mr. Waddington: In 1985 the average population of persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 in prison department establishments in England and Wales was 104.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average length of time spent in prison department establishments for persons detained under Immigration Act powers during 1985.

Mr. Waddington: The average period of detention in prison department establishments in England and Wales of persons initially received under the Immigration Act 1971 powers who were discharged in 1985 was about four weeks.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will give a breakdown by individual nationality of persons detained in prison department establishments under Immigration Act powers during 1985.

Mr. Waddington: The readily available information is given in the following table; the collection of information on nationality is not yet completely satisfactory.

Receptions of persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 into prison department establishments in England and Wales in 1985 by country of birth.

Country of birth	*Number**
United Kingdom, Channel Islands, Isle of Man	2
Eire	14
Other Europe	52
West Indies†	13
India	91
Pakistan	85
Bangladesh	117
Sri Lanka	86
Hong Kong	14
Other Commonwealth countries in Asia and Oceania	10
Ghana	141
Nigeria	119
Other Commonwealth countries in Africa	18
Cyprus	23
Other Commonwealth countries	4
Algeria	20
Iran	21
Turkey	62
United States of America	15
Other countries‡	152
Not recorded	7
All countries of birth	1,066

* The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.
† Includes other Commonwealth countries in the Americas.
‡ Countries for which 10 or fewer receptions were recorded.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were received into prison department establishments under Immigration Act powers during 1985, by individual prison establishment.

Mr. Waddington: The readily available information is given in the following table:

Receptions of persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 into prison department establishments in England and Wales in 1985.

	Establishment	*Number**
Remand centres		
	Ashford	894
	Brockhill	1
	Cardiff	2
	Exeter	2
	Latchmere House	8
	Low Newton	2
	Manchester	5
	Pucklechurch	4
	Risley	21
	Thorp Arch	3
Prisons		
	Bedford	9
	Birmingham	28
	Bristol	8
	Brixton	1
	Canterbury	15
	Cardiff	3
	Dorchester	1
	Durham	5
	Exeter	5
	Holloway	15
	Leeds	5
	Leicester	6
	Lincoln	3
	Manchester	1
	Norwich	6
	Pentonville	2
	Reading	1
	Swansea	6
	Winchester	3
	Wormwood Scrubs	1
	All prison department establishments	1,066

* The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

Prison Officers (Murder)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers have been murdered in the course of duty in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: In England and Wales, none in the years 1976 to 1985.

Young Persons (Convictions)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons under 18 years of age were convicted of acts punishable under the Criminal Damage Act 1971 in the past three years.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information relates to persons aged under 17 found guilty of offences of criminal damage. These figures include a very small number of offences under Acts other than the Criminal Damage Act 1971. The figures are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Volume 4" (for 1984 in table S4.1(A) under offence classifications 56-59 and table S4.1(B) under offence classification 149, and in the corresponding tables for earlier years). Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available.

Custodial Sentences

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of *(a)* males and *(b)* females are sentenced to custody by the time they reach the ages of 18 and 21 years, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: An estimate is available only for those born in 1953 and 1958 from the sample study of their convictions, results of which were published in Home Office statistical bulletin issue 7/85. Just over 2 per cent. of males and less than 0·1 per cent. of females had been

sentenced to custody by the age of 18, and about 4 per cent. of males and 0·1 per cent. of females by the age of 21.

Police Officers (Criminal Charges)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many criminal charges were brought against members of the police force in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This information is not available. Statistics relating to the numbers of police officers convicted of criminal offences is contained in the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary and of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Police Officers (Murders)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers in England and Wales have been murdered in the course of duty during each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: In a case of homicide it is not possible in the absence of a court decision to distinguish between offences of murder and manslaughter. The available information is given in the following table.

Offences currently recorded as homicide where the victim was a police officer on duty by the result of court proceedings or other outcome
England and Wales *Number of offences*

Year initially recorded	*Number of offences (victims)*	*Decided by the court to be*			*Other outcome*
		Murder	*Section 2 manslaughter*	*Other manslaughter*	
1976	—	—	—	—	—
1977	1	1	—	—	—
1978	1	1	—	—	—
1979	1	—	—	1	—
1980	1	1	—	—	—
1981	2	1	—	1	—
1982	6	3	—	1	2 (one suspect committed suicide)
1983	3	—	—	—	3 (no suspects)
1984	3	1	—	—	2 (no suspects)
1985*	2	—	—	—	1 (acquitted) 1 (case pending)

* Provisional.

Intercontinental Hotel

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the nature of the operation on 20 June at the Intercontinental hotel, Hyde Park Corner, London W1; how many police officers and immigration officers were involved and of what ranks; how many people and of what nationalities were *(a)* interviewed and *(b)* detained in the operation; for how long and where; and with regard to what suspected or alleged breaches of immigration control these people were interviewed or charged.

Mr. Waddington: This was a major joint operation specifically planned to investigate suspected offences under the immigration laws. The numbers and ranks of police and immigration officers who visited the hotel were:

Police
1 Chief Superintendent
1 Sergeant
13 Constables

Immigration Service
1 Deputy Chief Inspector
1 Inspector
1 Chief Immigration Officer
7 Immigration Officers

A total of 27 people were interviewed (12 Ghanaians, 9 Nigerians, 2 Ugandans, 1 Sri Lankan, 1 Bangladeshi, 1 French and 1 British). Seventeen people were arrested and taken to Vine street police station with the following results:

Seven were judged to be illegal entrants (3 Ghanaians and 4 Nigerians);
Four were charged with working in breach of conditions (2 Ghanaians and 2 Nigerians);
Three were formally cautioned for working in breach of conditions (2 Ghanaians and 1 Nigerian); and
Three were found not to be in breach of the immigration laws (1 British citizen, 1 Ghanaian and 1 Nigerian).

The seven illegal entrants who had been detected at the hotel, and who were taken initially to the police station, were all transferred to the Harmondsworth detention centre during the evening of 20 June. Three remained there until their removal or voluntary departure from the United Kingdom, whilst the other four were transferred to Latchmere house remand centre on 22 June (in three cases transfer was via the Queen's building detention centre). The total periods spent in detention in these cases were: 4, 8, 11, 12, 19, 26 and 32 days respectively.

In the other cases the periods spent in custody, all at Vine street police station, were:

4 hours or less: 1
Over 4 but under 6 hours: 2
Over 6 but under 9 hours: 2
Over 9 but under 15 hours: 5

This operation was conducted in accordance with the recommendations of Home Office circular 131-1980, of which a copy was placed in the Library in December 1980.

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, of those detected as illegal entrants in each of the last five quarters, how many are alleged to have entered *(a)* by avoiding immigration controls, *(b)* by concealment of material facts from an immigration officer,

(c) by deceiving an immigration officer, *(d)* by concealment or deception by a third party and *(e)* on a false passport or not in their correct identity, by nationality.

Mr. Waddington: Some of the information requested could be furnished only at disproportionate cost. The number of illegal entrants detected in the various periods are as below. Categories *(b)* and *(c)* cannot be separately distinguished.

	Category	*Number*
1st Quarter 1985	*(a)*	26
	(b) + *(c)*	186
	(d)	0
	(e)	44
2nd Quarter 1985	*(a)*	26
	(b) + *(c)*	141
	(d)	0
	(e)	54
3rd Quarter 1985	*(a)*	24
	(b) + *(c)*	121
	(d)	0
	(e)	35
4th Quarter 1985	*(a)*	32
	(b) + *(c)*	162
	(d)	1
	(e)	61
1st Quarter 1986	*(a)*	37
	(b) + *(c)*	298
	(d)	0
	(e)	54

Citizenship

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for British citizenship under section 4(5) of the British Nationality Act 1981 have been *(a)* granted, *(b)* refused and *(c)* not yet decided.

Mr. Waddington: So far, one application has been granted, two have been refused and 479 are outstanding.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the outcome of requests made for supplementary grants to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in each year from 1978-79 to 1985-86.

Mr. Mellor: Under the terms of the scheme the board is solely responsible for deciding what compensation should be paid in individual cases. The board is financed by grant-in-aid which is paid periodically as necessary. The board notifies the Home Office at intervals what money is required to meet expenditure on the scheme. Estimates of the provision required to meet forthcoming expenditure are submitted annually to Parliament. In years when the board's expenditure has seemed likely to exceed the budget estimate, a supplementary estimate has always been sought.

Potassium Iodide

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether stocks of potassium iodide are kept at police stations in the vicinity of Bradwell nuclear power station in Essex and at police stations in other parts of the United Kingdom where there are nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Emergency plans for civil nuclear installations include the provision of potassium iodate tablets. Where these tablets are held depends on local circumstances. At Bradwell they are held at the site. In some other areas they are kept at police stations.

Crime Statistics (Kent)

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to progress with inquiries into allegations of malpractice regarding the compilation of crime clear-up statistics for Kent.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. The allegations are being investigated by a commander of the Metropolitan police under the supervision of the Police Complaints Authority.

It will be open to the Police Complaints Authority to draw my attention to any matters of a general nature arising from the investigation into Constable Walker's allegations. On the separate, but related, point of the system for the write-off of crimes, in order to improve our understanding of how offences are cleared up the Home Office has recently introduced a return which separates offences cleared up as a result of interviews with convicted prisoners from other offences cleared up without proceedings or the administration of a caution.

Rape

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what actions have been undertaken as a result of the recommendations put forth by the Women's National Commission regarding under-reporting of rape;

(2) What guidelines have been issued to chief constables concerning the creation of victim examination suites for victims of rape and sexual assault since December 1985; and what plans there are for further guidance;

(3) if he will make it his policy to introduce a national programme for training of police in rape counselling techniques.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We are consulting the police about those recommendations of the report "Violence Against Women" issued by the Women's National Commission which concern police procedures and training. We hope to issue guidance on all these recommenations, including those on facilities for examining rape victims and on the reporting of allegations of rape, in the autumn. Copies will be placed in the Library.

Buses (Westminster Bridge)

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the policy of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis towards bringing prosecutions against tourist bus operators whose vehicles have been parked in bus lanes on Westminster bridge.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner informs me that tourist coaches stop on the west side of Westminster bridge to enable passengers to alight and photograph the Houses of Parliament. No bus lane operates here, and the waiting

restrictions contain exemptions for coaches setting down or picking up passengers. The police take enforcement action where the waiting restrictions are contravened.

Civil Defence

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what expenditure levels he has determined in respect of 1987-88 for the joint police and fire and civil defence authorities in the metropolitan areas and the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority.

Mr. Hurd: For these authorities, which under the Local Government Act 1985 are, for three years, deemed to have been designated under section 2 of the Rates Act 1984, I have determined expenditure levels as follows:

Police

	£ million
Greater Manchester	89·121
Merseyside	62·047
South Yorkshire	36·726
West Midlands	81·402
West Yorkshire	66·117
Northumbria	45·542

Fire and Civil Defence

	Fire and civil defence £ million	*Fire £ million*	*Civil defence £ million*
Greater Manchester	43·312	43·226	0·086
Merseyside	29·284	29·201	0·083
South Yorkshire	20·681	20·606	0·075
Tyne and Wear	20·989	20·915	0·074
West Yorkshire	33·788	33·702	0·086
West Midlands	39·523	39·436	0·087
London	156·348	156·020	0·328

The above figures are net of receipts and pension contributions, and, for police and civil defence, of specific grant. For police, the figures assume that police grant in 1987-88 will remain at 51 per cent.

Formal notice of their expenditure levels has today been sent to each of the authorities together with advice on the procedure for applying for redetermination of the expenditure levels.

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of deaths which have occurred in Great Britain in the first six months of the current year connected with present civil unrest in Northern Ireland; and how many of those deaths were caused by action taken by the police and each of the known paramilitary groups.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Provisional information is that there were no such deaths in England and Wales in the first six months of 1986.

Mr. NcNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts in each of the police areas of Metropolitan London, Dumfries and Galloway and Merseyside have been charged with offences under the Acts or under other Acts, separately, for the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Mellor: Information on detentions in the three police force areas specified is published quarterly in Home Office statistical bulletins (table 3 of issue 13/86 gives figures up to the first quarter of 1986; figures for the second quarter will be published shortly). In the first quarter of 1986, five persons detained in Dumfries and Galloway were charged with offences under the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1984 and one person detained in the Metropolitan police district was charged only with an offence under other legislation.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were remanded in custody before trial for terrorist-type offences in the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Mellor: The only information which is readily available relates to prisoners who are now in prison custody in category A, and does not cover prisoners who have been released or downgraded.

Three such prisoners were first received in custody in the first six months of 1986.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average number of days spent on remand by those remanded in custody for terrorist-type offences in the first six months of the current year with regard to cases now completed in England and Wales and the number of bail applications refused, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: The only information which is readily available relates to prisoners who are now in prison custody in category A. It does not cover prisoners who have been released or downgraded.

None of the cases of those first remanded during the first six months of 1986 have been completed. The average number of days spent on remand by prisoners whose cases were completed in the first six months of 1986 was 370. Ten applications for bail are recorded; all were refused.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in British jails give as their place of domicile *(a)* the Republic of Ireland and *(b)* Northern Ireland; and, in each case, how many of these prisoners are serving sentences for terrorist-type offences as at 30 June.

Mr. Mellor: The information which is readily available centrally relates to prisoners' place of birth and to those terrorist-type prisoners who are held in category A. On 31 May 1986, 670 inmates of prison department establishments in England and Wales were recorded as born in the Republic of Ireland and about 330 in Northern Ireland. Of those, 13 born in the Republic of Ireland and 33 born in Northern Ireland had been convicted of terrorist-type offences and were held in category A.

Prisoners (Transfers)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were transferred from *(a)* England and Wales to Northern Ireland and *(b)* from Northern Ireland to England and Wales in the first six months of the current year; and under which section of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 such transfers were carried out.

Mr. Mellor: Three prisoners were transferred from England and Wales to Northern Ireland during the first six months of 1986. Two of these transfers were under section 26 of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 (permanent transfer) and one under section 27 (temporary transfer). Two prisoners were transferred to England and Wales from Northern Ireland under section 27.

Wormwood Scrubs Prison

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to improve hospital conditions in Wormwood Scrubs prison.

Mr. Mellor: The Wormwood Scrubs hospital is at present located in temporary accommodation in B hall of the prison. The major cause of the present unsatisfactory conditions in the temporary hospital is a leaking steam main beneath the hall, and work is now in hand to remedy this.

Subject to financial approval, we expect to start the preliminary phase of an overall redevelopment of the prison at about the turn of the year. As part of that work, priority will be given to carrying out further remedial and upgrading work to the temporary hospital at a cost of £315,000.

Under a later phase of redevelopment it is planned to provide a permanent hospital and operating theatre within a new building linking the existing wings of the prison. It is hoped that work on this new building will start in 1988-89 and be completed in 1991-92.

Motor Cycles (Noise)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria the Metropolitan police use in deciding what action to take regarding motor cycles which exceed the limits for noise emissions; and how many successful prosecutions there have been in each of the last five years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner has informed me that the Metropolitan police take enforcement action as and when breaches of the restrictions on noise are detected. Information on findings of guilt for noise offences by all motor vehicles, by police force area, is published annually in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (Table 18 of Issue for 1984) copies of which are in the Library. The information available on proceedings does not distinguish offences involving motor cycles.

Political Refugees

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the political refugees domiciled in the United Kingdom at the latest date and the countries from which they have come;

(2) how many political refugees from Uganda are now resident in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: Information is not available in the form requested. However, the numbers granted refugee status or exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom in the years 1979 to 1985 are given by nationality in tables 1 and 5A to 5F of Home Office statistical bulletin "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom 1985" (issue 12/86).

Detained Persons

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines have been issued to chief constables regarding the circumstances in which belts, braces, ties and shoelaces should be removed from persons detained in police custody.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The circumstances in which a detained person may be deprived of articles of clothing while in police detention are set out in section 54 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and code C of the codes of practice which were issued to police forces in January of this year. These lay down that a detained person may retain clothing and personal effects unless the custody officer at the police station considers that he may use them to cause harm to himself or others, interfere with evidence, damage property or effect an escape. If the custody officer so considers, he has the authority to withhold such articles as he thinks necessary.

Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the working of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The main provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 came into effect on 1 January this year. The wide-ranging new procedures introduced by the Act are being monitored closely but it is too early to make a full assessment.

Public Order

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on public order in the light of the Gifford report into the Tottenham riots, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Our aim remains to encourage the police to establish and maintain the good working relationship with the community, which is an essential basis for preventing crime and disorder; to ensure that the police have the manpower and the equipment necessary to tackle disorder effectively if and when it occurs; and to ensure that the law gives the police sufficient powers to prevent and deal with disorder while preserving our traditional rights of peaceful protest and assembly.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from chief constables as to the extent to which drugs are being traded on licensed premises and as to steps taken to notify licensees of the more obvious indications of drug abuse.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Chief officers are aware that drugs may be traded on licensed premises although information about the scale of such misuse is not recorded separately. I welcome the initiatives which the Brewers Society has taken to produce training materials to ensure that licensees are well equipped to respond to any drug problem that may arise on their premises.

Police National Computer

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements have been made to allow the British Transport police access to the police national computer.

Mr. Hurd: The British Transport Police have always been able to obtain information from, and to provide information for, the police national computer through individual Home Department forces at the discretion of the chief constable concerned. The PNC board has recently reviewed this arrangement, and with the support of the Association of Chief Police Officers, and the Association of Chief Police Officers of Scotland has agreed that the British Transport Police should henceforth have direct access to the PNC through terminals situated in its headquarters in London. This facility, which will enable the British Transport Police to obtain information needed to carry out its duties and to enter information that may assist Home Department forces, will be subject to the same conditions as regards to the protection of PNC information as apply to all other PNC users.

Remand

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received regarding the time spent on remand in custody awaiting trial.

Mr. Mellor: Our records do not enable all representations we receive on this subject to be identified, but I recall in particular those made to us last year by the Central Council of Probation Committees, the Association of Chief Officers of Probation and the parliamentary all-party penal affairs group; also the report published by the Prison Reform Trust in March this year.

We are taking action to curb delays. In particular, we plan to move on early next year to apply statutory limits on periods in custody before trial in three of the areas where field trials of such limits have been operating.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown of the number of home beat officers per police division within the Metropolitan police district.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 July 1986, c. *105*]: I understand from the Commissioner that there are 1,374 home beat officers in the Metropolitan police district. The breakdown between divisions is as follows:

	Number
Number 1 Area North (205)	
Barkingside	21
Chingford	15
Ilford	16
Leyton	16
Kings Cross Road	20
Holloway	21
Edmonton	15
Enfield	24
Hornsey	18
Tottenham	39
Number 2 Area East (167)	
Hackney	21
Stoke Newington	15
Bethnal Green	20
Leman Street	8
Limehouse	22
Romford	32
East Ham	16
Dagenham	19
West Ham	14
Number 3 Area South-East (173)	
Southwark	19
Peckham	6
Carter Street	20
Catford	23
Lewisham	27
Orpington	19
Bromley	21
Greenwich	12
Woolwich	15
Bexleyheath	11
Number 4 Area South (220)	
Brixton	19
Kennington	14
Clapham	41
Streatham	21
Wimbledon	34
Croydon	24
Norbury	28
Epsom	39
Number 5 Area South-West (160)	
Chiswick	15
Hounslow	12
Richmond	13
Twickenham	24
Kingston	32
Battersea	20
Tooting	20
Wandsworth	24
Number 6 Area West (159)	
Chelsea	*8*
Kensington	*14*
Notting Hill	*14*
Hammersmith	*8*
Fulham	*16*
Shepherds Bush	*11*
Heathrow Airport	*20*
Ealing	*18*
Ruislip	*18*
Southall	*16*
Hayes	*16*
Number 7 Area North-West (199)	
Hampstead	14
Kentish Town	18
Holborn	10
Harrow	25
Wembley	19
Kilburn	27
Barnet	40
Golders Green	26
West Hendon	20
Number 8 Area Central (91)	
Palace of Westminster	0
Cannon Row	2
Gerald Road	16
Rochester Row	6
Bow Street	13
West End Central	9

	Number
Vine Street	13
Paddington	10
Marylebone Lane	6
Harrow Road	16

Racial Attacks

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide figures for the number of reported racial attacks in London, broken down by police division, for 1985 and 1986 to date.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1986]: The available figures relate to recorded racial incidents, not all of which are criminal offences, or in the nature of attacks. The following table shows figures for the first five months of this year analysed by borough. For the corresponding figures for 1985, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 6 March at column *235*.

Racial incidents recorded in the Metropolitan police district by borough, 1 January to 31 May 1986

Borough	*Number**
Barking and Dagenham	19
Barnet, including that part of Hertsmere within the MPD	2
Bexley	13
Brent	16
Bromley	3
Camden	13
Croydon	23
Ealing	33
Enfield, including those parts of Welwyn, Hatfield and Broxbourne within the MPD	10
Greenwich	21
Hackney	4
Hammersmith/Fulham	1
Haringey	6
Harrow	21
Havering	2
Hillingdon (except parts in London airport)	18
Hounslow	34
Islington	26
Kensington and Chelsea	1
Kingston, including those parts of Elmbridge within the MPD	4
Lambeth	19
Lewisham	4
London Airport (parts of Spelthorne and Hillingdon)	1
Merton	21
Newham	38
Redbridge, including part of Epping Forest	37
Richmond, including those parts of Spelthorne within the MPD but not in London Airport	4
Southwark	14
Sutton, including those parts of Epsom and Ewell and Reigate and Banstead within the MPD	8
Tower Hamlets	88
Waltham Forest, including part of Epping Forest	6
Wandsworth	18
Westminster	—
Total MPD	528

* Provisional.

Visitors (Entry Refusals)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will investigate the reasons for the upward trend in the number of visitors to Britain refused entry in the first six months of 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1986]: Comprehensive statistics of passenger arrivals, and of those refused entry, are not yet available for the first six months of this year. But it is already apparent that during this period there has been a significant increase in refusals. In the first three months of the year, just over 5,500 passengers were removed after being refused leave to enter, an increase of about 50 per cent. over the same quarter in 1985.

The increase is continuing. For example, in May and June at Heathrow and Gatwick there were increases in initial refusals of 130 per cent. and 89 per cent. respectively for Nigerian nationals compared to the same months in 1985, and 63 per cent. and 103 per cent. for Indian nationals. As there has been no change in the criteria employed by immigration officers in applying the immigration rules it is clear that increasing numbers of passengers who are ineligible, or who are likely to be ineligible, for entry under the rules are arriving at our ports of entry.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Security Staff Grants Scheme

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future of the security staff grants scheme.

Mr. Scott: The security staff grants scheme was introduced in 1972 as a non-statutory scheme to give the occupiers of business premises an incentive to employ static security guards to help secure their premises against terrorist attack. Over the years the scheme has been modified in the level of payments available and the categories of businesses eligible, and recent years have seen a substantial fall-off in the rate of take-up, from nearly £7 million in 1980-81 to less than £1 million in the current financial year.

Having reconsidered the value of the scheme, we have concluded that it has now served its purpose. It has therefore been decided that the scheme will be terminated with effect from 30 November 1986. Businesses eligible to claim from the scheme will have a further three months, up to 28 February 1987, to submit their outstanding claims.

Security grants to ferry companies, which for administrative convenience are paid under this scheme, will continue for the present, under other arrangements.

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to how many nurses in Northern Ireland earn less than £120 per week, following the 1986 pay award; what proportion of total nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff this represents; and if he will break down the figures into grades.

Mr. Needham: Nurses' basic pay rates went up on average by 7·8 per cent. on 1 July 1986. Information on the details of nurses' earnings following that increase is not yet available.

Alcohol and Drugs (Deaths)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many deaths in each of the past five years in Northern Ireland are attributable to the abuses of *(a)* alcohol and *(b)* drugs.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

International classification of diseases Number	*Cause*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
A. Deaths from alcholol abuse						
303	Alcohol dependence syndrome	3	4	3	2	2
305.0	Non-dependent abuse of alcohol	7	2	4	5	2
980.0	Toxic effect of ethyl alcohol	1	4	10	5	—
	Total	11	10	17	12	4
B. Deaths from drug abuse						
304	Drug dependence	—	—	—	—	—
305.2-9	Non-dependent abuse of drugs	1	—	2	1	—
965.0	Poisoning by opiates and related narcotics	—	1	2	2	3
967	Poisoning by sedatives and hypnotics	12	13	22	11	6
969	Poisoning by psychotropic agents	11	12	11	10	19
982	Toxic effect of solvents other than petroleum based	2	—	1	3	3
	Total	26	26	38	27	31

United States

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total expenditure by his Department on promoting the interests of Northern Ireland within the United States of America; and how many persons are employed in the United States of America on a full-time and part-time basis on this work.

Dr. Boyson: Total estimated expenditure for these purposes in the current financial year is £2·25 million. Twenty-three persons are employed, all on a full-time basis; this number includes 11 industrial promotion officers, seven of whom are involved in seeking industrial investment for the whole of the United Kingdom, not Northern Ireland alone.

Crime Statistics

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the figures for the first six months of the current year for the number of persons proceeded against for scheduled offences in Northern Ireland; how many persons pleaded guilty to the principal offence; and how many persons in contested cases were found not guilty of the principal offence.

Mr. Scott: In the first six months of this year 338 persons were proceeded against in the Crown court for scheduled offences. Of these, 281 pleaded guilty to the principal offence and 57 not guilty. Of the latter 20 were acquitted.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will give separately for magistrates' courts and crown courts for the first six months of the current year the number of cases involving non-scheduled offences in which pleas of not guilty were entered; in how many of these cases verdicts of not guilty were returned; and in how many of these cases trial was by jury;

(2) how many persons were charged with non-scheduled offences; how many were charged with scheduled offences; and how many persons were found not guilty of all or some of the offences with which they were charged in the first six months of the current year;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of persons who were initially detained under other Acts and were charged under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts in the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Employment (Discrimination)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of individual discrimination have been found by the Fair Employment Agency in the first six months of the current year; and how many of these were against (i) Catholics and (ii) Protestants.

Dr. Boyson: Two; during the period 1 January 1986 to 30 June 1986; both against Roman Catholics.

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many persons were detained under Northern Ireland Emergency Provisions Acts 1973 and 1978 in the first six months of the current year;

(2) how many persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts were charged with *(a)* offences under the Acts and *(b)* offences under other Acts (excluding common law offences) in the first six months of the current year;

(3) how many persons were detained under the Northern Ireland Emergency Provisions Act 1978 and, of

those persons, how many were charged with scheduled offences and how many were charged with non-scheduled offences, in the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Security Statistics

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the security statistics for the first six months of the current year are now available, together with details of persons charged with terrorist-type offences and convictions for scheduled offences for the year.

Mr. Tom King: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many formal complaints have been made about incidents of police use of plastic baton rounds in the first six months of the current year; in how many cases the complaint has been upheld; and in how many cases disciplinary action has been taken against the officers involved.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many plastic bullets have been fired in Northern Ireland in the first six months of the current year; in what circumstances, and in what locations the bullets were fired; and how many persons were injured as a result of their use.

Mr. Scott: During the first six months of this year 351 plastic baton rounds were fired in Northern Ireland. Seventeen people were allegedly injured and one person was killed in that period.

I am writing to the hon. Member with the information he has requested about the circumstances and places in which the baton rounds were fired. A copy of my letter will be placed in the Library.

Prison Population

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the size of the prison population in Northern Ireland as at 30 June, divided into terrorist-type offenders and other offenders categorised by age and by sex in the following groups: under 18 years old, 18 to 25 years, 25 to 30 years, 30 to 40 years, 40 to 50 years, 50 to 60 years and over 60 years; and if he will give a breakdown of the length of sentence being served by each age group under the following headings: (i) up to three months, (ii) over three months and up to six months, (iii) over six months and under 12 months, (iv) over 12 months and under 18 months, (v) over 18 months and up to four years, (vi) over four years and up to eight years, (vii) over eight years and (viii) life; and if he will give a breakdown, divided into terrorist-type offenders and other offenders under the same sentence headings, of the numbers as a percentage of the total prison population.

Mr. Scott: On 30 June 1986 there was a total of 1,595 sentenced inmates in Northern Ireland prison establishments. This figure includes those detained in the young offenders centres. The requested breakdowns of the population are set out in the following tables:

Males

Sentence	*Offence Type*	*Under 18*	*18 to 25*	*25 to 30*	*30 to 40*	*40 to 50*	*50 to 60*	*60 and over*
Up to 3 months	Scheduled	1	3	2	2	—	—	—
	Non-Scheduled	1	11	6	5	—	1	—
3-6 months	Scheduled	—	3	2	—	—	—	—
	Non-Scheduled	4	10	2	1	—	—	—
6-12 months	Scheduled	2	18	5	2	—	—	—
	Non-Scheduled	14	51	14	15	7	2	1
12-18 months	Scheduled	—	16	5	1	—	—	—
	Non-Scheduled	7	45	19	7	3	1	1
18 months to 4 years	Scheduled	10	82	12	13	3	—	—
	Non-Scheduled	12	62	24	23	9	1	—
4-8 years	Scheduled	2	67	32	32	9	—	—
	Non-Scheduled	—	24	15	19	8	1	1
Over 8 years	Scheduled	4	206	85	47	5	1	—
	Non-Scheduled	1	6	2	1	2	1	—
Life	Scheduled	13	253	107	68	16	1	1
	Non-Scheduled	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
	Totals	71	857	332	236	63	9	4

Females

Sentence	*Offence Type*	*Under 18*	*18 to 25*	*25 to 30*	*30 to 40*	*40 to 50*	*50 to 60*	*60 and over*
Up to 3 months	Scheduled	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Non-Scheduled	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3-6 months	Scheduled	—	—	1	—	—	—	—

Sentence	Offence Type	Under 18	18 to 25	25 to 30	30 to 40	40 to 50	50 to 60	60 and over
	Non-Scheduled	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6-12 months	Scheduled	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Non-Scheduled	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
12-18 months	Scheduled	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Non-Scheduled	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
18 months to 4 years	Scheduled	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
	Non-Scheduled	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
4-8 years	Scheduled	—	5	—	—	—	—	—
	Non-Scheduled	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Over 8 years	Scheduled	—	6	—	—	—	—	—
	Non-Scheduled	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Life	Scheduled	—	2	2	—	2	—	—
	Non-Scheduled	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Totals	1	13	4	2	3	—	—

Percentage of total prison population by length of sentence and nature of offence

Sentence length	Scheduled offences Per cent.	Non-Scheduled offences Per cent.
Up to 3 months	0·5	1·5
3 to 6 months	0·4	1·1
6 to 12 months	1·8	6·6
12 to 18 months	1·4	5·3
18 months to 4 years	7·5	8·2
4 to 8 years	9·2	4·3
Over 8 years	22·1	0·8
Life	29·2	0·1

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the number of prisoners in Northern Ireland's jails as at 30 June detailing the numbers by sex, in prison and in young offenders centres separately.

Mr. Scott: On 30 June 1986 the total number of inmates in Northern Ireland prison establishments, including the young offenders' centres, was 1,887. The breakdown of the total is as follows:-

	Male	Female
Prisons	1,673	27
Young Offenders' Centres	186	1

Arms Seizures

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show *(a)* how many firearms, by type, handguns, rifles, shotguns or fully automatic weapons, were seized by the security forces in Northern Ireland in the first six months of the current year; and for each type how many were legally held weapons stolen by terrorist organisations from (i) civilians, (ii) the Royal Ulster Constabulary, (iii) the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve (iv) the Ulster Special Constabulary, (v) the Ulster Defence Regiment and (vi) the Regular Army;

(2) if he will detail the number of arms found in 1985 and the first six months of the current year under the headings of (i) machine guns, (ii) rifles, (iii) shotguns, (iv) pistols/revolvers and (v) others.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many attacks on Royal Ulster Constabulary personnel took place monthly in 1985, showing whether the attack was on *(a)* a foot patrol and *(b)* a mobile patrol and the total attacked while on duty each month together with details of the type of attack namely (i) physical assault, (ii) stone throwing, (iii) petrol bomb, (iv) explosion and (v) shooting and the number of persons made amenable.

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give particulars of attacks upon, and injuries sustained by, officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, in operations since November 1985, broken down so far as possible by the characteristics and localities of such incidents.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to my hon. Friend and the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Bail

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many prisoners were refused bail, and what is the average period of remand without bail for persons charged either wholly or partially on the basis of accomplice evidence in each of the following categories: *(a)* the top decile, *(b)* the top quartile, *(c)* the second quartile, of prisoners awaiting trail for the longest period and *(d)* all prisoners charged on the basis of such evidence for the first six months of the current year;

(2) how many applications for bail, by those held on remand for scheduled, non-scheduled offences, and both together, were refused in the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Scott: Out of a total of 1,357 bail applications, 551 were refused in the High Court, in the first six months of this year. Information as to whether the applications were in respect of scheduled or non-scheduled offences could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information on remand times for those at present on remand in custody who have been charged on the basis of evidence from alleged former accomplices is not separately available and could, likewise, be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Trials (Waiting Times)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will give the average period between remand and trial for prisoners refused bail and charged with scheduled offences in Northern Ireland in the first six months of the current year;

(2) what was the average number of days that prisoners spent on custodial remand for scheduled, non-scheduled offences and both together, in the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Scott: For persons whose trials were completed in the first six months of this year and who were in custody at the time of trial the average length of time spent on custodial remand was 353 days for persons charged with scheduled offences and 85 days for persons charged with non-scheduled offences.

Remanded Persons (Statistics)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of prisoners on custodial remand for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively, were *(a)* given a non-custodial sentence, *(b)* given a custodial sentence and *(c)* found not guilty or not proceeded against in the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Scott: The information in relation to those tried in the first six months of this year is as follows:

Type of Disposal	*Scheduled Offences* Per cent.	*Non-Scheduled Offences* Per cent.
(a) Non-custodial Sentence	9	14
(b) Custodial Sentence	68	57
(c) Found Not Guilty or Not Proceeded Against	23	29

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners were remanded in custody prior to trial for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively, for the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 22 July 1986.

Parades

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Protestant traditional parades have been held in the Province in the current year to date; how many were re-routed; how many became the occasion of, or were followed by, violence; and what part was played by *(a)* the Orange order and *(b)* other Protestant organisations in restraint of such violence.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Demonstration (Newtownards)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as to the conduct of the Orange demonstration on 12 July in Newtownards; what was the estimated number of people in Newtownards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the right hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mount Royal, Donaghadee

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will initiate the special procedure for major planning applications in accordance with article 22 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 in respect of planning application X/388/86 for a proposed development at Mount Royal, Donaghadee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: No.

Land Purchases (County Derry)

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what lands in the Magilligan area of County Derry have been bought over the past 18 months by or on behalf of the British Army or other defence or security forces; and for what purposes.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Magilligan (Explosions)

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement as to the reasons for the numerous explosions in the Magilligan area which have been detonated by Crown forces over the past year.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

1987 Economic Summit

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which nation will host the 1987 economic summit.

Mrs. Chalker: Italy.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the date of the 1987 economic summit.

Mrs. Chalker: It has yet to be decided.

Diplomatic Staff (Children's Education)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many children of diplomatic staff were both educated and boarded at independent schools whilst being financed by the diplomatic wing of his Department in each year since 1978-79; what was the total and unit spending per pupil on this facility; and what information he has as to which independent schools currently educate and board over 20 pupils via the facility.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the statistics in the replies that I gave to him on 28 October 1985 and 12 November 1985 at columns *86* and *144*.

As at March 1986, there were 1,111 children both educated and boarded at independent schools, whilst being financed by the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and

Commonwealth Office. The total spending from March 1985 to March 1986 was £5,641,900·98 (including tax); the unit spending per pupil differed according to the category of school with the maximum being £1,553·08 per term for boys at senior schools. At present three independent schools currently educate and board over 20 pupils. They are:

Windlesham	(39 pupils)
Bedales	(29 pupils)
Ashford	(22 pupils)

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest estimated waiting time to first interview for settlement applicants in each of the queues at each of the posts in the Indian sub-continent, how long applicants now being called for interview have waited; and how many people are in each queue at each post.

Mr. Eggar: Waiting times in months and the number of people in each queue as at 31 May are as follows:

Post	*Queue*	*Actual*	*Estimated*	*Numbers awaiting first interview*
New Delhi	1	2	2	28
	2	5	5	236
	3	8	8	430
	4	*	11	147
				841
Bombay	1	2	3	28
	2	6	6	549
	3	*	10	443
	4	*	12	105
				1,125
Dhaka	1	3	3	528
	2	10	8	2,376
	3	10	8	132
	4	21	20	3,565
				6,601
Islamabed	1	3	3	899
	2	7	8	482
	3	13	10	2,061
	4	14	14	907
				4,349
Karachi	1	2	3	25
	2	6	6	35
	3	11	11	89
	4	13	13	7
				156

* None interviewed in May.

Actual waiting time is the time waited by an applicant from lodging an application to the actual date of interview in May. Estimated waiting time is the time an applicant applying in May could expect to wait until interview.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long those applying for entry clearance for *(a)* settlement and *(b)* temporary purposes have been waiting before interview at British posts in (i) the Philippines, (ii) Sri Lanka, (iii) Ghana and (iv) Nigeria; and what are the expected waiting times for those now applying.

Mr. Eggar: Waiting times for entry clearance for settlement and temporary purposes are as follows:

Post	*Settlement*	*Temporary Purposes*
Manila	Six weeks	24 hours if no interview required, otherwise six weeks
Colombo	Same day	Same day
Accra	Within seven days	Same day, apart from June/September when three-seven days
Lagos	Same day	Same day
Kaduna	Same day	Same day

The waiting times for those now applying are as above.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many entry clearances *(a)* in total, *(b)* for temporary purposes and *(c)* for settlement were issued during 1985 in the Indian sub-continent; and what was the cost of stationing entry clearance staff at posts in the sub-continent in that period.

Mr. Eggar: In the period 1 January-31 December 1985 a total number of 20,480 entry clearances were issued in the subcontinent. Of this figure 7,260 were for temporary purposes and 13,220 were for settlement.

Figures for the cost of stationing entry clearance staff at posts in the subcontinent for the financial year ended at 31 March 1986 are not yet available. The cost for the financial year ended 31 March 1985 was £5·2 million.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many entry clearance officers are in post at each post in the Indian sub-continent, the Philippines and Sri Lanka at the latest convenient date and at a date 12 months before that; and if he plans to alter the complement at any of these posts.

Mr. Eggar: The information required is contained in the following table:

Numbers of ECOs by post

Post	*July 1986*		*July 1985*	
	Permanent	*Temporary*	*Permanent*	*Temporary*
Islamabad	17	—	14	—
Karachi	1	1	2	—
New Dehli	5	—	4	2
Bombay	5	1	6	1
Calcutta	1	—	1	—
Dhaka	16	2	15	1
Colombo	3	2	2	3
Manila	3	1	2	1

The complement of ECOs is under constant review in the light of the pressures on the posts and other demands on available manpower.

South African Gold Coins

Mr. Cabora asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will introduce controls to prohibit the importing of gold coins from South Africa into Britain's overseas dependencies.

Mrs. Chalker: On 23 May we banned the importation of gold coins into Britain. We informed the dependent territories of our decision, and it is a matter for them to decide whether to effect a similar ban.

Uganda

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government present relations with Uganda.

Mrs. Chalker: There are many ties of friendship between Britain and Uganda. We strongly welcome President Museveni's commitment to a stable and united Uganda with full respect for human rights. The situation in the country has greatly improved, after many years of suffering. In support of President Museveni's efforts to establish stability and encourage respect for human rights we are providing substantial economic assistance and training for the Ugandan army and police force. We have pledged £5 million of emergency aid and are, in addition, currently providing £22 million from ODA and CDC funds for the rehabilitation of the Owen Falls hydro-electric station and the whole Ugandan Electricity Board systems. We are resuming programmes in the health, education and public administration sectors and are planning a natural resources sectoral review in October.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations recently Her Majesty's Government have made to Uganda concerning human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: None. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on 18 July at column *642*.

Cyprus

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money has been granted to Cyprus under the 1960 treaty of establishment since 1 April 1965; and if he will now review the financial obligations accepted by Her Majesty's Government under the treaty in consultation with the Government of Cyprus.

Mr. Eggar: No financial aid has been provided pursuant to the 1960 exchange of notes since 1965. We assist Cyprus in a number of other ways.

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the obstacles which now prevent final agreement between Turkish and Greek Cypriots; and if, as a guarantor power, Her Majesty's Government will now exert pressure to secure agreement.

Mr. Eggar: The UN Secretary General presented his third set of proposals in March this year. We believe that they provide a good basis for a peaceful, just and lasting settlement. The Turkish Cypriot side has accepted them. We hope that the Greek Cypriot side will still do so. We continue actively to support the UN initiative and to urge both sides to co-operate fully with the Secretary General's efforts.

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he plans to seek changes to the 1960 treaty of establishment so as to acquire ownership of the soverign bases in Cyprus in perpetuity.

Mr. Eggar: No. The base areas in Cyprus are already sovereign British territory.

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what factors led Her Majesty's Government to open an office in Turkish-occupied northern Cyprus; what the establishment will be; and if this implies recognition of the self-styled Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Mr. Eggar: We have not opened any new office in northern Cyprus. In 1960, on the independence of the Republic, we acquired a property which is now in the Turkish sector of Nicosia, to serve as the high commissioner's official residence. Since 1971, when it was last used as the residence, we have maintained a residual presence there in order to deal with inquiries from individual Turkish Cypriots and British nationals in the north. This long-standing arrangement carries no implication of recognition of the so-called "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus".

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will urgently seek Turkey's compliance in the full implementation of resolution 3212 passed by the United Nations Assembly and resolution 365 passed by the Security Council.

Mr. Eggar: We have made clear to the Turkish Government, as to all the parties involved, our support for the United Nations Secretary General's initiative which takes account of these resolutions.

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Turkey sought the agreement of the other two guarantor powers prior to the construction of the military airstrip at Lefkonico, northern Cyprus.

Mr. Eggar: We understand that Lefkonico is a Turkish Cypriot civilian airport which does not fall to be considered under the treaty of guarantee.

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will call upon the Turkish Government to withdraw their occupational forces from Cyprus as a prelude to the two sides reaching agreement based on the De Cuellar initiatives.

Mr. Eggar: The United Nations Secretary General's proposals on Cyprus provide for negotiations on the withdrawal of foreign troops from the Republic as part of an overall settlement. We strongly support the Secretary General's initiative as the most effective instrument by which a settlement of the Cyprus question may be achieved.

Foreign Affairs Council

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on 21 and 22 July.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend chaired a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Twelve meeting in political co-operation on the morning of 21 July. This was followed by a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on 21 and 22 July, also chaired by my right hon. and learned Friend, at which I and my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade represented the United Kingdom.

The Foreign Ministers of the Twelve had an exchange of views on South Africa on the basis of a report by my right hon. and learned Friend on his recent visit to the region and his talks in Washington on 18 July. The full support of the Twelve for the efforts of my right hon. and learned Friend during his current visit to South Africa was reiterated. There was also a discussion of East/West relations. My right hon. and learned Friend reported on the recent visit to London by Mr. Shevardnadze.

The Foreign Ministers reviewed the policy of the Twelve towards Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa and issued a statement. The Foreign Ministers meeting in the framework both of political co-operation and the Council reviewed the principles of the human rights policy of the European Community and its member states and issued a statement. Both statements have been placed in the Library of the House.

The Foreign Affairs Council heard a report from the Commission of the Community's trade relations with Japan. The Council reaffirmed its declaration of 10 March. It invited the Commission to press for early action by the Japanese Government to remove discriminatory barriers against imports of alcoholic drinks. It agreed that if there was no early progress, the Commission should instigate action under article XXIII of the GATT. The Council invited the Commission to select other market sectors for similar treatment, to review Japanese export practices with a view to obtaining redress where they violate GATT obligations and to report to the Council in the autumn.

The Council also discussed the Community's trade relations with the United States. It welcomed the interim solution reached on the trade dispute over the trade effects of enlargement of the Community and called on the United States to confirm the agreement reached in negotiations on semi-finished steel products. The Council reaffirmed the Community's willingness to work for an early conclusion to the citrus/pasta dispute on the basis of a balanced package which included adequate assurances from the United States that the Community's Mediterranean agreements would not be subject to further challenge. The Council repeated its intention to take equivalent action in the event of any further unilateral United States action to impede imports from the Community.

The Council agreed preferential access levels for New Zealand butter exports to the United Kingdom market of 76,500 and 74,500 tonnes for 1987 and 1988 respectively. This is a very satisfactory outcome. The Commission will make proposals before 1 August 1988 on the maintenance of the arrangements for New Zealand access after 1 January 1989.

The Council considered a revised mandate for negotiations with the Community's mediterranean preferential partners to take account of enlargement, and discussed economic and trade relations with the member countries of the Gulf Co-operation Council.

The Council agreed to explore urgently means of using the funds in the 1986 budget allocated to fight hunger in the world in accordance with existing programmes.

The Council discussed the appointment of members of the Economic and Social Committee of the European Community.

The Council adopted a Commission proposal on the total allowable catches for member states fishing in international waters covered by the North-West Atlantic Fisheries Organisation.

A useful meeting of the EC/Yugoslavia Co-operation Council which reviewed the operation of the EC/Yugoslavia agreement was held in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council. There was also informal discussion of current political issues over a dinner attended by EC Foreign Ministers and the Yugoslav Ministers present.

ENVIRONMENT

Radioactivity

17. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on his latest assessment of the impact of radionuclides on the environment arising from the Chernobyl incident.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department published a leaflet in May 1986 on the assessment of the levels of radioactivity in the United Kingdom from the accident at Chernobyl. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House. Its conclusions remain valid. NRPB is undertaking a more detailed analysis which will be published in due course.

Surplus Land

19. **Mr. McLoughlin** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the powers available to him for directing public bodies to sell their surplus land.

Mr. Ridley: I am using the relevant powers to encourage, and where necessary to direct, public owners of unused and underused land to dispose of it. However, in view of the amount of such land and the time it is taking to bring it back into use, I am considering what further powers may be necessary to ensure that surplus land is put to good use.

38. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the performance of statutory undertakings in disposing of their unused and underused land.

Sir George Young: No. Statutory undertakers and nationalised industries have a financial incentive to dispose of underused or surplus land in their ownership. There is, however, always scope to improve the rate of disposal, and where necessary my right hon. Friend will consider using the powers available to him under part X of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 to direct disposal of unused and underused publicly owned land.

59. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the number of times he has used his powers under section 98 of the Local Government Act 1980 to direct *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* statutory undertakers to sell surplus land.

Sir George Young: On 16 July my right hon. Friend, under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, directed the owners of four sites, entered on the registers of unused and underused land, to dispose of their interest in the land. This brings the total of such directions issued to 29.

The owners of these sites have all been local authorities. Together with ministerial colleagues my right hon. Friend is keeping under review the performance of other public bodies in bringing unused and underused land back into use or disposing of it.

Litter Acts

20. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the implementation of the Litter Acts; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The last representation we received was in January 1985 about implementation of section 4 of the Litter Act 1983.

Local Government Finance

21. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of local authority associations to discuss local authority spending.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 7 July 1986 in the consultative council on local government finance.

25. **Mr. Carter-Jones** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many submissions he has received to date in response to the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government."

26. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have responded to date to the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government."

Mr. Ridley: I have received over 400 responses to our tax and grant proposals, about 70 of them from local authorities. The consultation period continues until 31 October.

60. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet able to announce any decision with regard to the recommendations of the Widdicombe report concerning section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the 22 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels).

61. **Mrs. Shields** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received from local authorities concerning the use of capital receipts for the benefit of people requiring council housing.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from local authorities, and from the local authority associations, seeking changes in the regulations on the use of capital receipts. Additional capital expenditure funded from receipts produces a net increase in the public sector borrowing requirement, and for that reason it has to be controlled and phased. However, even the present prescribed proportion of 20 per cent. for most housing receipts means that, over the three years after a receipt has been generated, an authority can spend roughly half of it on new capital projects.

Council House Sales

22. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the rate of sale of non-sheltered council dwellings for the elderly under the right-to-buy provision.

Sir George Young: Non-sheltered housing for the elderly is included in the right to buy unless landlords apply to the Secretary of State for exemption. Where such an application is made, my right hon. Friend must consider it against the criteria laid down in the Act. Considerations relating to the overall rate of sales do not enter into his decisions on individual cases.

31. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authority tenants seeking guidance as to the exercise of their right to buy.

Mr. John Patten: Representations are received from tenants whose purchase is delayed or who disagree with their landlord over the terms of sale. The Department offers advice and may take cases up with the authority concerned. There have also been many inquiries about the provisions of the Housing and Planning Bill.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

23. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has made, following his Department's recently published national survey, of the length of time it will take for the housing and safety conditions in houses in multiple occupation to be brought up to the minimum standards laid down by local housing authorities.

Sir George Young: Parliament has placed on local authorities the responsibility for securing adequate conditions in HMOs through the use of powers which have been available for many years. It is for each authority to decide what standards are appropriate. I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend, the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox).

Mr. Peter Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the final report of the physical and social survey of a sample of houses in multiple occupation.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 17 July 1986 at column *626*.

Residential Land

24. **Mr. Cockeram** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now able to supply figures as to the proportion of new housing starts, in the most recent two years, which are situated on land which has previously been developed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Information in the form requested is not available. However, figures recently issued for land use changes in England recorded during 1985 show that about 45 per cent. of land developed for residential use was previously developed or was vacant land in built up areas. The other 55 per cent. was mainly land previously in agricultural use.

33. **Sir Peter Mills** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of land used for residential development in recent years has been previously developed.

Mr. Tracey: Figures recently issued for land use changes in England, recorded during 1985, show that about 45 per cent. of land developed for residential use was previously developed or was vacant land in built-up areas. The other 55 per cent. was mainly land previously in agricultural use.

Inner Area Programme

27. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in what way he monitors the allocation and administration of funds under the inner area programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Urban programme resources are allocated to individual local authorities according to assessments of their needs and their performance in formulating and implementing inner area programmes which accord with ministerial guidelines. Clear objectives are set for individual projects within an overall strategy. Local authorities monitor projects systematically and produce annual reports on their programmes. There are arrangements for systematic sample checking of projects by departmental officials.

Widdicombe Report

28. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will extend the consultation period in respect of the Widdicombe report recommendations.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have no present plans to do so.

Homelessness

30. **Mr. Raynsford** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of homeless households likely to be accepted by local authorities in England in 1986, and the number living in bed and breakfast accommodation at the end of December 1986.

Sir George Young: Since such estimates would depend on individual local authorities' policies, the housing stock position in their areas, and other factors, too many assumptions would be involved for them to be reliable.

Gipsy Sites

32. **Mr. Moate** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received advocating the review of cost criteria for gipsy sites, particularly as they apply to smaller sites.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations closely related to this subject from hon. Members, individual local authorities and their associations, and from the Romany Guild. We are considering these representations in the context of the review of gipsy sites policy which we are at present conducting at the request of the Select Committee on the Environment.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

34. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to introduce, in the next Session of Parliament, legislation to prepare the water authorities for privatisation in advance of the main legislation on this subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I cannot anticipate the Queen's Speech.

House Building

35. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the present number of council properties being built in the London borough of Wandsworth.

Mr. John Patten: Wandsworth is not building more council houses. It is rightly making room for waiting list applicants in its existing stock in which it has been investing more than almost any other London borough by encouraging low-cost home ownership opportunities for existing tenants, largely through private developers and housing associations.

29. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses were constructed by the public sector or begun in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985 in Leicester.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 14 July at column *321.*

41. **Mr. Ottaway** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet the Housebuilders Federation to discuss the release of land for house building.

Mr. Ridley: I expect to meet the Housebuilders Federation later in the year. I cannot predict what subjects will be discussed.

District Auditor

36. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to change the role of the district auditor.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have no present plans to do so. In its report, the Widdicombe committee of inquiry into the conduct of local authority business has made a number of recommendations concerning the role of the district auditor, and I shall be considering its proposals in the light of the consultation exercise announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) on 19 June at column *639.*

West Sussex Structure Plan

37. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be announcing the result of his review of the West Sussex county council structure plan.

Mr. Tracey: Work is proceeding as quickly as possible, and my right hon. Friend hopes to make an announcement later this year.

Clean-up Scheme

39. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the progress of his anti-litter campaign.

40. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet in a position to announce details of the national clean-up scheme.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have nothing to add to the statement about UK2000 made by my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government on 14 July 1986 at column 683.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many sites of special scientific interest or sites identified by the Nature Conservancy Council for notification as such have been damaged since 1 January 1984 due to the actions of statutory undertakers upon land where they were not at the time the legal owners or occupiers;

(2) how many sites of special scientific interest or sites idenified by the Nature Conservancy Council for notification as such have been damaged since 1 January 1984 due to the actions of any third parties where such parties were not at the time the legal owners or occupiers.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is currently being compiled. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available.

Wingshaver Case

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the wildlife division in Bristol has now replied in full to the RSPCA's letter of 5 March regarding his Department's involvement in the Wingshaver case.

Mrs. Rumbold: The matter is still under investigation. An interim reply was sent on 1 July.

Private Prosecutions

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has made any contribution to the costs of any private prosecutions carried out on behalf of his Department.

Mr. Ridley: It is possible under the staff rules of my Department for financial assistance to be given in certain cases where a staff member has been injured by the wrongful act of a third party. But such assistance will be given only if it is considered that the prosecution is in the interest of both the staff member and the Department. There have been no such cases in recent years. I am not aware of other circumstance where the Department has contributed to private prosecutions.

Council Services (Competitive Tendering)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the impact on ratepayers if all council services were subject to competitive tender.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not possible to estimate what savings would result from exposing all local authority services to competition.

However, authorities spend well over £2,000 million annually on the six services for which the Government have proposed legislation, so even modest percentage savings would be substantial in absolute terms.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to increase the housing investment programme allocations to local authorities in view of the increased expenditure arising out of the Housing Defects Act and the proposed increase in eligible expense limits.

Mr. John Patten: The housing investment programme allocations for 1986-87 have already taken account of local authorities' likely expenditure under the housing defects legislation. My Department will continue to monitor the position carefully and all the relevant factors, including the impact of the increased eligible expense limits, will be taken into account in decisions about the distribution of housing resources for 1987-88.

Merseyside Development Corporation (Private Hospital)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if there have been any representations to the Merseyside development corporation for the building of a private hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer this question shortly.

Cottages, Hallsands

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he hopes to answer the letter from the hon. Member for South Hams, dated 21 April, about the cottages at Hallsands which are falling off the cliff; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I wrote to my hon. Friend on 18 July 1986.

Nuclear Power Stations (Accidents)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of accidents at Britain's nuclear power stations reported to him by the nuclear installations inspectorate since the accident at Chernobyl on 26 April of the current year.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive does not report accidents at nuclear power plants to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Under the arrangements announced to Parliament on 26 July 1982 by my right hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy, incidents at nuclear sites in Britain which are reported to the Secretaries of State for Energy and for Scotland by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate are published quarterly by the Health and Safety Executive. The next report to cover the period 1 April to 31 July 1986 will be published later this year and, like its predecessors, will be placed in the Library of the House.

Wash Site of Special Scientific Interest

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department received details of the Wash site of special scientific interest, Norfolk/Lincolnshire, from the Nature Conservancy Council together with its recommendations to list this site under

the Ramsar convention and the European Community directive on the conservation of wild birds; and when listing can be expected.

Mr. Ridley: Proposals for listing The Wash (north Norfolk and Lincolnshire coast) as a special protection area under EC directive 79/409 and as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar convention were submitted to this Department by the Nature Conservancy Council in March 1984. The listing of this site raises complex issues which we have not been able to resolve as quickly as I would have wished. Discussions on the matter are continuing and we shall endeavour to bring these to a conclusion as soon as possible.

Radioactive Waste

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government expect to publish their response to the Environment Committee's report on radioactive waste.

Mr. Ridley: The Government's response is being published today and copies have been placed in the Library.

Chernobyl (Monitoring)

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the monitoring information provided to the National Radiological Protection Board following the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Waldegrave: Her Majesty's Stationery Office has today published a compilation of the results of monitoring for radioactivity in the United Kingdom following the Chernobyl accident. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

Domestic Rating Revaluation

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the likely effect of a domestic rating revaluation based on capital values.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are no comprehensive data about the outcome of a capital revaluation of domestic rateable values. However, information about the relationship between house prices and existing rateable values suggests that:

i. because house prices vary widely between regions, capital value rates would be even less well related to income than they are now;

ii. the effects of such a valuation would be different for different types of housing. On average, terraced houses would face increases in their rate bills everywhere except the Midlands and the north west; there would be average rises of over 20 per cent. for detached houses in the south of England;

iii. some individual occupiers would face much larger rises, more than 1 million would have increases of 80 per cent. or more in their rate bills.

Because capital revaluation would not improve local accountability, and because rate bills would remain unrelated to the use made of local services by households of different sizes, the Government have no intention of conducting a revaluation on this basis.

I have placed in the Library more detailed estimates of the likely effects of a capital revaluation.

Policy Achievements

Mr. Stevens asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the main policy achievements of his Department in the year 1985-86.

Mr. Ridley: I have today placed in the Library copies of a report which gives an account of the various measures taken by my Department between April 1985 and March 1986. This report supplements the earlier documents covering the period since May 1979 which were provided pursuant to the replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) on 3 May 1983 and 9 May 1984, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 3 April 1985.

Enterprise Zones Planning Schemes

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes any change to the provisions governing the termination of enterprise zones planning schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Schedule 32 of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 effectively terminates any planning permission granted by the enterprise zone scheme as soon as the scheme is terminated, generally 10 years after designation. Even if development authorised by the scheme is well under way, completion would then require a further planning permission under ordinary planning powers. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales and I are concerned that such an abrupt cut-off could deter developers from investing in zones. We therefore propose that development authorised by the enterprise zone scheme, which had begun before the zone's termination, should continue to have the benefit of that planning permission though not of the other benefits available in enterprise zones. As a safeguard against unreasonable delay in completing developments after an enterprise zone's termination date, we propose to make available to local planning authorities, after the EZ termination date, the completion notice mechanism, which already applies to normal planning permission under S44 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1971 and section 41 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972.

The Government also propose that the same arrangements for serving completion notices would apply in simplified planning zones.

Amendments will be put down shortly to the Housing and Planning Bill to give effect to these proposals.

Dog Licensing

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet in a position to announce the Government's conclusions on the future arrangements for dog licensing in Great Britain.

Mr. Ridley: The dog licence fee costs about £3·5 million annually to collect, and raises less than £1 million. There is some support for the licence from those who are concerned that dog nuisance and dog control should be properly managed and funded. Local authorities are best placed to deal with this problem and we think it right that they should continue to do so. They have adequate existing powers and can make byelaws as necessary. National legislation providing safeguards for farmers whose livestock are worried by dogs will remain in place. In the

light of our proposals for the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement, local authorities will be able to accommodate any expenditure which they may judge to be necessary.

Accordingly, the Government have decided to introduce legislation to abolish the licence when a suitable opportunity arises.

Housing Policy

42. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to issue a White Paper on future housing policy.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so at present.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

43. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now publish all the submissions received by his Department in response to the White Paper on "Privatisation of the English and Welsh Water Authorities".

Mr. John Patten: My Department has received 374 letters from organisations and others, following publication of the White Paper in February. It is for the originators of those letters to publish their views, if they so wish.

Defective Houses

44. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to seek to alter the Housing Act 1985 to give further assistance to houses designated under the Housing Defects Act 1984.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans to do so.

Severn Barrage

45. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to meet the Severn Tidal Power Group in the near future to discuss environmental matters relating to a possible Severn barrage.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet the Severn Tidal Power Group. Officials are in close contact with the Department of Energy and the Severn Tidal Power Group. I can assure my hon. Friend that environmental matters will continue to be fully taken into account.

Local Government Finance

46. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive figures for 1985-86 on the capital receipts held by local authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department will shortly be collecting figures from English local authorities on the level of their accumulated capital receipts at the end of 1985-86.

Out-of-town Shopping Areas

47. **Mr. Key** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the implications for inner areas and town centres of the growth of out-of-town shopping centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Development proposals of this kind have to be assessed individually and in relation to local circumstances. Our general policy is that it may be necessary in exceptional circumstances to take account of the cumulative effects of recent and proposed large scale retail development in the locality, and to consider whether they are on such a scale and of a kind that they could seriously affect the vitality and viability of a nearby town centre as a whole.

Departmental Buildings

48. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many premises maintained by his Department are licensed for the solemnisation of matrimony.

Sir George Young: According to my inquiries, there are 174 such premises.

Local Authorities (Rent Arrears)

49. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the progress being made by local authorities in reducing the level of their rent arrears.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend is not satisfied. A minority of authorities have levels of arrears persistently far above those achieved by apparently comparable authorities. These arrears could be substantially reduced if such authorities adopted more effective policies and practice as recommended in the recent Audit Commission report on housing management.

Local Authorities (Designation)

50. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes announcing details of any authorities to be designated in 1987-88 under the Rates Act 1984.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made yesterday by my right hon. Friend.

Inner City Areas

51. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further initiatives he intends to take to encourage more private investment into the inner city areas.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction on 25 June at columns 317-18.

Domestic Rates

52. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average percentage increase in domestic rates between 1979-80 and 1986-87.

Mr. Waldegrave: The average increase in domestic rates in England was 150 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1986-87.

World Cup (Mexico)

53. **Mr. Pendry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the behaviour

of British football supporters at the Mexico World Cup and the steps taken to reduce the risk of crowd trouble, including the actions of Her Majesty's ambassador in Mexico and his staff.

Mr. Tracey: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) on 17 July, at columns 579-80.

I would add that, having attended the World Cup tournament from 8 to 15 June, I can report at first hand that the behaviour of the British fans won praise from the Mexican people and media. The Government's planning and preparations, with the national football associations and the Mexican authorities, proved highly effective. During the competition the ambassador and his staff gave expert assistance to British supporters, and helped to foster extremely good relations with the local people, and I am sure the hon. Member, who was also able to observe the arrangements at first hand, would wish to associate himself with my gratitude and praise for their efforts.

Fair Rents

54. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to empower rent officers to fix fair rents in all instances where housing benefit is paid.

Sir George Young: Rent officers already have powers to register fair rents in respect of regulated tenancies, on application from the landlord, tenant or local authority. However, my right hon. Friend has no proposals to introduce compulsory rent registration for such tenancies where the tenant is in receipt of housing benefit.

Royal Wedding

55. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the costs to his Department of the arrangements for the royal wedding on 23 July.

Mr. Tracey: My Department estimates a net cost of approximately £40,000 on providing services for today's royal wedding, but final costs will not be available until all bills have been paid.

Islington

56. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the proportion of the income of the London borough of Islington which came from central Government funds in 1979-80 and as to the equivalent figure for 1986-87.

Mrs. Rumbold: Figures for 1979-80 are not comparable with those for 1986-87 since both grant and expenditure were based on different definitions.

In 1981-82, the first year of the present block grant system, central Government block grant formed 34·1 per cent. of Islington's total expenditure. The latest estimate for 1986-87 is that block grant will form 44·8 per cent. of the council's total expenditure.

Refuse Collection and Waste Disposal

57. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was allocated in the grant-related expenditure allocation for *(a)* Waltham Forest and *(b)* nationally, in respect of refuse collection and waste disposal (i) in 1979 and (ii) in the current year.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following is the information for 1986-87:

£ million

	Refuse collection	*Waste disposal*
Waltham Forest	2,114	1,975
England Total	408,500	224,400

There were no grant-related expenditure assessments in 1979; these were first brought in under the present block grant system in 1981-82.

New Towns (North-East)

58. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the present position concerning the consultations relating to the future of the north-east new towns.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend is considering both the report prepared by the chairmen of the two north-east development corporations on successor arrangements and the comments he has received on that report. An announcement on the course to be followed will be made as soon as possible.

Nuclear Waste

62. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about his policy on the disposal of nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has received a considerable number of representations from hon. Members and others. These mostly concern the alternative potential sites for the disposal of low-level radioactive waste, and the special development order permitting NIREX to proceed with site investigations.

Tobacco Industry (Sports Sponsorship)

63. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the agreement between his Department and members of the tobacco industry on the sponsorship of sporting events.

Mr. Tracey: I am currently in negotiation with the tobacco industry. I shall announce the results of those negotiations when they have been completed. By agreement with the industry, the talks are confidential.

Local Authority Officers

64. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to provide for controls on the appointment by local authorities of officers with partisan commitment; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Widdicombe committee of inquiry has proposed a wide-ranging package of measures to deal with the impact of politicisation on the conduct of local authority business, including some concerned with the employment of officers. I shall consider its proposals in the light of the consultation I announced in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) on 19 June at column 639.

Government Land Sales

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) under what authority he is selling Government-owned land at preferential rates to public authorities for community use;

(2) what sales he has made of Government land to public authorities on preferential terms; and for what reasons;

(3) if he will make it his policy to sell publicly owned land on preferential terms where it is to be dedicated for community use.

Mr. Tracey: Government Departments dispose of surplus land at current market value unless there are exceptional circumstances justifying a concessionary price. Whether or not a sale for community use would be on preferential terms would depend on the circumstances of the particular case. I am not aware of any recent sales by my right hon. Friend at concessionary rates.

Planning Permission (Appeals)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many refusals of planning permission have been reversed on appeal to him in each London borough during the last period of 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Tracey: The number of planning appeals allowed for the London boroughs during the period April 1985 to March 1986 is as follows:

Boroughs	*Appeals allowed*
City of London	0
Barking and Dagenham	4
Barnet	32
Bexley	10
Brent	23
Bromley	74
Camden	43
Croyden	38
Ealing	26
Enfield	33
Greenwich	37
Hackney	12
Hammersmith and Fulham	29
Haringey	16
Harrow	22
Havering	17
Hillingdon	29
Hounslow	42
Islington	9
Kensington and Chelsea	19
Kingston upon Thames	33
Lambeth	11
Lewisham	4
Merton	13
Newham	15
Redbridge	36
Richmond upon Thames	31
Southwark	26
Sutton	21
Tower Hamlets	8
Waltham Forest	13
Wandsworth	13
City of Westminster	39

Radiation

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all airborne releases from nuclear facilities in the United Kingdom for the period 25 April to 20 May.

Mrs. Rumbold [*pursuant to her reply*, 3 June 1986, c. *492*]: Figures for airborne releases from Central Electricity Generating Board nuclear power stations in megabecquerels during the period 25 April to 25 May 1986 are as follows:

Station	*Aerosols* (1)	(2)	*Sulphur 35*	*Iodine 13*	*Argon 41*
Berkeley	4	5	—	—	—
Bradwell	9	37	—	—	—
Hinkley Point A	16	30	4,806	—	3.0E8
Hinkley Point B	42		2,849	38	1.5E7
Trawsfyndd	28	41	—	—	—
Dungeness A	27	40	—	—	—
Dungeness B	<40		<5,400	22	2.8E6
Sizewell	73	447	1,100	—	1.1E8
Oldbury	14		—	—	—
Wylfa	8		—	—	—
Hartlepool	<3		<588	71	1.5E6
Heysham	<4		1,307	228	1.8E5

Some of these figures are enhanced due to the detection of fallout from the Chernobyl accident. This reached a maximum on 2 and 3 May and affects the figures for aerosols for those stations with shield cooling air systems. Column 1 under aerosols excludes the measurements for 3 May and column 2 gives the measurements for 3 May.

It will take a further two to three weeks to obtain the figures for the facilities run by British Nuclear Fuels plc and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. I shall then write to the hon. Member.

Carsington Reservoir

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he can now indicate the date on which he expects the final report from Mr. Roy Coxon on the future of the Carsington reservoir.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 June 1986, c. *233-34*]: The final report by Mr. R. E. Coxon BSc, DIC, FEng, FICE, FASCE on the failure in 1984 of the Carsington embankment dam is being published today by Her Majesty's Stationery Office and I have placed copies in the Library.

Mr. Coxon's findings include the following:

> The investigation of the failure has been carefully and diligently pursued. The work provides a sound base for use in assessment of the cause and is adequate to establish the data on which remedial works could be confidently based.
>
> A satisfactory structure could be built at this site and integrated with the elements of the pevious structure identified to be left in place.

In respect of reservoir safety generally, Mr. Coxon's recommendations include the following:

> The preparation of design reports should be a fundamental part of the design process. Consideration should be given to their being required as part of the attachments to certification under the Reservoirs Act 1975.
>
> Consideration should also be given to centralisation of key records relating to certification and inspection of dams. This could afford rapid identification and onward reference in case of need by others.
>
> There is merit in involvement of a Board or Panel of Specialists in projects of this kind to review key elements relevant to design and construction, although such a board could in no way relieve other parties of their normal responsibilities.

Mr. Coxon's report is comprehensive and contains detailed summaries of technical investigations carried out by the separate parties involved. His has been a complex and time-consuming task, and he is to be congratulated upon the efficient way in which he has carried it out.

I accept Mr. Coxon's conclusions that there is an adequate technical explanation of the reasons for the failure, and that a replacement embankment could be designed and safely constructed on the Carsington site using locally available materials. It is now for the Severn-Trent water authority to decide, in the light of Mr. Coxon's report, what action should be taken.

I shall study carefully Mr. Coxon's recommendations on reservoir safety generally.

TRANSPORT

Tourist Buses (Westminster)

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the number of tourist buses parked in bus lanes on Westminster bridge and main roads within a mile of the House of Commons on 14, 15 and 16 July.

Mr. David Mitchell: None. The Department hopes to have later this year the results of a series of sample surveys of tourist coach movements and parking now being undertaken.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether he will seek the tightening of the International Civil Aviation Organisation chapter 3 regulations to prevent any new aircraft noisier than the quietest currently in production from entering service; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent representations he has received from hon. Members, public organisations and the general public on aircraft noise;

(3) what is the average number of years that aircraft not meeting the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organisation chapter 3 are allowed to remain on the British register;

(4) whether he has any intention to set a time limit for large civil aircraft which do not meet International Civil Aviation Organisation chapter 3 to be allowed to remain on the British register;

(5) what is his policy concerning the continued production and entry onto the British register of large civil passenger aircraft that do not meet the requirements of International Civil Aviation Organisation chapter 3; and if he will make a statement;

(6) if he will list those large civil passenger aircraft currently in production that conform to the noise regulations of International Civil Aviation Organisation chapter 3;

(7) if all large passenger aircraft currently in production and being introduced onto the British register meet the requirements in regard to noise as laid down by the International Civil Aviation Organisation chapter 3 regulations;

Mr. Moore: Noise certificated subsonic jet aeroplanes have to meet the standards laid down in the International Civil Aviation Organisation's annex 16, volume 1, "Aircraft Noise", and fall into two categories: chapter 2, and the more stringent chapter 3. In the White Paper on Airports Policy (para. 8.5) the Government pointed to the difficulties of replacing chapter 2 aeroplanes with chapter 3 types, but said that it would continue to play a leading role internationally in developing controls to limit the use of these aeroplanes. Whether this would entail preventing chapter 2 aeroplanes from being added to the United Kingdom register at some point in time is a matter for further consideration, as is the question of how long they should be permitted to remain on the register.

ICAO, with United Kingdom support, has decided to leave the phasing out of the production of chapter 2 aeroplanes to market forces, and I am not aware of any orders by United Kingdom airlines for new large passenger jet aeroplanes which do not meet chapter 3 standards. Recently ICAO's Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection decided that the need for increasing the stringency of the noise standards should be examined by a working group, on which the United Kingdom will be represented. The large passenger aeroplanes in production that meet chapter 3 are as follows:

Airbus
A300
A310
A320

Boeing
737-300
747 (most models)
757
767

British Aerospace
BAe 146

Fokker
F100

McDonnell Douglas
DC10
MD80 series

During the first six months of the year my right hon. Friend and I received 50 letters from hon. Members and 1,267 letters from members of the public about aircraft noise. In addition we have had seven meetings with interested organisations and hon. Members.

Motor Cycles (Noise)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what are the limits of noise levels allowed for motor cycles; and what steps he is taking to secure compliance with the current levels;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to stop the activities of motor cycle repair shops that fit silencer modifications or conversions that do not meet the legal requirements for noise suppression;

(3) what is the level for noise emissions by motor cycles; and when and how this was determined;

(4) what discussions he has had with his colleagues in the Council of Transport Ministers of European Economic Community in regard to reducing motor cycle noise, aircraft noise and lorry noise; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what discussions he has had with police authorities in regard to seeking to reduce the problem of motor cycle noise; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what steps he is taking to reduce the levels of noise emissions from motor cycles;

(7) when he last met representatives of motor cycle manufacturers to discuss the reduction of noise emissions from motorcycles.

Mr. David Mitchell: The current maximum noise limits for new motor cycles were laid down by European Community Directive 78/1015/EEC and are as follows:

	dB(A)
Up to 80 cc	78
80 to 125 cc	80
125 to 350 cc	83
350 to 500 cc	85
Over 500 cc	86

Discussions are currently taking place in the Community on Commission proposals for reducing these limits; details are given in explanatory memorandum 9148/84. Tighter limits for new lorries were agreed in 1984 and will take effect in 1989 and 1990. There are already two directives on the limitation of aircraft noise and any further Commission initiatives will be examined carefully.

Regulations were made in 1984 to require any silencer or exhaust fitted to a motor cycle first used on or after 1 January 1985 to be marked to show its compliance with British Standard BS AU 193: 1983. This should encourage manufacturers, repairers and dealers to supply and fit only components which fully meet the noise requirements.

We receive many complaints from the general public and from hon. Members about motor cycle noise. There are also letters from motor cyclists who are needlessly worried by reports in the motor cycle press that the new noise limits being discussed in Europe would make it impossible to manufacture air-cooled machines.

We have regular contact with the organisations concerned including the National Motorcycle Council, which represents motor cycle manufacturers and other groups concerned with motor cycling. My hon. Friend the Minister responsible for roads and traffic met the council's secretary on 10 July.

Officials of the Department have held discussions with the Association of Chief Police Officers about the difficulties in enforcing noise requirements on motorcycles in use, particularly where riders deliberately tamper with their machines. There is no easy solution to this problem.

Drivers' Hours

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has asked the European Community Commission to take regarding re-examining the application of the drivers' hours and tachograph regulations to private driving.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: European Community regulations 3820/85 and 3821/85 directly apply in the United Kingdom, with effect from 29 September, to passenger carrying vehicles of more than 17 seats even if the vehicles are being run privately or by voluntary organisations. I have asked the Commission to initiate a review of this subject and I have suggested that, in view of costs involved, and taking account of the needs of road safety, an exemption of privately driven vehicles which do not travel more than 100 kilometres from their base might be appropriate.

British Rail

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Transport when British Rail will publish its annual accounts for 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Railways Board's report and accounts for the 12 months to 31 March 1986 were published and laid before Parliament yesterday. They show that BR has substantially recovered from the losses it incurred in 1984-85 due to the miners' strike and that it is on target to meet the Government's requirements for a reduction in the public service obligation grant. I congratulate the chairman, board and staff on the progress which they are making in meeting their objectives and improving services to the customer.

SCOTLAND

Inverclyde Initiative

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he is satisfied with the working of the Inverclyde initiative; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many jobs have been created by the Inverclyde initiative at the latest date; and, of these, how many are full-time occupations.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Inverclyde initiative is a long-term programme whose aim is to stimulate the regeneration of the local economy. The employment target is the creation of up to 2,000 jobs during the five-year period of the initiative. Most of the work so far has concentrated on creating an environment which will be attractive to investors and entrepreneurs. A £6 million programme of land improvement measures is in progress, and £3·5 million was spent in the first year of the initiative to March 1986. Proposals for the redevelopment of a site at Customs house quay were recently given outline planning permission by the Inverclyde district council, and these could lead to the creation of 700 jobs.

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many nurses in Scotland earn less than £120 per week following the 1986

pay award; what proportion of total nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff this represents; and if he will break the figures down into grades.

Mr. John MacKay: I regret that this information is not held centrally in Scotland.

School Meals

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the total number of staff employed in the school meals service in January 1986 in each region, division or island authority in Scotland, and *(b)* the numbers of staff employed for (i) 30 or more hours per week, and (ii) less than 30 hours per week.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is as follows:

Region, Division or Island Authority	Number of Staff Employed		Total
	More than 30 hours per week	Less than 30 hours per week	
Borders	17	193	210
Central	282	344	626
Dumfries and Galloway	115	400	515
Fife	206	574	780
Grampian	383	732	1,115
Highland	214	420	634
Lothian	507	1,049	1,556
Strathclyde:	2,122	3,806	5,928
Argyll and Bute	63	154	217
Ayr	327	652	979
Dumbarton	112	612	724
Glasgow	790	909	1,699
Lanark	503	679	1,182
Renfrew	327	800	1,127
Tayside	304	589	893
Orkney	36	35	71
Shetland	52	52	104
Western Isles	39	96	135
SCOTLAND	4,277	8,290	12,567

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will produce a comparative table showing the total uptake of school meals to pupils present in percentage terms from 1979 to 1986 in each region, division or island authority in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is as follows:

Region Division or Island Authority	Total Uptake of School Meals as a Percentage of Pupils Present							
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Border	53·6	49·0	47·3	36·9	35·2	35·3	36·2	34·0
Central	41·6	39·1	43·8	39·2	37·2	37·8	38·8	36·3
Dumfries & Galloway	59·5	56·2	63·5	52·8	54·1	54·9	54·7	54·5
Fife	46·8	42·9	45·6	39·3	37·9	39·7	41·6	38·9
Grampian	45·7	45·4	41·6	37·9	38·5	39·3	40·5	38·3
Highland	54·3	48·8	49·2	44·5	46·2	50·8	49·3	49·6
Lothian	47·8	43·0	48·7	40·5	35·1	38·7	42·2	44·8
Strathclyde:	47·3	42·2	45·8	36·7	37·8	41·3	42·1	44·0
Argyll & Bute	57·2	54·8	57·2	50·4	52·8	55·2	52·9	58·6
Ayr	52·9	49·4	53·3	39·0	39·3	42·2	45·0	44·7
Dumbarton	44·7	38·8	42·4	36·0	37·9	44·0	43·4	48·1
Glasgow	46·9	42·5	42·9	39·5	41·7	44·6	45·4	47·1
Lanark	42·4	36·1	42·6	30·2	30·2	33·0	33·6	35·4
Renfrew	49·9	44·2	49·6	37·0	37·4	42·0	42·5	43·8
Tayside	45·7	41·5	40·0	31·6	33·0	37·5	39·5	38·6
Orkney	63·5	63·0	65·9	56·1	58·7	59·2	62·9	59·0
Shetland	80·2	75·3	78·0	72·0	71·4	69·8	69·8	71·4
Western Isles	64·8	62·2	66·5	60·0	57·9	58·1	55·9	57·2
SCOTLAND	47·8	43·6	46·3	38·4	38·2	41·2	42·4	43·0

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the cost of fixed school meals in each region, division or island authority in Scotland in January 1986, and *(b)* the average amount spent on cafeteria meals.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is as follows:

Region Division or Island Authority	Charge for Fixed Price School Meals (pence)	Average Amount Spent on Cafeteria Meals (pence)
Borders	48	52
Central	50	30
Dumfries and Galloway	55	41
Fife	52	42
Grampian	P.55 S.65	49
Highland	55	50
Lothian	P.50 S.55	50
Strathclyde		
Argyll & Bute	58	45
Ayr	58	46·4
Dumbarton	58	40·4
Glasgow	58	49
Lanark	58	48
Renfrew	58	50
Tayside	55	45
Orkney	55	55
Shetland	50	*
Western Isles	65	65

P = Primary, S = Secondary, * = No Cafeteria Service.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the number of schools in each region, division or island authority which do not supply school meals.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information taken from the 1986 annual school meals census is as follows:

Region	*Number of schools not providing meals*
Borders	16
Central	31
Dumfries and Galloway	4
Fife	40
Grampian	47
Highland	24
Lothian	99
Strathclyde	99
Argyll and Bute	5
Ayr	29
Dumbarton	9
Glasgow	14
Lanark	26
Renfrew	16
Tayside	11
Orkney	3
Shetland	2
Western Isles	1
SCOTLAND	377

Paramilitary Activity (Deaths)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in Scotland in the first six months of the current year as a result of paramilitary activity; and if he will break down the figures specifying whether the paramilitary were (i) from Western Europe, (ii) from Northern Ireland, (iii) from the Republic of Ireland, (iv) from other parts of the world and (v) of unknown origin.

Mr. John MacKay: No such deaths or injuries occurred in Scotland in the first six months of 1986.

Prisoners (Transfers)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners were transferred from *(a)* Scotland to Northern Ireland and *(b)* Northern Ireland to Scotland in the first six months of the current year; and under which section of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 such transfers were carried out.

Mr. John MacKay: Two prisoners were transferred permanently from Scotland to Northern Ireland under Section 26(1), and one prisoner was transferred temporarily, for a period of 15 days, from Northern Ireland to Scotland under Section 27(1), of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 in the first six months of this year.

The permanent transfer of another prisoner from Scotland to Northern Ireland under Section 26(1) of the Act was also agreed during the same period, but the actual transfer has still to take place.

Fur Production

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many establishments known to him in Scotland were used for the raising of animals for the production of fur, by species, in each of the last five years.

Mr. John MacKay: The only figures known to my right hon. and learned Friend for establishments which rear animals for the production of fur in Scotland are those for mink farms licensed annually for the purposes of the Destructive Imported Animals Act 1932. The licences issued in each of the financial years 1981-82 to 1985-86 were respectively 14, 13, 10 8 and 8.

Court of Session (Delays)

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the increase in the number and extent of delays which are occurring in the hearing of cases in the Court of Session in the latest convenient 12 months period as compared with earlier similar periods; and what action is proposed to reduce such delays.

Mr. Rifkind: No statistics of the kind requested are available but the report of the review body on use of judicial time in the superior courts in Scotland records that the average intervals between fixing and commencing hearings for the main categories of business are as follows:

Categories of Civil Business	*Current Average Interval*
Appeals	12 months
Jury Trials	15 months
Non-Consistorial Proofs	15 months
Defended Consistorial Proofs	12 months

The report, which was published on 18 July, makes a number of recommendations which I have discussed already with the Lord President of the Court of Session, many of which he is currently in the process of implementing. On those requiring primary legislation I have written to interested bodies and organisations inviting comments by 31 August.

Scottish Women's Aid

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the amount of grant aid allocated to Scottish Women's Aid in 1985-86; and what sum is proposed for the current financial year.

Mr. John MacKay: Revenue grants made to Scottish Women's Aid, including the expenses of a children's worker and a training liaison officer, amounted to £63,563 in 1985-86. A grant of £505 for capital equipment was paid in addition.

In 1986-87 revenue grants amounting to £64,467 have been offered but the position is being reconsidered following recent discussions with the organisation.

Dog Licences

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what income was received from dog licences in Scotland in 1985-6; what was the cost of collection; how many licences were issued; and what progress has been made in establishing a self-financing system.

Mr. Ancram: Final figures for 1985-86 are not yet available. On the basis of an estimate of 173,000 licences, the income for that year has been estimated at £64,010 and the cost of collection at £258,635.

After careful consideration, the Government have decided to introduce legislation to abolish the dog licence when a suitable opportunity arises.

Student Finance

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he intends to conduct in Scotland during the review of student finance; and whether he has any plans to publish the results of the review.

Mr. Rifkind: Organisations in Scotland concerned with education at undergraduate level will be specifically invited to submit written evidence, and in addition it will be open to any group or individual to make representations.

As was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science in his statement on 18 June at columns 1046-47 the outcome of the review will be published for public consultation.

Students (Planning Courses)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students are currently studying on planning courses on Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 July 1986, c. *300*]: In 1984-5, which is the latest year for which final figures are available, there were 492 full-time and 157 part-time students on planning courses in universities and central institutions in Scotland.

Dounreay

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Nature Conservancy Council has submitted written evidence to the public inquiry considering the expansion of facilities at Dounreay; and if he will instruct the Nature Conservancy Council to appear before the inquiry.

Mr. Ancram [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *30*]: The Nature Conservancy Council lodged a written submission on 11 March 1986. The council stated that it did not wish to appear or be represented at the Dounreay inquiry. Its submission has, however, been made available to parties at the inquiry and has been referred to in evidence. My right hon. and learned Friend does not have power at this stage of the inquiry to require the appearance of a representative of the council: the reporter whom my right hon. and learned Friend appointed has such power but it is not his intention to exercise it.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Visitors

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Lord Privy Seal what is his estimate of the increase in the number of public visiting the Palace of Westminster over the last 10 years; what is his estimate of the resultant increased cost to public funds; whether he is satisfied with the necessary security arrangements; if he will raise with the Services Committee the possibility of placing a box for voluntary contributions towards the upkeep of the Palace at points of ingress and egress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1986]: Since 1979 the number of visitors to the Palace of Westminster, apart from visitors to the Public Gallery, has been restricted to those who are either sponsored by a Member of both Houses, or who come as guests of those who work here. In 1985 the Palace of Westminster was visited by about a quarter of the number of visitors in 1975. The Services Committee has always taken a keen interest in the number of visitors on the line of route and for a variety of reasons, since 1979, this number has been restricted to a maximum of 1,000 on any one day. The security arrangements are kept continually under review.

Successive Administrations have accepted that the costs of the upkeep of the Palace of Westminster, which include the cost of controlling visits, are a legitimate charge on public funds.

ENERGY

Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much of the depleted uranium stockpile has been re-enriched for use in British or foreign nuclear programmes since 1956.

Mr. Goodlad: I am asking the chairman of BNFL to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will set out in tabular form *(a)* the amount of magnox spent fuel reprocessed arising from the Latina and Tokoi Mura reactors and imported for processing in the United Kingdom, *(b)* the amounts of magnox spent nuclear fuel reprocessed arising from the electricity board reactors for each year since 1963;

(2) if magnox spent fuel from Latina and Tokoi Mura reactors has ever been co-processed with spent nuclear fuel from Calder Hall and Chapel Cross reactors.

Mr. Goodlad: These are operational matters for British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now publish the text of the safeguards agreement concluded on 3 June between Her Majesty's Government and the European Commission concerning the application of safeguards to the magnox reprocessing material balance area at Sellafield.

Mr. Goodlad: I have nothing to add to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member of 12 June, at column *268-69*.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether the United Kingdom-European Commission agreement on the safeguarding of civil nuclear material flows through Sellafield contains provisions for continuous physical nuclear safeguards;

(2) what provisions are in force to ensure that magnox spent nuclear fuel from Latina in Italy and Tokai Mura in Japan are open to continuous physical nuclear safeguards when being reprocessed at Sellafield.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) on 14 July at column *388*.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will consider publishing, weekly, until December, an input-output table of spent magnox nuclear fuel and depleted uranium/plutonium stocks arising from the throughput at the Windscale works B205 reprocessing plant at British Nuclear Fuels, Sellafield.

Mr. Goodlad: In this period the plant will handle material from the United Kingdom's defence reactors and the information cannot therefore be given.

Electricity Supply Industry

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his policy towards the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in the light of the Electrical Power Engineers' Association document entitled "Public or Private Electricity—The American Experience", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Goodlad: I shall read the EPEA report with interest. As has been made clear on a number of occasions, the Government have no present plans to privatise the electricity supply industry.

Coal Industry

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is his estimate of the contribution made to National Coal Board profits by royalties paid by private mine operators; and whether he has any plans to review the basis of royalty payments;

(2) what information he has to how many coal merchanting businesses have been acquired by the National Coal Board or its subsidiaries since 1979; and what annual tonnages of coal those businesses were retailing when acquired;

(3) what information he has as to how many disposals of coal merchanting businesses there have been by the National Coal Board since 1979 and as to what tonnages of coal they represent;

(4) what is his estimate of the annual profits in each of the years since 1979 which National Fuel Distributors Ltd. has derived from supplying smokeless fuels to concessionaires.

Mr. David Hunt: These subjects are matters for British Coal to advise on and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Sellafield

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether there have been any further official assessments of the implications of the 1957 Windscale fire since the Fleck committee reports.

Mr. Goodlad: The National Radiological Protection Board published "An assessment of the radiological impact of the Windscale fire October 1957" (R135) in November 1982, and an addendum to that report in September 1983. In addition, there have been a number of detailed technical studies relating to different aspects of this subject, many of which are listed in that NRPB report.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will reconsider his decision not to place in the Library copies of accountancy records of the reprocessing batch from which the liquor discharged from Sellafield on 23 January originated.

Mr. Goodlad: No.

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make available to hon. Members all reports and assessments made by his Department since 1979 on the effects of a maximum credible nuclear accident at the four Calder Hall nuclear reactors on the contnued operation of the Sellafield nuclear reprocessing and waste handling activities after such an accident.

Mr. Goodlad: There have been no such reports and assessments made by the Department of Energy. Safety is the responsibility of the operator, overseen by the Health and Safety Executive's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate.

Voltage Variations

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many representations he has received relating to voltage variations in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I have received very few representations on this matter, which is within the operational responsibility of the electricity supply industry.

Advance Petroleum Revenue Tax

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will assess the effect on the viability of marginal oilfields and further North sea development work of the immediate repayment of advance petroleum revenue tax, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: A number of oil companies have raised with me issues concerning the APRT and its effects on their cash flows and ability to fund existing and new United Kingdom continental shelf developments.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Sickness Benefit

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the implications of his proposals to remove the right to part rate sickness benefit for those with less than full contribution records on their qualification for invalidity benefit.

Mr. Newton: Our proposals in the Social Security Bill mean that people who currently become entitled to invalidity benefit through receiving part-rate sickness benefit will no longer be able to do so. It is estimated that in an average year about 6,500 people will be affected. It is further estimated that over 70 per cent. of these will be entitled to other benefits (such as severe disabled allowance and/or supplementary benefit) either in their own right, or as a dependant of a beneficiary.

Mortgage Interest

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the estimated impact of the Government proposals to limit the proportion of mortgage interest to be met during the initial period of benefit on the living standards of those affected;

(2) what has been the response of the building societies to the Government's proposals to limit the proportion of mortgage interest to be met during the initial period of benefit;

(3) what impact the proposals for individuals to pay a proportion of rates and mortgage interest is expected to

have on the level of repossessions; and what is the estimated cost to the social security budget of possible increased bed and breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Newton: The proposals concerning supplementary benefit for mortgage interest during the first six months on benefit have been referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee for consultation. Final decisions will be taken in the light of the Committee's report, which we have not yet received. We would not however expect proposals along the lines referred to have a significant impact on standards of living of those affected, on the level of repossessions or on the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. Claimants over age 60 would not be affected; in other cases, half the interest would continue to be paid during a period of up to six months on benefit, and anyone whose claim lasted more than six months would receive full help with interest payments after that period, as well as extra payments for any additional interest on a higher outstanding amount due to the limitation. It is estimated that the proposed change would add about £200 to the outstanding loan in the average case where a claim lasted for the full six months. Many claims do not, however, last this long

While the Building Societies Association has made it clear that it does not support the proposals, it indicated in its response to the social security Green Paper that it would respond to any changes sympathetically and continue to help as many people as possible into owning their own homes. I understand that the association has responded to the SSAC's invitation to comment on the proposals, and the committee will no doubt take account of its views in preparing its report.

Disabled People (Survey)

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys survey of disabled people will be published.

Mr. Newton: Publication of the full results of the survey is expected in 1988. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has made good progress. By the end of last year, it had successfully completed interviewing in relation to nationally representative samples of adults and children with significant disabilities living in private households. I am grateful to the many disabled people and their families who have given so generously of their time, and to the organisations who represent them for their constructive contributions throughout the research programme. That valued assistance continues during the design of this year's research, which is to cover people in residential care. OPCS will conduct interviews in relation to a representative sample of disabled adults in communal establishments; and to enable the Department to decide whether interviewing should subsequently be extended to disabled children permanently resident in institutions, OPCS will first establish their number by means of a postal census. Processing and analysis of the data from last year's fieldwork has begun and the survey results will, as the Government's White Paper indicated, provide the evidence needed to support a comprehensive review of benefits for sick and disabled people.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Denton and Reddish and Gorton and Stockport, North constituencies in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at his Department's local offices for the same period.

Mr. Major: Denton and Reddish constituency is covered by four of the Department's offices, Hyde, Stockport, South, Stockport, North and Ashton under Lyne. Stockport, North constituency is covered by Stockport, South and Stockport, North and Gorton constituency is covered by the offices at Rusholme, Longsight and Openshaw. In each case the boundaries of the offices are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)			*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**		
	1982-83	*1985-86*	*Percentage change*	*1982-83*	*1985-86*	*Percentage change*
Hyde	13,442	13,027	−3·1	10,504	11,445	+9·0
Stockport-South	13,913	13,846	−0·5	10,808	11,197	+3·6
Stockport-North	16,023	15,152	−5·4	11,583	12,349	+6·6
Ashton under Lyne	11,720	12,218	+4·2	11,209	11,829	+5·5
Longsight	14,605	14,684	+0·5	10,906	11,923	+9·3
Rusholme	18,865	13,985	−26·0	11,140	12,499	+12·2
Openshaw	11,237	9,912	−11·8	10,177	10,465	+2·8

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1982-83—1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Hyde	+20·0	+0·8
Stockport-South	+16·1	−5·0
Stockport-North	+9·9	−6·8
Ashton under Lyne	+36·1	+2·9
Longsight	+15·2	+2·3
Rusholme	+6·1	−6·2
Openshaw	−1·4	−13·6

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at his Department's local offices in Sheffield between 1979 and 1985, inclusive;

(2) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Sheffield, Hillsborough constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents.

Mr. Major: Sheffield, Hillsborough is covered by two of the Department's offices, Sheffield north-east and Sheffield north-west but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested. Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Sheffield	
	North-East	*North-West*
1982-83	17,472	23,784
1985-86	15,748	19,962
Percentage change	−9·9	−16·1
*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**		
1982-83	18,560	16,293
1985-86	19,806	18,418
Percentage change	+6·7	+13·0

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Sheffield is covered by the two offices above, and the offices at Sheffield south-east and Sheffield south-west. The percentage change in complement for these offices 1982-83—1985-86 is as follows:

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Sheffield South-East	+22·0	+2·9
Sheffield South-West	+8·7	−4·7
Sheffield North-East	+22·2	+7·8
Sheffield North-West	+18·2	−1·1

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Eccles constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at this Department's offices for the same period.

Mr. Major: Eccles is covered by two of the Department's offices, Salford, North and Salford, South, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

	*Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit**			*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit†*			*Percentage change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86*	
	1982-83	*1985-86*	*Percentage change*	*1982-83*	*1985-86*	*Percentage change*	*Supplementary benefit staff*	*All staff*
Salford North	16,828	13,573	−19·3	14,566	16,079	+10·4	+12·0	−5·7
Salford South	11,506	10,202	−12·8	12,111	12,611	+4·1	+9·2	−9·0

* Including unsuccessful.

† Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of Housing Benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Hyndburn constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at his Department's local offices;

(2) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Rossendale constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at his Department's local offices;

(3) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Burnley constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at his Department's local offices for the same period.

Mr. Major: Hyndburn constituency is covered by one of the Department's offices, Accrington. Rossendale and Darwen is covered by two offices, Rossendale and Blackburn and the Burnley constituency is covered by Burnley office. In all of these cases, the offices' boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	1982-83	*1985-86*	*Percentage change*
Accrington	11,305	11,160	−1·3
Rossendale	6,568	6,596	+0·4
Blackburn	18,646	19,970	+7·1
Burnley	21,257	19,531	−8·1

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	1982-83	*1985-86*	*Percentage change*
Accrington	7,526	7,794	+3·6
Rossendale	5,345	5,066	−5·2
Blackburn	14,069	14,945	+6·2
Burnley	15,561	16,463	+5·8

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Accrington	+14·6	−6·4
Rossendale	+8·3	−10·4
Blackburn	+11·7	−4·5
Burnley	+19·8	−5·4

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Worsley constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents;

(2) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at his Department's local office at Market street, Farnworth between 1979 and 1985;

(3) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at his Department's local office at Windermere road, Leigh between 1979 and 1985;

(4) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at his Department's local office at Davenport house, Salford between 1979 and 1985;

(5) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at his Department's local office at Baskerville house, Salford between 1979 and 1985.

Mr. Major: Worsley is covered by three of the Department's offices, Farnsworth, Leigh and Salford South, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)			*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**		
	1982-83	*1985-86*	*Per cent. change*	*1982-83*	*1985-86*	*Per cent. change*
Farnworth	11,114	11,600	+4·4	9,167	9,946	+8·5
Leigh	12,539	11,552	−7·9	9,386	10,580	+12·7
Salford South	11,506	10,202	−11·3	12,111	12,611	+4·1

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February

Percentage change in complement for the above offices and Salford North 1982-83—1985-86:

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All Staff*
Farnworth (Market Street)	+24·1	−2·6
Leigh (Windermere Road)	+28·3	−1·4
Salford South (Baskerville House)	+9·2	−9·0
Salford North (Davenport House)	+12·0	−5·7

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Concannon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Mansfield constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents;

(2) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the Mansfield offices of his Department over the period 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Major: Mansfield is covered by one of the Department's offices, Mansfield, but the office's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency. Comprehensive figures are not available before 1980-81 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the office is as follows:

	1980-81	1985-86	Percentage change
Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)	15,326	16,230	+ 5·9
Number of people receiving supplementary benefit*	7,669	13,590	+77·2

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February

Percentage change in complement 1980-81 to 1985-86

	Change
Supplementary benefit staff	+40·3
All staff	−12·0

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of Housing Benefit and postal claim forms.

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of claimants receiving supplementary benefit in West Bromwich, Wednesbury and Tipton in the years 1979 and 1985; and what is the percentage change which the figures represent.

Mr. Major: West Bromwich, Wednesbury and Tipton are covered by the Department's office at West Bromwich, but its boundaries are not conterminous with those towns.

The number of people receiving supplementary benefit from this office in May 1979 and 1985 and the percentage change which the figures represent were:

1979	1985	Percentage change
10,639	21,214	99·4

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Mr. Ron Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Carlisle constituency in 1979 and 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the local offices of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major: Carlisle constituency is covered by one of the Department's offices, Carlisle, and the office's boundary is conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the office is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)	Number of people receiving supplementary benefit*
1982-83	12,387	8,440
1985-86	11,819	8,125
Percentage change	−4·8	−3·7

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1982-83—1985-86

	Per cent.
Supplementary benefit staff	+8·8
All staff	−5·1

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of Housing Benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Sunderland, North constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major: Sunderland, North is covered by two of the Department's offices, Sunderland, north and Sunderland, south, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency. Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

	Sunderland North	South
Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)		
1982-83	20,088	15,922
1985-86	21,064	13,925
Percentage change	+4·9	−12·5
Number of people receiving supplementary benefit		
1982-83	19,43	15,271
1985-86	21,545	16,529
Percentage change	+13·1	+8·2

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1982-83—1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	All staff
Sunderland North	+14·7	−1·3
Sunderland South	0	−8·4

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit

in the Swansea East constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department over the same period.

Mr. Major: Swansea, East is covered by two of the Department's offices, Swansea and Morriston, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1981-82 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the above offices is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)	*Swansea*	*Morriston*
1981-82	21,082	8,828
1985-86	20,128	9,146
Percentage change	−4·5	+3·6
Number of people receiving supplementary benefit		
1981-82	15,246	6,750
1985-86	20,429	8,935
Percentage change	+34·0	+32·4

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1981-82—1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Swansea	+20·0	−0·5
Morriston	+21·8	−4·3

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Monklands, West constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benfit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department over the same period.

Mr. Major: Monklands, West is covered by five of the Department's offices, Cumbernauld, Coatbridge Area Office, Coatbridge national insurance office, Glasgow Springburn AO and Glasgow Springburn NIO. Their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency. The national insurance offices do not deal with supplementary benefit.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the offices is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)			*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**		
	1979/80	*1985/86*	*Per cent. change*	*1979/80*	*1985/86*	*Per cent. change*
Coatbridge	7,637	7,889	+3·3	3,947	6,871	+74·1
Cumbernauld	11,883	14,631	+23·1	4,681	10,294	+119·9
Springburn	10,838	9,334	−13·9	6,484	10,730	+65·5

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February

Percentage change in complement 1979/80—1985/86:

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Coatbridge AO*	+56·5	+56·5
Cumbernauld	+92·2	+17·1
Springburn AO*	+51·4	+51·4
Coatbridge NIO	Not applicable	−38·9
Springburn NIO	Not applicable	−53·7

* Deals only with supplementary benefit.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in the Islington, North constituency claimed supplementary benefit in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and in 1986, January to June.

Mr. Major: Islington, North constituency is covered by three of the Department's offices Hoxton, Finsbury Park and Highgate but their boundaries are not conterminous with those of the constituency.

Information is available only in relation to the number of new and repeat claims processed by local offices and figures are collected for the period April to April each year. No details are available for years before 1982-83.

The total numbers of claims processed by these three offices for the years 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and the numbers to date for 1986 were as follows:

Year	*Number*
1982-83	50,023
1983-84	55,545
1984-85	51,790
1985-86	54,272
*1986	9,541

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.
* Period 9 April—1 July.

Mr. McCartney asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit

in the Clydebank and Milngavie constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the local offices of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major: Clydebank and Milngavie is covered by two of the Department's offices, Clydebank and Glasgow (Maryhill). Their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested. Information that is available for the offices is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to Supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

Year	*Clydebank*	*Maryhill*
1979-80	8,082	12,384
1985-86	7,932	13,770
Percentage change	−1·9	+11·2
*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**		
1979-80	3,922	8,274
1985-86	6,313	12,179
Percentage change	+61·0	+47.2

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1979-80—1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Clydebank	+52·3	+5·9
Maryhill	+46·9	+6·3

Direct comparisons between number of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has had any representations on the limits on supplementary benefit payments made to maintain physically or mentally handicapped individuals in residential or nursing homes.

Mr. Newton: Since April last year, when the present arrangements where introduced, we have received representations from many organisations with an interest in the provision of residential and nursing care for the physically and mentally handicapped. We have also received representations from some interested individuals. Such representations have been taken into account in the changes made in the supplementary benefit limits in November 1985, and those coming into force on 28 July.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that social security offices are empowered, in circumstances where they are satisfied that a real and urgent need exists, to provide first time single householders, without dependants, who are in receipt of supplementary benefit, with financial assistance through his single payments system towards the cost of obtaining those basic items of furnishing and household equipment needed to enable them to live independently in their own homes.

Mr. Newton: Under the revised rules contained in the Supplementary Benefit (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1986 laid before the House on 21 July, single childless householders setting up home for the first time will be eligible for furniture and bedding payments, including the flat rate payment for miscellaneous needs in the following circumstances; moving for a reason specified in regulation 13(1) (payment of removal expenses); leaving prison, hospital after one year, or young person leaving local authority care; moving as part of a planned programme of resettlement or rehabilitation from a resettlement unit or special care hostel or group home; and refugees from abroad. In other circumstances, elderly and disabled claimants will be able to get help without time limits for the revised list of specified furniture items other than the miscellaneous needs payments. Payment for specified furniture items subject to the same exception can also be considered under regulation 30 where the adjudication officer considers such a payment is the only means by which serious damage or serious risk to health or safety can be avoided.

I understand that the Chief Adjudication Officer will shortly be issuing guidance on the revised rules. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Forrester asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Stoke-on-Trent, North constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at local offices of his Department over the same period.

Mr. Major: Stoke-on-Trent, North is covered by one one of the Department's offices, Stoke North ILO but the office's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1980-81 and no information is available on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit throughout the year.

Information that is available is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc unsuccessful)	*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**
1980-81	24,476	13,805
1985-86	19,366	18.192
Percentage change	−20·9	+31·8

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at Febuary.

Percentage change in complement 1980-81—1985-86

	Change
Supplementary benefit staff	+24·3
All staff	−7·4

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Rother Valley constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change this represents; and what

was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major: Rother Valley is covered by two of the Department's offices, Rotherham North and Rotherham South, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

	Rotherham North	*South*
Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)		
1982-83	5,619	17,991
1985-86	5,571	20,327
Percentage change	−0·9	+13·0
Number of people receiving supplementary benefit*		
1982-83	5,291	16,713
1985-86	5,520	18,890
Percentage change	+4·3	+13·0

*Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

The percentage change in complement for these offices 1982-83 to 1985-86 is as follows:

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Rotherham North	+22·2	−6·8
Rotherham South	+16·5	−4·9

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Means-tested Benefits

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all the benefits in cash or in kind for which his Department is wholly or partly responsible which are means-tested.

Mr. Major: Supplementary benefit and family income supplement are the principal income-related benefits administered by the Department of Health and Social Security. Receipt can also give passported entitlement to other benefits such as free school meals. The Department also administers low-income schemes which provide help with National Health Service charges, travelling expenses and welfare foods, and has policy responsibility for housing benefit, which is administered by local authorities.

Rent and Rate Rebates and Allowances

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what payments were made by his Department for *(a)* rate rebates, *(b)* rent rebates and *(c)* rent allowances in 1985-86; and what are his latest estimates for these figures for 1986-87 for the (i) Burnley borough council, (ii) Pendle borough council, (iii) Hyndburn borough council and (iv) Rossendale borough council.

Mr. Major: Payments on account made by the Department to these authorities for benefits granted under the housing benefit scheme in 1985-86 and estimated payments to be made in the year 1986-87 are:

£ million

	Rate Rebate		*Rate Rebates*		*Rent Allowances*	
	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Burnley BC	1·4	1·7	3·2	3·4	0·9	1·2
Pendle BC	1·2	1·5	2·8	3·0	0·5	0·6
Hyndburn BC	1·3	1·4	2·4	2·6	0·7	0·8
Rossendale BC	1·1	1·1	2·7	2·9	0·4	0·6

These figures are based on the Councils' estimated expenditure and are subject to revision following submission of their final subsidy claims.

Prescription Items

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, to what factors he attributes the fall in the number of prescription items between 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Hayhoe: The table I provided on 11 July showed that in the past 10 years the general trend has been for the number of prescription items dispensed to increase. Although occasionally there may be variations in this trend there is no firm evidence to identify any particular cause.

Students (Benefits)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what welfare benefits students are eligible to claim in connection with illness; and what is the cost to public funds.

Mr. Major: A student who is ill may qualify for sickness benefit or supplementary benefit, subject to the normal rules. No separate records are kept of claims from sick students.

Board and Lodging Allowance

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the reasons for paying board and lodging allowance at a rate of £247·50 per week from August 1986 to the British Home and Hospital for Incurables for the care of a stroke victim under the age of 65 years and £187·50 per week for a stroke victim over the age of 65 years.

Mr. Newton: Younger physically disabled people, some of whom may be multiply handicapped and very young, generally have a wider variety of care needs and thus higher costs than people whose disability occurs later in life. The maximum amount of supplementary benefit which may be paid to physically disabled people in nursing homes, whose disability arose under pension age, has therefore been set at a higher level (currently £230 and from 28 July £247·50 for a nursing home in the Greater London area) than the maximum amount for elderly people. As I have made clear to the House on a number of occasions, we are looking at whether practicable arrangements allowing greater flexibility can be devised.

Supplementary Pensions

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent on supplementary pensions in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to table 3.15 on pages 224-225 of volume II of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89" (Cmnd. 9702), a copy of which is in the Library.

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many nurses earn less than £120 per week following the 1986 pay award; what proportion of total nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff this represents; and if he will break down the figures into grades.

Mr. Hayhoe: Nurse basic pay rates went up on average by 7·8 per cent. on 1 July 1986. I regret that information on the detail of nurse earnings following that increase is not yet available.

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current basic minimum and maximum salary of *(a)* a nursing auxiliary, *(b)* an enrolled nurse and *(c)* a pupil-student nurse; what it was in December 1974 expressed in current prices; and what percentage increases would be necessary to give the 1986 salary a purchasing value equal to that of 1974.

Mr. Hayhoe: Pay levels in the grades concerned would need to be reduced by up to 16 per cent. to return them to their 1974 value in real terms. This calculation ignores the further benefit of the 2½ hour reduction in the working week in 1980-81.

The detailed information requested is as follows:

	Annual basic pay salary as at 1 July 1986		*Annual basic pay salary as at December 1974* expressed at current prices†*		*Percentage change needed to give 1986 salary real value of 1974 salary*	
	Minimum £	*Maximum* £	*Minimum* £	*Maximum* £	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
Nursing Auxiliary	4,265	5,525	3,782	5,030	−11·3	−9·0
Enrolled Nurse	5,700	7,020	4,792	6,277	−15·9	−10·6
Pupil/Student	4,325	4,875	3,713	4,366	−14·2	−10·4

* Excludes threshold payments.
† Based on retail price index for June 1986.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of families receiving family income supplement in 1979 and each subsequent year and the average amount of benefit received: *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in real terms.

Mr. Major: The information is as follows:

Year (April)	*All families (thousands)*	*Av. weekly payment (cash terms)* £	*Av. weekly payment (real terms) (At April 1979 prices)* £
1979	78	5.20	5.20
1980	88	7.90	6.50
1981	112	10.00	7.30
1982	143	10.50	7.10
1983	186	12.00	7.70
1984	203	12.10	7.40
1985	199	12.10	6.90
1986	201	13.30	7.40

Patient-Doctor Ratio

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the patient to doctor ratio in *(a)* the Burnley constituency, *(b)* the Hyndburn constituency, *(c)* the Pendle constituency and *(d)* the Rossendale constituency; and what is the average figure for England as a whole.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that not all of the information requested is available centrally. The number of doctors per 100,000 population for hospital and community health services in England is 85·7 whole-time equivalents. The average list size for general practitioners is 2,068. The hon. Member may wish to make inquiries of North-Western regional health authority and Lancashire family practitioner committee for the more detailed local information he seeks.

Leukaemia

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the progress of the study by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys into the incidence of leukaemia and related cancer in the areas around nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Several inquiries have been received but I am not yet in a position to give an expected date of publication of the report.

Eye Testing

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many ophthalmic opticians have the necessary equipment to carry out tests for intraocular pressure and of visual fields.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether tests of intraocular pressure and visual fields form part of the routine sight tests carried out by ophthalmic opticians for the National Health Service; and if he has any plans to extend these.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is not considered necessary to require opticians to include these as part of the routine National Health Service sight test, although it is open to ophthalmic opticians to carry out whatever tests they judge to be appropriate in individual cases. There are no plans to change the arrangements for the provision of National Health Service sight tests.

Glaucoma

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which specialist tests for glaucoma are beyond the competence of ophthalmic opticians.

Mr. Hayhoe: Ophthalmic opticians are trained in many of the techniques for detecting symptoms of glaucoma. However diagnosis would be a matter for the responsible ophthalmologist.

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the effectiveness of the testing procedures for the blood relatives of sufferers from glaucoma.

Mr. Hayhoe: Facilities for the detection and treatment of glaucoma provided in hospital eye departments are the responsibility of individual health authorities. I understand that ophthalmologists would normally advise glaucoma sufferers that their first degree relatives over the age of 40 should be screened.

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of glaucoma were positively identified by ophthalmic opticians in routine National Health Service eye tests in 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Hayhoe: Diagnosis of disease is a matter for qualified medical practitioners. Ophthalmic opticians are, however, required to inform patients' doctors of any indication of disease they detect in the course of the National Health Service sight test. I regret that information is not available on the number of such referrals.

Cervical Cancer (Wandsworth)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women have died of cervical cancer in Wandsworth in each year since 1979; and what is the national average figure for a comparable area.

Mr. Hayhoe: The number of deaths to women usually resident in Wandsworth with an underlying cause of death of malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri (ICD(9) 180) in each year since 1979 is shown in the table. Allowing for differences in age distribution, the mortality from cervical cancer has been on average 1 per cent. lower in Wandsworth than in England and Wales as a whole over this period, or 4 per cent. lower than in the combined group of all London boroughs and metropolitan county districts. Such differences are within the range of variation that could well occur from chance alone.

Number of deaths with an underlying cause of death of malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri (ICD (9) 180) to women usually resident in the London Borough of Wandsworth*

Year	*Number of deaths*
1979	2
1980	13
1981	17
1982	15
1983	10
1984	9
1985	6

* International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

Cigarette Advertising

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to publish annual reports of the committees to monitor the operation of the new voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry regarding cigarette advertising and health warnings.

Mr. Whitney: The terms of the voluntary agreement provide that the chairman's annual report may be published at the discretion of Ministers and after consultation with the Tobacco Advisory Council and the Imported Tobacco Products Advisory Council. Accordingly, we shall consider publication when the first report becomes available next year.

Benefits

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the cost of paying unemployment benefit to persons between the ages of 60 and 65 years whose benefit is exhausted or who are currently disqualified because their contribution record is inadequate, but excluding females who are entitled to a state pension, and the saving in other benefits and additional yield of tax; and what adjustment should be made to these figures if those with an occupational pension but no state pension were to be excluded from drawing unemployment benefit.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information requested is not available. No records are kept of the number of unemployed persons over 60 years who are not receiving benefits and who are not required to sign at the unemployment benefit office for credits.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his estimate of the saving in benefits including housing benefit if *(a)* child benefit were increased to (i) £15 and (ii) £20 per week and *(b)* unemployment pay was also paid to all those below pensionable age without work and able and willing to work;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of children in families in receipt of social security; how this compares with the number in 1973 and 1979; and what is his estimate of the numbers which could be taken out of social security

if *(a)* child benefit were increased to (i) £15 and (ii) £20 per week and *(b)* in addition unemployment pay was payable to all those below pensionable age without work and able and willing to work.

Mr. Newton: Increases in child benefit would reduce the number of families in receipt of supplementary benefit, rather than social security as a whole. The number of children in families in receipt of supplementary benefit is as follows:

	Number
1973	780,000
1979	920,000
1984	1,950,000

I regret that the other information requested can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of children eligible for child benefit, the number for whom benefit is being paid, the number of families receiving benefit and the distribution by family size, the number of families receiving one-parent benefit, the estimated gross cost in the current year of both kinds of benefit and the estimated cost if child benefit were to be increased to (i) £15 and (ii) £20 per week together with the estimated savings on other programmes, including housing benefit.

Mr. Newton: In December 1984 child benefit was paid for 12,346,000 eligible children, in 6,881,000 families, with the following distribution by family size:

	'000
Families with—	
One child	2,895
2 children	2,865
3 children	858
4 children	197
5 children	48
6 or more children	18

In December 1984 517,000 families received one-parent benefit. The estimated gross costs in 1986-87 are £4,425 million for child benefit and £148 million for one-parent benefit. In a full year the gross cost of child benefit at £15 a week would be £9,496 million, and at £20 a week, £12,661 million. To calculate the estimated savings on other programmes following these increases would incur disproportionate cost.

Social Security Budget

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, in terms of current prices, expenditure under the social security budget in the current financial year under the heads set out in the answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 18 July 1985, *Official Report*, column 237.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is as follows:

Social security benefit expenditure 1986-87 (estimated)

	£ million
Retirement pension	17,840
Non-contributory retirement pension	37
Widows benefits	828
Unemployment benefit	1,530
Sickness benefit	111
Invalidity benefit	2,625
Attendance allowance	773
Invalid care allowance	15
Severe disablement allowance	303
Mobility allowance	506
Christmas bonus	113
All industrial injuries benefits	484
Maternity benefits	197
Benefits paid in respect of children*	4,575
Family income supplement	158
Death grant	18
War pensions	572
Supplementary benefit	7,264
Housing benefit	4,678
Total social security benefits	42,627

* Child benefit, one parent benefit, guardian's allowance and child's special allowance.

This information, in somewhat more detailed form, is provided annually in the social security chapter of the Government's public expenditure White Paper.

Yttrium-Aluminium-Garnet Lasers

Sir Ian Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many hospitals in the United Kingdom are equipped with yttrium-aluminium-garnet lasers for use in ophthalmic surgery.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information requested is not held centrally but I understand that a reasonable estimate would be between 20 and 30.

St. Helens and Knowsley District Health Authority

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the amount of resources made available to St. Helens and Knowsley district health authorities.

Mr. Hayhoe: A total of £534 million revenue expenditure was made available to Mersey regional health authority for the year 1986-87, which is an increase of 6 per cent. over its 1985-86 funding. The allocation of resources to St. Helens and Knowsley health authority is determined by the region. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the regional chairman for the information he seeks.

Single and Homeless Persons (Care Facilities)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to seek to improve the general medical care facilities available to patients who are single and homeless; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: General medical services are available to all, but some homeless people experience difficulty in presenting for, or obtaining treatment. Two pilot schemes have been established, one in Tower Hamlets and the other in Camden, which are taking primary health care to homeless people in the places where they congregate. The longer-term objective is to encourage people to register on the list of a general medical practitioner whenever this is practicable.

Darwen Caller Office

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the north-west regional office of his Department has now received comments from all interested parties concerning the proposed closure of the Darwen caller office; what has been the general nature of those comments; and when a decision on the future of the office will be made.

Mr. Major Comments have been received from most of the interested parties who have been consulted. In general, they are concerned with the value of retaining a facility locally for face to face contact with the Department and the travelling difficulties which the public may encounter in visiting the main office in Blackburn, as well as the status of the town of Darwen.

A decision on the future of this caller office will be made soon.

Unemployment Review

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to change the arrangements for unemployment review in his Department.

Mr. Fowler: Unemployment review officers are responsible both for giving advice and help to unemployed people on finding work, and for preventing abuse. These functions have been undertaken by the Department of Health and Social Security because of its responsibility for paying supplementary benefit to unemployed people.

My noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has now introduced nationwide the restart scheme which involves calling the 1·3 million people unemployed for a year or more for individual counselling interviews at jobcentres. This advice and help means there is a considerable overlap with the existing work of unemployment review officers. My noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and I have therefore concluded, with the agreement of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, that the function of unemployment review should be transferred to the Department of Employment. We expect the transfer to be completed by April next year.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list, from 1970 to date, the number of cases in each year referred to him where it is alleged that a local authority has been in default of its duties under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970;

(2) if he will list, from 1970 to date, the number of cases in each year investigated by him where it is alleged that a local authority has been in default of its duties under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970; in how many cases the local authority was found to be in default; and what action he took in any such case.

Mr. Newton: The number of cases referred to the Secretary of State since 1978 where it is alleged that a local authority has been in default of its duties under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 are as follows:

	Number
1978	6
1979	4
1980	5
1981	20
1982	3
1983	3
1984	5
1985	7
1986	1

In none of the cases in which investigations were completed was it judged necessary for my right hon. Friend to exercise his default powers. Inquiries are continuing on six complaints.

Information about complaints before 1978 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many local authorities are subject to the functions imposed by section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970; and what information he has, for each year since 1970, as to how many people were registered in total pursuant to section 1(1) of the Act as being persons to whom that section applies.

Mr. Newton: All of the 109 social services departments in England are subject to the functions imposed by section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

Section 1(1) of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 requires local authorities to inform themselves of the number of persons within their area to whom section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948 applies. The number of persons registered under section 29 since 1970 are given in the table.

*Persons registered as handicapped with Social Services Departments under Section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948**

England	*Number of persons (thousands)†*				
	Blind	*Partially sighted*	*Deaf‡*	*Hard of hearing‡*	*Other‡*
1970‖	95·7	34·2	24·3	16·5	234·1
1972¶	96·4	35·7	23·1	15·8	304·2
1973	97·3	36·9	25·9	18·8	398·6
1974	98·1	38·0	25·8	20·1	497·2
1975	99·3	40·9	25·6	20·4	579·5
1976	101·1	42·9	27·5	25·5	657·2
1977	102·8	45·4	27·8	27·0	717·0
1978	104·7	47·6	28·9	31·1	787·2
1979	105·3	49·2	29·1	32·4	846·8
1980	107·8	51·4	29·7	35·1	900·7
1981	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	954·8

England	Number of persons (thousands)†				
	Blind	Partially sighted	Deaf‡	Hard of hearing‡	Other‡
1982	111·7	58·0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1983	n.a.	n.a.	31·8	47·2	n.a.
1984	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1102·6

n.a. Data not available. From 1980 onwards these data were collected on a sequential and triennial basis.
* Not all persons who could register do so.
† The different categories overlap as a proportion of the disabled have more than one disablement.
‡ Excluding persons on the register of the blind.
‖ The figures relate to 31 December prior to 1972 and to 31 March thereafter.
¶ The figures for 1972 are not complete.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of cases in which court proceedings have been instituted under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

Mr. Newton: We are aware of five cases where court proceedings have been initiated in connection with complaints of alleged failure by local authorities to comply with the requirements of section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act. The Department would not necessarily be aware of court proceedings to which they were not a party.

National Assistance Act 1948

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, from 1970 to date, how many complaints were made to him of alleged defaults by local authorities under section 36 of the National Assistance Act 1948, indicating in how many cases the local authority was found to be in default and what action he took in respect of any such case.

Mr. Newton: Apart from complaints in connection with the provisions of section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, the Department is aware of only one request since June 1982 to consider action under section 36 of the National Assistance Act 1948 in respect of an alleged failure by a local authority to fulfil its statutory obligation under the Act. The case was resolved without recourse by my right hon. Friend to use of his default powers. Information on any complaints in earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Drugs (Safety)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to his answer, *Official Report*, 14 July, if he will list the five drugs which have had the largest cumulative number of adverse reaction reports over the last six months; and if he will indicate which of these have resulted in deaths possibly associated with the drug;

(2) pursuant to the answer, *Official Report*, 14 July, column *422*, of the eight drugs whose licences or certificates were withdrawn, how many had *(a)* been on the market for over five years and *(b)* had at some time over 1 million prescriptions issued for them in one year; and, for the drugs falling into either of these two categories, how many months the committee spent in evaluating safety before the decision was taken to revoke the licence or certificate.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the right hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answers of 14 July, *Official Report*, column *422*, if he will reconcile his statement that the Committee on Safety of Medicines is at present actively assessing the safety of seven drugs which had over one million prescriptions issued for them in 1984 with his statement that of the 14 drugs whose safety has been discussed by the Committee on Safety of Medicines in the last year, only one had had over 1 million prescriptions issued and another one had had over 2 million issued, with the figures for number of prescriptions of the other drugs being less than one million or not available.

Mr. Hayhoe: The two sets of information given in my reply to the right hon. Member on 14 July at columns *421-22*, related to separate questions about different time periods.

AIDS

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what amount will be allocated for the projected budget on acquired immune defficiency syndrome expenditure for the next three years.

Mr. Hayhoe: Decisions on central spending in future years will be taken in the light of the public expenditure survey. Health authorities have also been asked to prepare plans for future services for AIDS as part of their short term programmes to be submitted by the end of the year.

Community Care

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his assessment of the effect of the Opportunities for Volunteering Scheme on community care for the mentally ill, mentally handicapped and the elderly; which health authorities have used this scheme for community care; how many volunteers have been involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The opportunities for volunteering scheme is aimed at developing opportunities for unemployed people to undertake voluntary work and to expand voluntary work in the health and personal social services generally. Overall, the indications are that 40,000 or so unemployed people have participated in about 1,200 local projects of benefit to people who need support in the community. While of the 700 or so projects current at any one time, about 6 per cent. are specifically designed to help mentally ill people, 8 per cent. to help mentally handicapped people and 25 per cent. to help elderly people, other more general projects are also of benefit to

people in these groups. Grants under the scheme are not available to health or other statutory authorities; these have access to other sources of funds.

Tobacco Industry (Agreement)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how members of the public can obtain copies of the text of the new voluntary agreement with the tobacco companies.

Mr. Whitney: copies of the agreement are available from the Department on request.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has sent copies of his new voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry to all distict health authorities.

Mr. Whitney: Copies have been sent to those health authorites that have asked for them. In addition, the agreement was widely distributed to district health education officers for a recent conference organised by Action on Smoking and Health.

Glucose Testing Strips

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the annual cost of making glucose testing strips prescribable by general practitioners.

Mr. Hayhoe: The cost is estimated at between £5 million and £10 million per annum.

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department has estimated the potential long-term savings to the National Health Services from changes in the level of reduced hospitalisation if glucose testing strips were prescribable by general practitioners

Mr. Hayhoe: Blood glucose testing strips can be prescribed for patients through the hospital services. It is possible that wider use could enable some patients to achieve better control of their condition, so avoiding the complications that lead to hospital treatment but no reliable estimate can be made of the overall net effect on national health service costs.

Diabetics (Syringes)

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to allow general practitioners to prescribe plastic syringes to diabetics up to the equivalent cost of glass syringes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Road Accidents (Records System)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy concerning the introduction of a computerised accident and emergency record system for road accident epidemiological use.

Mr. Whitney: It is for individual health authorities to determine the scope of all National Health Service hospital records. The Department has not issued any guidance on the detailed content of record systems used in accident and emergency departments nor on the extent to which accident types should be separately recorded.

Fuel Payment

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the number of and *(b)* the total payments made during the first three months of the current year to help those on social security with fuel payments during periods of exceptionally severe weather, in each of the offices of his Department in Wales.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 18 July at column *663*.

Statistics (Publication)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, further to his statement in the House on 11 February that it was planned to publish the 1986 edition of "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for England" during the summer of 1986, if he is now able to give a date for publication.

Mr. Whitney: "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for England 1986" edition was published on 22 July 1986. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Dental Amalgam

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has yet received any advice from either the Committee on Toxicity or the Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials on the use of dental amalgam in fillings.

Mr. Hayhoe: The advice of the Committee on Toxicity was as follows:

"Dental amalgams containing mercury have been used for 150 years and we understand that in the United Kingdom some 30 million amalgam restorations are inserted each year. Despite this extensive usage only a very few cases that can be recognised as having any reaction to mercury occur each year, and these are due to hypersensitivity. Nevertheless, from time to time concern is expressed in some quarters that use of dental amalgam may lead to excessive exposure to mercury and to poisoning.

We have examined the evidence from which such concern arises. There is some evidence that mercury is released from dental amalgam during the period following insertion and on the removal of the restorations. Some mercury may be released as a result of corrosion but this is likely to be small because of the excess of unreacted alloy in the finished filling. The development of copper enriched alloys has reduced the potential for corrosion. Vapourisation of mercury from amalgam restoration may possibly occur with prolonged heavy chewing. However, long term clinical evidence would seem to suggest the view that substantial amounts of mercury are not released from amalgam fillings.

Theoretical considerations suggest that in extreme cases the amount of mercury released might, were it known to be absorbed, constitute an undesirable although not a toxic exposure. However, studies of the concentration of mercury in the blood of people with amalgam restorations indicate to us that the exposure is in fact of no toxicocological significance. It has been suggested also that exposure to mercury from amalgam may be a factor in the development of some chronic diseases, but in our opinion the evidence does not support this contention.

In our opinion the use of dental amalgam is free from risk of systematic toxicity and only a very few cases of hypersensitivity occur. It is our view that further research in this area would not merit priority."

Medicines Commission (Report)

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the Medicines Commission's annual report for 1985.

Mr. Whitney: I have received the report and copies have today been laid before both Houses of Parliament, in accordance with section 5(2) of the Medicines Act 1968. Bound volumes will be placed in the Library, and will also be available to hon. Members from the Vote Office, containing the 1985 reports of the Medicines Commission, the Committee on Safety of Medicines, the Veterinary Products Committee, the British Pharmacopoeia Commission, the Committee on the Review of Medicines and the Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials.

Labour Statistics (Liverpool)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why, in answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead on 15 May, *Official Report* column *527*, the total number of unemployed claimants in the city of Liverpool in November 1985 was given as 32,100 when figures published by the Department of Employment for the same date gave a total of 56,421.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *418*]: The figures published by the Department of Employment were for the city of Liverpool local authority area. Figures for unemployed claimants receiving different types of social security benefits are available on a different basis, that is, for individual unemployment benefit offices whose boundaries are not conterminous with local authority boundaries.

The answer given to the hon. Member on 15 May was therefore based on figures for unemployment benefit offices within the Liverpool area. However, in checking these figures it has been discovered that four ofices were mistakenly omitted from them. I am grateful to the hon. Member for pointing out this discrepancy and express my apologies to him for the error.

The corrected figures are as follows:

Liverpool City Council

(Thousands)

	UB	*UB & SA*	*SA*	*NIL*	*Total*
1979	8·9	1·9	21·0	4·1	36·0
1980	12·7	2·9	24·6	3·7	44·0
1982	10·5	3·8	37·1	5·4	56·7
1983	9·7	3·3	41·3	4·4	58·7
1985	8·4	2·5	41·5	5·2	57·6

Figures for 1981 and 1984 are not available because of industrial action.

Source: Quarterly count of unemployed claimants.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the cost of extending the payment of unemployment benefit for a further (i) one year, (ii) two years, (iii) three years and (iv) as long as unemployment lasted; and what would be the cost if the single person's rate of unemployment benefit were increased by £7·35.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *419*]: The available information is given in the table. The figures are based on unemployment assumptions underlying the report by the Government Actuary on the draft of the Social Security Benefits Uprating Order 1986 (Cmnd. 9789). They are gross costs and do not include savings in supplementary benefit and housing benefit, figures for which are not available.

	Cost of extending unemployment benefit	*Cost of extending unemployment benefit if single person's rate increased by £7·35*
	£ million	*£ million*
By 1 year	650	800
By 2 years	1,050	1,300
By 3 years	1,350	1,650
Indefinitely	2,050	2,500

Psoriasis

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to put psoriasis on the prescribed list of prescription exemptions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *98*]: No. The medical exempt list was established when prescription charges were reintroduced in 1968. It has been reviewed on a number of occasions, most recently in January. On each occasion it was concluded that the existing exemption arrangements should remain unchanged.

Personal Social Services

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out the total gross expenditure, current and capital, on personal social services, deflated by gross domestic product, retail prices index and the index of social services pay and prices for each year since 1970.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *104*]: Personal social services pay and prices indices on the same basis as post-1973 figures are not readily available for earlier years. Cash and deflated expenditure figures are therefore shown only for years where all three deflator figures can be applied.

Information is as follows:

Local authority personal social services gross expenditure
(England figures in £ million)

	Cash	*GDP deflated*	*RPI deflated*	*PSS Pay and Prices deflated*	
Current					
1974-75	625·254	625·254	625·254	625·254	
1975-76	848·565	675·072	700·379	705·022	
1976-77	995·101	699·588	703·590	729·493	
1977-78	1,115·895	688·888	723·180	746·418	
1978-79	1,263·211	704·874	745·570	779·904	Final outturn upto
1979-80	1,537·275	733·993	757·666	804·730	1983-84 inclusive
1980-81	1,892·927	760·988	828·491	824·087	

	Cash	GDP deflated	RPI deflated	PSS Pay and Prices deflated	
1981-82	2,098·299	766·981	832·222	812·885	
1982-83	2,303·895	787·081	873·359	832·904	
1983-84	2,486·460	812·946	895·586	852·608	
1984-85	2,637·000	827·411	895·328	870·039	Provisional outturn
1985-86	2,792·000	826·341	909·449	871·003	Revised estimate*
1986-87	3,096·000	883·191	—	921·785	Budget estimate*
Capital					
1974-75	66·554	66·554	66·554	66·554	
1975-76	78·351	62·332	64·668	65·097	
1976-77	65·207	45·843	46·105	47·802	
1977-78	44·411	27·417	28·781	29·706	
1978-79	49·795	27·786	29·390	30·743	Final outturn upto
1979-80	63·430	30·286	31·262	33·204	1983-84 inclusive
1980-81	81·060	32·587	35·478	35·290	
1981-82	78·045	28·527	30·954	30·235	
1982-83	78·171	26·706	29·633	28·260	
1983-84	90·144	29·473	32·469	30·910	
1984-85	95·471	29·956	32·415	31·499	Provisional outturn
1985-86	103·351	30·589	33·665	32·242	Estimated outturn
1986-87	106·568	30·400	—	31·729	Plan

* Estimated from net figures

NATIONAL FINANCE

Customs and Excise

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons are employed in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise service; and what were the comparable figures in 1981, 1976 and 1971.

Mr. Brooke: At 31 March 1986, 25,395 persons were employed in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; comparable figures were 26,861 at 31 March 1981, 29,551 at 31 March 1976 and 17,949 at 31 March 1971.

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost of administration of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise service in the last 12-month period for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figures for 1981, 1976 and 1971.

Mr. Brooke: The cost of administration of Her Majesty's Custom and Excise in 1985-86 is estimated to have been £411,800,000; comparable figures are £299,683,000 for 1980-81, £174,140,000 for 1975-76, and £45,082,000 for 1970-71.

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what codes of practice exist for the guidance of Customs and Excise officers in the pursuit of their duties; whether any further codes are planned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Customs and Excise issues the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 codes of practice to those staff requiring them in the course of their duties. Codes of practice as such are not otherwise issued to its staff. However, there is a wide range of books of instructions which are updated regularly. These instructions give guidance on the law, the technical aspects of the department's work, and the way officers are to carry out their duties.

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer who is responsible for overseeing the procedure and work of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in the execution of its duties; what disciplinary proceedings are available in the event of abuse of these powers by officers; if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The responsibility for the general procedures and work of the Customs and Excise lies with the Board of Customs and Excise. Day-to-day control of Customs and Excise officers in local stations is exercised through 21 regional controllers, called collectors, who are responsible to the board.

Any misuse of authority by an officer will be investigated by the Department within the Civil Service disciplinary procedures. These provide for formal charges to be raised and for penalties to be awarded, in varying degrees of severity according to the gravity of the case, if the charge is proved.

Portsmouth Ferry Terminal

Mr. Hancock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of customs officials that have been employed in each year since Portsmouth ferry terminal opened.

Mr. Brooke: For operational reasons it is not policy to disclose the number of Customs staff employed at specific locations but since the Portsmouth ferry terminal opened there have been a number of increases in the staff employed on customs work.

From time to time use is also made of mobile and specialist staff who are organised on a regional basis and these units have also been considerably strengthened.

Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the yield of income tax, corporation tax and value added tax in the current financial year; and what is the estimated amount of value-added tax which will be payable to the European Economic Community, including the amounts agreed under supplementary European Economic Community budgets.

Mr. Brooke: The information on estimated tax yields for 1986-87 is as follows. A revised estimate of our net

payments to Community institutions for this financial year will be contained in the Autumn Statement, and an estimate of our net contribution to the Community budget in this calendar year will be contained in the White Paper on the 1986 budget, to be published in August or September. The amount of VAT contribution to the 1986 Community budget will be 2,240 mecu (£1,390 million at a budget exchange rate of £1 = 1·6096 ecu). This is net of an abatement of 1,900 mecu (£1,180 million). The Community budget for 1987 has not yet been established.

	Estimated yield 1986-87 £ million
Income Tax	38,500
Corporation Tax	11,700
Value Added Tax	20,700

Source: Table 6.B.3 of Financial Statement and Budget Report 1986-87.

Hospital Radio Organisations

Mr. Amess asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why hospital radio organisations do not receive the same value added tax relief as talking newspapers for the blind.

Mr. Brooke: The relief for talking newspapers for the blind is in line with the Government's policy of providing specific VAT reliefs for the handicapped. The services provided by hospital radio organisations, although making a valuable contribution to the welfare of patients, are significantly different.

Income Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will bring up to date for the current financial year the information given in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 22 March 1984, *Official Report*, columns *528-29*, concerning the proportion of tax paid at specified levels of income.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Figures for 1978-79 and 1986-87 are in the table.

Percentage of gross earnings taken in direct and indirect taxes

		1978-79	1986-87
Three times average earnings	*(a)* Direct	34·8	33·7
Average earnings	*(a)* Direct	20·9	21·8
	(b) Indirect	11·3	13·0
60 per cent. of average earnings	*(a)* Direct	8·4	10·9
45 per cent. of average earnings	*(a)* Direct	−0·8	1·9

Notes:

1. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. The figure for 1986-87 is illustrative and assumes growth of 7 per cent. over the provisional 1985-86 outturn.

2. Direct taxes include national insurance contributions and are net of child benefit.

3. The estimates of indirect taxes are based on the 1984 family expenditure survey and exclude rates. Estimates cannot reliably be made outside the range 75 to 150 per cent. of average earnings.

Advance Petroleum Revenue Tax

Mr. Kennedy asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in the *Official Report* oilfields in respect of which advance petroleum revenue taxation is currently paid.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I cannot comment on the tax position of individual taxpayers.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning possible early repayment of advance petroleum revenue tax; if he will assess the cost of any such proposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Seven letters have been received, putting forward various different proposals for the early repayment of APRT. The cost would vary depending on the precise proposal made, but the first year cost would be substantial. A case has not yet been made out for a tax change, but I understand that further representations are being made.

EC Budget

Mr. Leighton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his statement of 11 July on the exceeding of the budgetary discipline guidelines in the budget in the European Economic Community, he will set out the guideline figures, the calculations used to produce it and the multiple by which it has been exceeded.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 July 1986, c. *499-500*]: Further to my statement on 11 July reporting the adoption of a Community budget for 1986, at columns 613-14, the adopted 1986 Community budget provides for EAGGF—guarantee section expenditure of 22,112 mecu (including 567 mecu for expenditure in Spain and Portugal). This represents an increase of 926 mecu or 4·4 per cent. above the financial guidelines for agricultural spending in 1986. The calculations of the 1986 guidelines for the Community of Ten (20,619 mecu) were set out in the document "Key Figures for the 1986 Preliminary Draft Budget" which was laid before the House on 25 June 1985.

The ECOFIN Council on 7 July (reported at column 195), agreed that the provision for agricultural spending in 1986 could be increased by the

"amounts which can be justified mainly by the exceptional circumstance of the abnormally large depreciation of the dollar".

Pensions

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer of 19 October 1982, *Official Report*, columns 82-87, relating to public sector pensions, to the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *68*]: The corresponding information relating to the main public service schemes, based on the most recent information available for the year 1985-86, is shown in the tables. The information on nationalised industries and other public sector employers required to update the final table of the original answer is not readily available. I shall write to the hon. Member in due course.

Financing arrangements for the main schemes

Scheme	Employee contributions (see note a) Per cent. of pay	Estimated revenue in 1985-86 £ million	Employer contributions Per cent. of pay	Estimated revenue in 1985-86 £ million	Source of benefit Basic pensions	Pensions increase
Civil Service	1½ (see note b)	73·5	(see note c)	(see note c)	Exchequer	Exchequer
Local Government	non-manuals 6 manuals 5	508·5	England and Wales 5 Scotland 8·5 (see note d)	473·0	Local authority pension funds	General rate funds
Teachers	6	399·8	England and Wales 9·45 Scotland 8	601·3	Notional fund	Exchequer
National Health Service	non-manuals 6 manuals 5	419·4	7·5	524·0	Notional fund	Exchequer
Police	11	161·0	(see note c)	(see note c)	Police authorities	Police authorities
Fire	10·75	42·5	(see note c)	(see note c)	Fire authorities	Fire authorities
Armed Forces	(see note b)	—	(see note c)	(see note c)	Exchequer	Exchequer

Notes:

a. Most of the schemes covered by this table provide for pension to accrue at a rate of 1/80 final salary, plus a lump sum of 3/80 final salary, per year of service, up to a maximum of 40 years at age 60 or 65. However, the arrangements for the police and fire services, the armed forces, prison officers (within the Civil Service scheme) and mental health officers (within the NHS scheme) provide for pensions to be paid from earlier ages, with faster accrual rates. The value of such arrangements as a percentage of salary is considerably greater, and is reflected in higher effective employee contributions for the armed forces, the police and the fire service.

b. Civil Service and armed forces pensions are largely non-contributory (the 1½ per cent. contribution paid by male civil servants is for widows' benefits). In the case of the armed forces, a reduction of 11 per cent. was incorporated in pay rates recommended for 1985-86 by the Review Body on Armed Forces Pay, to take account of pension benefits. For the Civil Service no formal reduction has been made to pay rates since the abolition of pay research, but, as with other public services, the value of the pension scheme is a relevant factor in determining an overall remuneration package appropriate to recruit, retain and motivate the necessary staff.

c. The employer contributions listed are those payable to actual or notional pension funds; for the wholly unfunded schemes, no employer contributions as such are paid. However, the NHS and teachers' notional funds and the local authority pension funds (and, therefore, the contributions shown for these schemes) cover basic pensions only, without index-linked increases under the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971: these increases are financed separately by the bodies listed in the final column of the table. The Government Actuary estimates that if these increases were taken into account in the funds the employers' contributions might be higher by some 6 per cent. of pay.

d. Pensions under the local government superannuation scheme are paid from pension funds maintained by county councils, the Common Council of the City of London, London boroughs, certain residuary bodies and district councils in the metropolitan areas and Scottish regional authorities. The employers' contributions vary from fund to fund, and in 1985-86 averaged 5 per cent. in England and Wales (following reductions resulting from recent actuarial valuations) and about 8·5 per cent. in Scotland, where similar reductions are likely to follow later valuations, with effect from April 1986.

Numbers covered by the schemes

thousands

Service	Number of employees in service	Members of pension scheme in service	Number of Pensioners Retired Employees	Dependants	Total	Ex-employees with preserved pensions
Civil service	*594·0	592·0	360·0	109·0	469·0	120·0
Local government	*1,112·0	†1,138·4	459·5	109·6	569·1	131·2
Teachers	669·0	635·4	230·7	14·9	245·6	120·0
NHS	1,216·4	929·0	252·9	39·7	292·6	80·5
Police	132·0	132·0	65·5	29·0	94·5	5·0
Fire	38·0	38·0	23·0	8·0	31·0	8·0
Armed Forces	323·0	317·0	229·0	64·0	293·0	92·0
Overseas	—	—	34·0	13·0	47·0	—
Total	4,084·4	3,781·8	1,654·6	387·2	2,041·8	556·7

* Full time equivalent.
† Includes admitted bodies.

Expenditure on pension benefits

Scheme	Lump sums £ million	Basic pensions £ million	Pensions increase £ million	Total £ million	Average pension of retired employees £ a week pre-November 1985	Average pension of retired employees £ a week post-November 1985
Civil Service	214·0	549·0	469·0	1,232·0	47·80	51·70
Local Government	227·9	541·4	395·5	1,164·8	31·70	33·70

Scheme	Lump sums £ million	Basic pensions £ million	Pensions increase £ million	Total £ million	Average pension of retired employees £ a week pre-November 1985	Average pension of retired employees £ a week post-November 1985
Teachers	239·0	522·0	432·3	1,193·3	77·30	82·90
NHS	168·2	390·5	262·2	820·9	42·90	46·40
Police	70·0	120·0	153·0	343·0	64·00	69·00
Fire	20·0	32·0	35·8	87·8	55·00	56·00
Armed Forces	190·0	308·0	367·0	865·0	n/a	53·80
Overseas	0·2	17·6	106·5	124·3	49·0	53·00
Total	1,129·3	2,480·5	2,221·3	5,831·1	47·40	51·30

n/a = not available.

Distribution of monthly paid pensioners, by amount of pension after November 1985 uprating

Pension £ per year	Percentage of pensioners: Civil Service	Teachers	NHS	Armed Forces
0- 999	28·9	2·7	39·5	13·8
1,000-1,999	23·6	10·2	23·7	37·9
2,000-2,999	13·2	15·3	11·7	19·3
3,000-3,999	8·7	16·6	7·5	8·6
4,000-4,999	7·7	19·5	4·9	5·8
5,000-5,999	5·6	16·2	2·8	4·4
6,000-6,999	4·1	10·5	1·7	2·9
7,000-7,999	2·5	5·0	1·2	2·2
8,000-8,999	1·5	2·2	1·0	1·6
9,000-9,999	1·2	1·0	0·9	1·0
10,000 or more	3·0	0·8	5·1	2·5
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

DEFENCE

Overseas Personnel

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the countries in which (1) Her Majesty's forces and (2) civilian personnel are based at the latest date and the number concerned.

Mr. Freeman: The deployment of United Kingdom Service and civilian personnel overseas is contained in table 4.14 of Volume II of the "Statement on Defence Estimates 1986" (Cmnd. 9763-II). The figures for 1 April 1986 are as follows:

Deployment of United Kingdom Service and Civilian personnel: overseas 1 April 1986

	Number
*All overseas areas**	
Royal Navy and Royal Marines	5,388
Army†	69,212
Royal Air Force	16,978
Civilians	5,379
Federal Republic of Germany	
Royal Navy and Royal Marines	6
Army†	56,222
Royal Air Force	10,690
Civilians	1,827
Elsewhere in Continental Europe‡	
Royal Navy and Royal Marines	514
Army	3,877
Royal Air Force	1,591
Civilians	98
Gibraltar	
Royal Navy and Royal Marines	766
Army	744
Royal Air Force	405
Civilians	104
Cyprus	
Royal Navy and Royal Marines	16
Army	3,317
Royal Air Force	1,610
Civilians	284
Elsewhere in Mediterranean, Near East and Gulf	
Royal Navy and Royal Marines	546
Army	232
Royal Air Force	126
Civilians	7
Hong Kong	
Royal Navy and Royal Marines	275
Army	1,842
Royal Air Force	269
Civilians	288
Elsewhere in the Far East	
Royal Navy and Royal Marines	334
Army	222
Royal Air Force	7
Civilians	20
Other Locations	
Royal Navy and Royal Marines	2,931
Army	2,756
Royal Air Force	2,280
Civilians	2,751

* The figures include Service personnel who are on loan to countries in the areas shown. The Royal Navy, Royal Marine and civilian figures include personnel who are at sea in each area at the situation date. All defence attaches and advisors and their staff are included under "Other locations" and not identified within specific areas.

† Personnel serving in Northern Ireland on emergency tours of duty but remaining under the command of the Commander-in-Chief, British Army of the Rhine, are included in these numbers. Personnel serving on emergency tours of duty in other overseas areas are included in the numbers for that area.

‡ These figures include personnel stationed in Berlin and Sardinia.

DEFENCE

"Low-level Flying"

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make available in all post offices in those

areas where low flying is prevalant copies of his Department's publication "Low-level Flying" in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: We do not have sufficient resources to make copies of the publication available to all post offices in those areas in which military low flying training takes place.

Chemical Weapons and Plutonium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on *(a)* chemical weapons stocks and *(b)* un-safeguarded plutonium for military use held by the Soviet Union.

Mr. Stanley: On chemical weapons stocks, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 9 May at column *271*. On unsafeguarded plutonium, the information is classified.

Weapons Statistics

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on *(a)* chemical weapons, *(b)* biological weapons, *(c)* nerve gas and *(d)* unsafeguarded military plutonium stocks held by the United States of America.

Mr. Stanley: The report of the United States Chemical Warfare Review Commission and the annual report by the United States Secretary of Defence for the fiscal year 1987, copies of which are in the Library of the House, indicate that the United States has a limited retaliatory stockpile of chemical weapons, which includes nerve agents. As a party to the 1972 biological weapons convention the United States has renounced the possession of biological weapons. My Department has no details of the United States' stockpile of unsafeguarded military plutonium. Particulars of United States' capabilities are, in any case, a matter for that Government.

Veterinary Corps Dog School, Melton Mowbray.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost to public funds of the proposed transfer of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, Melton Mowbray, dog school to Royal Air Force, Newton.

Mr. Freeman: The proposed move of the Army dog training school from Melton Mowbray to RAF Newton is designed to achieve a saving to the defence budget through the rationalisation of dog training in the Services. There will therefore be no net additional cost to public funds.

Dogs (Veterinary Care)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out in tabular form the comparable costs per animal of veterinary care of dogs in (a) the Army and (b) the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Freeman: As I indicated to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton in answer to his question of 3 July, at column *645*, a study has been completed into the establishment of a joint Service dog school at RAF Newton. The study team's report included estimates of costs for veterinary care of dogs in the Army and RAF in the United Kingdom. These figures are being validated by the Services together with the other information contained in the report. It would therefore be premature for me to release this type of detailed information at the present time. I will write to my hon. Friend when the report is finalised.

El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are to train officers of the El Salvador army in Britain.

Mr. Freeman: I have nothing to add to the answer which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 19 May 1986 at column 19.

Land Purchases (County Derry)

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Defence what lands his Department or agents acting on its behalf have bought over the last 18 months in the Magilligan area of County Derry; and for what purposes.

Mr. Freeman: The Ministry of Defence has purchased two pieces of land at Magilligan ranges in the past 18 months. This land was originally leased and comprises part of the range area. It was purchased in order to provide security of tenure.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 24 July 1986

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Office, Secretarial and Research Allowance

Mr. Harris asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will make a further statement about the office, secretarial and research allowance.

Mr. Biffen: I have already told the House that the resolution agreed on 16 July 1986 will be put into effect. Although its terms apply to the rate for 1985-86, as well as that for 1986-87, it would clearly not be appropriate for retrospective claims to be paid by the Fees Office. The resolution will therefore apply only to the rate of the allowance for 1986-87.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Westland plc

Sir Edward Gardner asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on those aspects of the fourth report from the Defence Committee on Westland plc., the Government's decision-making, which fall within his responsibilities.

The Attorney-General: The Select Committee state that if, when I authorised an offer of immunity from prosecution to one of the officials concerned in the Head of the Home Civil Service's inquiry into the circumstances of the disclosure of the Solicitor General's letter of 6 January, I was able at that stage to say that under no circumstances would I have prosecuted the official concerned, I must have known, and must have learnt from the head of the Home Civil Service, that the disclosure had been authorised.

I wish to make it absolutely clear that at the time then I advised that an inquiry be instituted I did not know by whom the disclosure had been made or that it had been authorised by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry or at all.

At the time when I granted immunity to the official concerned, while I had reason to believe that the disclosure had been made by the official concerned and that the official concerned had acted in complete good faith, I was not aware of the full circumstances. It was important that the inquiry should discover as fully as possible the circumstances in which the disclosure came to be made, and should provide those concerned with the opportunity of giving their accounts of their part in the affair. It was clear that the testimony of the official in question would be vital to the inquiry, and I judged it right that possible impediment to full co-operation in the inquiry should be removed. I was and am satisfied that that in no way interfered with the course of justice: the facts as disclosed in the inquiry confirmed my judgment that there would have been no question of proceeding against the official concerned.

As the Select Committee recognises, I was not told of the direct involvement of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry until 22 January.

Race Relations Act 1976

Mr. Knox asked the Attorney-General how many prosecutions have been brought under the Race Relations Act 1976; and how many have been successful.

The Attorney-General: Thirty-five prosecutions have been brought under section 5A of the Public Order Act 1936, inserted by section 70 of the Race Relations Act 1976. In 25 of these cases convictions have been secured.

Mr. Kevin Taylor

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to the answer of 26 June, *Official Report*, column *267*, what action the Director of Public Prosecutions has taken on the preliminary report submitted to him on the activities of Mr. Kevin Taylor; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The position remains as stated in my reply to the right hon. Member on 3 July 1986 at column 595. The conduct of the investigation is an operational matter for the Greater Manchester police, who have received the advice referred to in my reply.

Mr. Manus Nunan (Recordership)

Mr. Alton asked the Attorney-General, further to his answer of 14 July, *Official Report*, column *317*, to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) what were the dates of the written advice of both Mr. Justice McPherson, and Mr. Justice Russell, dealing with the non-renewal of the recordership of Mr. Manus Nunan.

The Attorney-General: The presiding judges of the Northern circuit at the relevant time were Mr. Justice McNeill and Mr. Justice Russell. The Lord Chancellor consulted them shortly before, on 4 December 1984, he decided not to renew Mr. Nunan's Recordership. All such consultations are conducted on a basis of complete confidentiality and he cannot give further details.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

National Seed Development Corporation and Plant Breeding Institute

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has reached a decision on the proposed transfer of the National Seed Development Corporation and Plant Breeding Institute to the private sector.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My predecessor announced on 18 February that he and Agriculture Ministers had decided that a transfer of the National Seed Development Organisation and part of the Plant Breeding Institute to the private sector would be desirable provided it can be achieved on satisfactory terms. We have now received, and studied, a report by Lazard Brothers and Company Ltd. The Government are satisfied that transferring NSDO and the applied plant breeding departments at PBI to the private sector is the best way of ensuring that their

experience and expertise is applied and developed to the fullest extent and to the maximum benefit of United Kingdom agriculture and the United Kingdom economy.

In consequence, the intention is to offer the NSDO and the PBI applied breeding departments, with certain scientific and support elements, for sale later this year. The strategic plant science departments at the PBI will remain in the public sector and become part of the Agricultural and Food Research Council's new Institute of Plant Science Research. This science will continue to underpin plant breeding in both the public and private sectors.

I recognise and commend the vital contribution of NSDO and PBI staff to present and past successes. I believe that all of the staff concerned will respond well to the new opportunities for continuing success to the benefit of the United Kingdom created by this sale and the parellel creation of the new institute.

Interested purchasers will be asked to give a full statement of their future intentions for the assets in relation to United Kingdom needs and capabilities for plant breeding and seed marketing, and to benefits to the United Kingdom economy. A decision to proceed with the sale will be subject to obtaining satisfactory terms, particularly with regard to the needs of United Kingdom agriculture and horticulture.

We will shortly be appointing financial advisers to assist with the proposed sale.

Expenditure

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the planned level of spending per pupil in schools as provided for by the Government's annual expenditure plans White Paper, since 1979, at cash and cost prices; and if he will provide figures for actual spending per pupil for those same years.

Mr. Dunn: The available information is as follows. For the years 1979-80 to 1981-82 inclusive it includes an element of estimation because the Government's plans were then drawn in constant prices rather than cash.

Net Institutional Expenditure per Pupil[1]

	Public Expenditure White Paper Plans[2]		*Outturn*	
	Cash £	*Real terms*[3] £	*Cash* £	*Real terms*[3] £
[4] [5]1979-80	535	895	535	895
[4] [5]1980-81	680	960	680	955
[4]1981-82	760	975	770	990
1982-83	830	995	845	1,015
1983-84	880	1,010	910	1,045
[6]1984-85	935	1,030	965	1,065
[6]1985-86	1,000	1,040	N/A	N/A
1986-87	1,070	1,070	N/A	N/A

[1] Includes the direct and indirect costs of providing tuition, but does not include the costs of school meals, central administration and inspection or capital expenditure.

[2] Taken from the White Paper issued in the spring preceding each financial year.

[3] The cash figures for the earlier years have been repriced to 1986-87 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

[4] Based on expenditure plans that were expressed in volume terms that is at survey prices.

[5] Based on expenditure plans that covered England and Wales.

[6] Excludes spending within the unallocated margin or the level of the reserve.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the levels of direct and indirect spending at outturn and at 1985-86 prices and indexed on *(a)* public sector schools, *(b)* voluntary schools and *(c)* independent schools, by central Government and by local government in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The table sets out expenditure by the Department of Education and Science and by local education authorities in England for the years 1978-79 to 1985-86. Information for earlier years is not readily available on the same basis. Local education authority expenditure returns to the Department do not distinguish between voluntary and other maintained schools: the figures in the table for the maintained sector include voluntary schools.

Expenditure[1] *on schools*

England

Financial year	*Department of Education and Science*						*Local authorities*					
	Maintained sector			*Independent sector*			*Maintained sector*			*Independent sector*		
	Outturn £ million	*Real terms* £ million[2]	*Indexed 1978-79 = 100*	*Outturn* £ million	*Real terms* £ million[2]	*Indexed 1978-79 = 100*	*Outturn* £ million	*Real terms* £ million[2]	*Indexed 1978-79 = 100*	*Outturn* £ million	*Real terms* £ million[2]	*Indexed 1978-79 = 100*
1978-79	24	45	100	10	19	100	4,721	8,901	100	81	153	100
1979-80	35	56	124	9	15	79	5,376	8,673	97	91	147	96
1980-81	38	52	116	8	11	58	6,523	8,860	99	107	145	95
1981-82	40	49	109	9	11	58	7,038	8,692	98	117	144	94
1982-83	34	39	87	12	14	74	7,486	8,641	97	116	134	88
1983-84	34	38	84	18	20	105	7,844	8,665	97	116	128	84
1984-85[3]	42	45	100	25	27	142	8,153	8,643	97	121	128	84
1985-86[4]	47	47	104	34	34	179	8,517	8,517	96	124	124	81

[1] Includes total capital and current spending on education in nursery, primary, secondary and special schools and the cost of transport and meals and milk.

[2] 1985-86 real terms measured by the GDP deflator at market prices.

[3] Provisional.

[4] Estimated.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the pupil-teacher ratios

for *(a)* maintained primary schools, *(b)* maintained secondary schools and *(c)* the overall ratio for maintained schools, in (i) Hertfordshire and (ii) nationally for the years 1970 to 1985 respectively.

Mr. Dunn: Information for Hertfordshire for years before 1975 is not readily available. The pupil-teacher ratios for maintained primary schools, maintained secondary schools and overall for the years 1975 to 1985 for Hertfordshire and England are as follows:

	Pupil-teacher ratio					
	Hertfordshire			*England*		
	Primary	*Secondary*	*Overall*	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Overall*
January each year						
1975	22·9	16·0	*19·0	24·2	17·2	20·0
1976	23·1	16·1	*18·9	24·0	17·0	19·8
1977	23·0	16·1	18·7	23·9	17·0	19·7
1978	22·8	16·2	18·7	23·6	16·9	19·4
1979	22·5	15·9	18·4	23·1	16·7	18·9
1980	22·3	16·0	18·1	22·7	16·6	18·7
1981	22·2	15·9	18·1	22·6	16·6	18·6
1982	21·9	16·0	17·9	22·5	16·6	18·5
1983	22·4	16·2	17·9	22·3	16·5	18·1
1984	22·4	16·1	17·9	22·1	16·2	17·9
1985	22·2	16·0	17·8	22·2	16·1	17·8

*A small number of student teachers and instructors are not included in the calculation.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give for 1979, 1983 and 1986 the pupil-teacher ratio in maintained primary and secondary schools and overall and the percentage changes since 1979 in each case, and the percentage of classes with over 30 pupils in maintained primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: The pupil-teacher ratio in maintained primary, middle and secondary schools and overall and the percentage of classes with over 30 pupils for 1979, 1983 and 1986 for England are as follows:

	January 1979	*January 1983*	*January 1986**
Pupil-teacher ratio†			
Within primary schools	23·1	22·3	22·1
Percentage reduction since 1979	—	3·5	4·3
Within secondary schools	16·7	16·5	15·9
Percentage reduction since 1979	—	1·2	4·8
Overall	18·9	18·1	17·6
Percentage reduction since 1979	—	4·2	6·9
Percentage of all classes with over 30 pupils			
Primary schools	28·5	20·8	21·6
Secondary schools	11·7	8·6	7·9

*The figures given for January 1986 are provisional.
†Number of pupils per teacher.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table to show for 1979, 1983 and 1986 in *(a)* England and *(b)* Leicester, the number of pupils and of teachers in maintained schools and the percentage fall since 1979 in each case.

Mr. Dunn: The number of pupils and teachers in maintained primary, middle and secondary schools in England and Leicestershire for the years 1979, 1983 and 1986 are as follows:

	January 1979		*January 1983*		*January 1986‡*	
	England	*Leicestershire*	*England*	*Leicestershire*	*England*	*Leicestershire*
Pupils*	8,390,310	160,199	7,585,069	148,416	7,149,484	135,125
Percentage fall since 1979	—	—	9·6	7·4	14·8	15·7
Teachers†	423,865	8,203	395,598	7,706	377,959	7,103
Percentage fall since 1979	—	—	6·7	6·1	10·8	13·4

* Total full-time and part-time pupils in maintained primary and secondary schools.
† Total full-time equivalent teachers in maintained primary and secondary schools.
‡ The figures given for January 1986 are provisional.

School Curriculum

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he makes any distinction between subjects which are essential elements in the school curriculum and those which are part of the core curriculum; why he uses these two descriptions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend's policies for the curriculum remain those set out in "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469) in which the description "core curriculum" is not used. The Government believe that certain subjects have a place in the curriculum of all pupils up to age 16; these were set out in answer to the hon. Member's question of 3 July, at columns 149-50. There are other elements of the school curriculum which we believe should form part of the education of all pupils, but which need not necessarily be studied at all ages and stages, or as separate subjects.

First Degree Students

Mr. Ron Davies: asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the number of first degree students enrolling in the current academic year at universities.

Mr. Walden: Final information for 1985 is not yet available. Provisional information, based on the number of accepted home candidates through the Universities' Central Council on Admissions, suggests there were 71,000 full-time and sandwich home new entrant undergraduates to universities in Great Britain in 1985.

Students (Languages)

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students have qualified at ordinary level, advanced level and at degree standard in each of the following languages in each of the last five years *(a)* French, *(b)* German, *(c)* Spanish, *(d)* Russian and *(e)* Chinese.

Mr. Walden: Numbers of public sector students graduating in individual languages are not available. The available figures of students qualifying at each level are given in the following tables.

Candidates GCE O and A-level graded results in specified foreign languages

English Examination Boards

	Summer examinations				
	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
O-level					
Higher graded results* in					
French	98,578	96,313	94,202	90,230	88,346
German	31,467	31,398	30,794	29,422	27,743
Spanish	8,462	8,197	8,193	8,040	7,716
Russian	1,116	1,102	1,036	1,010	1,117
Chinese (modern)	1,278	1,049	1,145	1,236	1,354
Chinese (classical)	47	—	—	158	—
Graded results† in					
French	134,970	132,198	130,915	125,800	125,806
German	43,017	42,182	40,383	38,975	37,245
Spanish	11,382	11,086	11,058	10,971	10,421
Russian	1,319	1,293	1,194	1,168	1,277
Chinese (modern)	1,388	1,172	1,268	1,362	1,541
Chinese (classical)	48	—	—	177	—
A-level					
Graded results‡ in					
French	18,042	18,408	18,355	17,847	16,720
German	6,906	7,168	7,382	7,082	6,507
Spanish	2,176	2,262	2,206	2,323	2,117
Russian	321	319	284	293	289
Chinese (modern)	185	178	144	184	268
Chinese (classical)	3	—	—	2	—

* Higher graded results are defined as O-level grades A-C.
† Graded results are defined as O-level graded A-E.
‡ Graded results are defined as A-level grades A-E.

1st degree graduates in specified foreign languages

	Calendar year				
	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985**
Universities (Great Britain					
French	1,002	1,104	1,103	1,096	1,055
French/German	444	505	537	539	450
German	443	482	528	542	472
Spanish	230	211	238	231	224
Russian	130	110	88	105	117
Chinese	14	25	32	48	55
Public sector (CNAA)†					
Modern languages	612	418	512	503	n/a

* Academic year 1 October 1984 to 30 September 1985
† CNAA data relates to degree conferments
n/a = Not available

School Textbooks

Mr. Ray Powell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the level of expenditure on school textbooks by local education authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1984-85, the latest year for which firm information on spending is available, LEAs in England spent £63 million on all books in primary and secondary schools. Information on spending in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the number of pupils on the assisted places scheme *(a)* in sixth forms and *(b)* not in sixth forms in each of the past five years.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is as follows:

	Number of assisted places taken u	
	VIth Form	*11+ or 13+*
1981-82	525	3,660
1982-83	1,139	7,477
1983-84	1,457	11,645
1984-85	1,622	15,764
1985-86	1,909	19,503

Higher Education

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide the figures for the amount of money in cash and constant values paid by Her Majesty's Government and the local education authorities per head of the student population to public sector higher education in England and Wales in the financial year 1979-80 and in the present financial year.

Mr. Walden: The information requested for 1979-80 and for 1984-85, the latest period for which actual data are available, is given in the following table.

Information on spending for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and is not held by my Department.

Total Expenditure		*Net Institutional Recurrent Expenditure*		
		Cost per full-time equivalent advanced student		
	Cash	*Real Terms**	*Cash*	*Real Terms**
	£ million	*£ million*	*£*	*£*
1979-80	525	879	2,290	3,830
1984-85	847	932	2,980	3,280

* The cash figures have been repriced to 1986-87 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

Students (Funding)

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the recent change in the formula for funding of part-time students *(a)* at Birkbeck college and *(b)* generally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The University Grants Committee has decided that in future it will allocate resources such that over the whole period of their courses part-time students are funded at the same level as full-time students on equivalent courses. The committee has also decided that for 1986-87 it will increase its previously announced block grant to the University of London by £600,000 so that the amount allowed in respect of students at Birkbeck college is calculated on the same basis as in recent years.

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, pursuant to the letter to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) dated 10 April, he is now in a position to give further details of his discussions and correspondence with the chairman of the Natural Environment Research Council regarding the British Nationality Act 1981.

Mr. Walden: I wrote to the chairman of the Natural Environment Research Council on 10 March agreeing with him that we must try to resolve the outstanding problems regarding designation under section 2(3) of the British Nationality Act 1981. My officials have had discussions with officers in the Natural Environment Research Council and the other research councils concerned. Consultations with officers in the Home Office are continuing on how best to reach a solution.

Schools (Collective Worship)

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) when schools in Norfolk were last monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in order to establish that the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship was being observed;

(2) when schools in Newcastle-upon-Tyne were last monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in order to establish that the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship was being observed;

(3) when schools in Avon were last monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in order to establish that the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship was being observed;

(4) when schools in the Inner London education authority were last monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in order to establish that the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship was being observed;

(5) when schools in Liverpool were last monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in order to establish that the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship was being observed;

(6) when schools in Birmingham were last monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in order to establish that the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship was being observed;

(7) when schools in Manchester were last monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in order to establish that the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship was being observed;

(8) when schools in Leeds were last monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in order to establish that the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship was being observed;

(9) when schools in North Yorkshire were last monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in order to establish that the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship was being observed;

(10) when schools in Bradford were last monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in order to establish that the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship was being observed;

(11) when schools in Sheffield were last monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in order to establish that the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship was being observed.

Mr. Chris Patten: The role of Her Majesty's Inspectorate is to report to my right hon. Friend, from evidence gained by inspection, on the strengths and weaknesses of education nationally. It is not its function when inspecting maintained schools to check whether particular statutory requirements, such as those for collective worship, are being observed: but if it had reason to believe that a school was evading such a requirement, it would raise the matter with the head teacher or the local education authority concerned and would, if necessary, report it to my right hon. Friend.

Mental Health

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 1 July, *Official Report*, column *469*, when he expects the schizophrenia and allied conditions committee of the Medical Research Council to report on opportunities for future research.

Mr. Walden: The Medical Research Council hopes that the schizophrenia and allied conditions committee will report back to the council's neurosciences board during the next academic year.

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of his Department's grant-in-aid to the Medical Research Council is spent on *(a)* mental health in general and *(b)* schizophrenia in particular; what are the relevant sums in the current year.

Mr. Walden: It is for the Medical Research Council to determine its priorities from within the annual grant-in-aid which it receives from the Department's science budget. I understand that in the financial year 1985-86 the MRC spent from its budget £9·1 million on research exclusively on mental health (including addiction) which accounts for 8 per cent. of the council's budget. Out of its expenditure on mental health research the council spent £525,000 on research exclusively on schizophrenia, which accounts for 0·5 per cent. of the council's budget. I understand that the MRC is also funding other work in which mental health and schizophrenia are minor components.

Spina Bifida

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received concerning the Medical Research Council tests involving vitamin supplementation of mothers at risk of having spina bifida children.

Mr. Walden: Since January 1986 I have received one letter. My right hon. Friend has received none.

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what government funds are being used through the Medical Research Council to finance its project involving vitamin supplementation of mothers at risk of having spina bifida children.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the estimated cost of the trial is £600,000.

Women (Neural Tube Defect)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he makes of the statistical significance of the difference in recurrence rates of neural tube defect between supplemented and unsupplemented mothers was due to vitamin supplementation.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the difference in the recurrence rates of neural tube defects between supplemented and unsupplemented mothers was statistically significant, that it to say, it was unlikely to have been chance alone. However, while the statistical significance of the results is not in question the medical significance is. There are two possible explanations for the difference, namely, that the vitamins reduced the risk of neural tube defects or that the women who took supplements were in any case at a very low risk of having neural tube defect pregnancies and therefore were not comparable with the women who did not.

The Medical Research Council and its advisers believe that, on present evidence, it is not possible to judge which of these explanations is the right one and that the way to find out is to conduct a properly controlled clinical trial. The trial is therefore proceeding, although it is too soon to draw any conclusions.

Marine Science and Technology

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the Government propose to respond to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology's report on marine science and technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have written today to the Chairman of the Committee's Sub-committee II with the Government's response, which has been published as a White Paper (Cmnd. 9861).

The Government welcome the Committee's report and accept that a mechanism for greater co-ordination across the breadth of marine science and technology is required. I have agreed therefore to sponsor the establishment of a co-ordinating committee on marine science and techno logy. I expect to announce the terms of reference and composition of the CCMST in the autumn.

Building Projects (Performance Data)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made by his Department with regard to the collection and publication

of comparative performance data on building projects undertaken by local education authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: It is important that when LEAs undertake educational building projects they should achieve value for money as well as fitness for purpose. My Department will shortly begin to collect data on individual major building projects on a basis agreed with the local authority associations. The collected data will be published. I hope that this will assist LEAs in their search for value for money by providing benchmarks by which each authority can judge its performance against experience elsewhere.

THE ARTS

Property Services Agency

Mr. Jessel asked the Minister for the Arts what progress has been made in his review of the relationship between the Property Services Agency and the major arts institutions for which he is responsible.

Mr. Luce: In its eighth report (Session 1981-82) the Education, Science and Arts Committee recommended that the Minister for the Arts should review the relationship between the Property Services Agency and the major arts institutions for which it had responsibilities. The Government accepted that such a review would be useful (Cmnd. 9127). The review is now complete. It has been carried out by my officials in close consultation with the PSA and the institutions sponsored by my Department: namely, most of the national museums and galleries in England and the British Library.

At present, the PSA carries out the building and maintenance work at the national museums and galleries and the British Library's Crown property. The Office of Arts and Libraries allocates a block of funds for these services from its public expenditure programme. Within the funds available, the composition of the works programme each year is decided by OAL and the PSA in consultation with the institutions about their requirements and priorities.

The present arrangements partly reflect the origins of some of the institutions within Government Departments. But, following the Heritage Act 1983, all of them now have independent trustee status. It is anomalous that these indenpendent trustee bodies should have building works and services, which are of central importance to the functioning of the institution, excluded from their responsibilities and in the hands of a central Government agency. The review has concluded that such a division of responsibilities is not conducive to the most effective discharge of the trustees' role in determining their own priorities and allocation of resources, and achieving the best value for the money available to them. In the view of the Government, and of all the institutions concerned, it would be better to concentrate responsibility for all the costs of running the museums and galleries, including building and works services, in the hands of the trustees.

I have therefore concluded, with the agreement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, that the institutions should not remain tied to the PSA for their works services. Instead, the Office of Arts and Libraries will allocate directly an annual grant-in-aid to each institution for building and maintenance work. The trustees will be responsible for its use, according to their priorities, and for achieving the best value for money. Major projects will continue to be subject to OAL approval.

In announcing this decision, my right hon. Friend and I wish to pay a warm tribute to the staff of PSA and its predecessors who have looked after these buildings over the years. The Museums and Galleries Group has justifiably earned an international reputation in this specialised field. But in the circumstances which now apply, the trustees of all the institutions concerned support this change. It is a major change which will require careful planning and management during the transitional period. Each institution will need to develop its own arrangements for discharging these substantial new responsibilities, and this will take time. My intention is that the institutions should assume their new responsibilities during the course of the financial year 1988-89.

The report recognises that the proposals may have implications for those museums and galleries which are not sponsored by my Department. It will be for the other sponsoring Departments to consider with the institutions and with PSA whether any changes in their arrangements should be made.

I have placed in the Library today a memorandum on the change, together with the review report.

CIVIL SERVICE

"Civil Servants and Ministers: Duties and Responsibilities"

Mr. Cash asked the Minister for the Civil Service when the Government expect to reply to the seventh report of the Treasury Civil Service Committee, "Civil Servants and Ministers: Duties and Responsibilities".

Mr. Luce: The Government's response to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee's report is published today as a Command Paper (Cmnd. 9841). Copies of the response have been placed in the Library.

Ethnic Monitory

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will ensure that monitoring of ethnic background of members of the Civil Service is not traceable back to the individuals concerned.

Mr. Luce: Effective safeguards have been agreed with the Council of Civil Service Unions to ensure the confidentiality of ethnic data and that it is used only to further the Civil Service's policy of equal opportunity. Ethnic monitoring will involve the use of statistical summaries of ethnic information of how people progress at recruitment and promotion but the identities of respondents will not appear.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Departmental Cash Limits

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any changes will be made to the cash limits on his Department's Votes for 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The cash limit on class II, vote 6 relating to expenditure by the Overseas Development

Administration on overseas aid administration will be reduced by £161,000 from £27,262,000 to £27,101,000. This is to compensate for over-expenditure of £161,000 in 1985-86 and follows the standard practice whereby an excess over the cash limit in one year is deducted from the cash limit in the next year. The excess occurred because departmental running costs, mainly on pay and agency payments, were greater than expected on the basis of previous expenditure patterns at the end of the year. The Administration has reviewed its monitoring and control procedures in order to improve its cash limits control.

Gibraltar Shiprepair Ltd.

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much remains to be spent from the Government's aid allocations for Gibraltar Shiprepair Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: A total of £3,685,000 remains to be spent from the £28 million aid grant agreed between the Government and the Government of Gibraltar in July 1983 and from the £2·4 million additional grant which the Government offered this year as its final contribution to the conversion of Gibraltar's naval dockyard into a commercial company, Gibraltar Shiprepair Ltd., owned by the Gibraltar Government.

PRIME MINISTER

Small Firms

Q40. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Prime Minister if she will transfer all responsibility for Government policy towards small firms to the Department of Trade and Industry; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Small firms make an essential contribution to the Department of Employment's objective of promoting enterprise and job creation. I have no plans to transfer responsibility for this important aspect of the Government's policies from the Department of Employment.

La Belle Discotheque (Bombing)

Q99. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister pursuant to her answer of 19 June, *Official Report*, column *617*, what criteria Her Majesty's Government used in determining the veracity of all the firm evidence and of the non-firm evidence relating to the alleged involvement of Libya and other countries in the La Belle discotheque bombing on 5 April in Berlin.

The Prime Minister: It would not be appropriate to discuss the assessment of intelligence material.

King's Newham

Q116. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to King's Newham, near Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Customs (Prosecutions)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Prime Minister if she will consider transferring the responsibility for prosecuting under customs legislation from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Prime Minister: No. The Royal Commission on criminal procedure considered this possibility but rejected it. The committee on the enforcement powers of the Revenue departments came to the same conclusion.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 24 July.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 24 July.

Mr. Amess asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 24 July.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 24 July.

Mr. Hirst asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 24 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Dr. Kurt Waldheim

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on progress being made with the investigation of Ministry of Defence records regarding the alleged involvement of Dr. Kurt Waldheim of German Army Group E in the interrogation and subsequent deaths of British prisoners of war during world war 2.

The Prime Minister: The Ministry of Defence search of records for information relevant in the context of the disappearance of British service men in the Balkans during the war is still continuing.

South Africa

Mr. Wareing asked the Prime Minister what advice she has received from the British Industry Committee on South Africa on Her Majesty's Government's trade and investment policy towards South Africa; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have not received any advice directly from the British Industry Committee on South Africa, but I understand that, in its regular contacts with Ministers and officials, it has continued to maintain its opposition to punitive economic sanctions against South Africa.

Inner Cities

Mr. Wareing asked the Prime Minister if she will now place in the Library *(a)* the report of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), the then Secretary of State for the Environment, about the Toxteth riots, entitled "It took a Riot", *(b)* the letter of the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East, (Sir G. Howe) then Chancellor of the Exchequer, in response to that report and *(c)* the report of the Central Policy Review Staff on problems of the inner cities; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Royal Wedding

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Prime Minister what is the total estimated cost to public funds of the royal wedding; and if she will give a detailed breakdown of that total.

The Prime Minister: The estimated costs to the Exchequer are:

	£
Department of the Environment	
Provision of flags, removal of traffic bollards, security checks and provision of temporary lavatories for the public.	40,000
Ministry of Defence	
Provision of security and ceremonial services.	12,000
Metropolitan Police	
The additional cost of policing. Other additional costs of catering, transport and barriers are not yet quantifiable.	61,000

SCOTLAND

Scottish Health Education Group

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals to privatise the functions of the Scottish Health Education Group.

Mr. John MacKay: No.

Spittal Quarry, Caithness

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has received an appeal from Caithness district council against the refusal by Highland regional council of the planning application to establish a refuse dump at Spittal Quarry, Caithness.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no such appeal.

Lorimer and Clark's Brewery (Closure)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the closure of Lorimer and Clark's Brewery in Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations. I very much regret the decision to close the Lorimer and Clark Brewery in Edinburgh. However, the decision of closure was taken on commercial grounds and is a matter for the judgment of Vaux plc of Sunderland.

Chernobyl Disaster (Food Imports)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Edinburgh district council about imported food precautions following the Chernobyl accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has received one letter from Edinburgh district council requesting information about imported food precautions and other matters related to the Chernobyl accident. A reply will be sent shortly.

Hypothermia

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of deaths registered in Scotland caused by hypothermia for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Deaths with any mention of hypothermia as a cause Scotland 1981 to 1985

Year	*Number*
1981	254
1982	196
1983	179
1984	176
1985	*232

* Provisional

Tourism

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken, or envisages, to develop a regional strategy for tourist developments, especially in remote and peripheral areas.

Mr. John MacKay: The development of a regional strategy for assistance to tourism projects lies principally with the appropriate Government agencies. The Highlands and Islands Development Board already has an area development strategy under which projects from the more fragile and remote parts of the board's area are given priority. One of the priorities of the Scottish Tourist Board's financial assistance scheme is to improve facilities, especially accommodation, in rural areas outwith the Highlands and Islands. With the Government's encouragement, the Scottish Tourist Board has commenced a programme of feasibility studies which, inter alia, will result in the clearer definition of regional priorities for the board's development funds. The area tourist board network has an important role to play in helping the two boards identify the needs of the industry at the local level and ensuring that assistance is targeted effectively.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to encourage the growth of the United Kingdom market for the Scottish tourist industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: In terms of visitor numbers, the United Kingdom market represents about 90 per cent. of the Scottish tourist trade. With the Government's full support, both the Scottish Tourist Board and the Highlands and Islands Development Board concentrate their marketing effort on the domestic market. A number of new initiatives have been taken by the two bodies, including advertising campaigns on the London underground by the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Scottish Tourist Board's campaign "Surprising Scotland", both designed to attract residents in England who have never spent a holiday in Scotland.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice his Department has given to local authorities and the tourist industry concerning investment and development opportunities and the demand for associated infra-structure projects.

Mr. John MacKay: Direct responsibility for the provision of advice on and financial assistance for

development opportunities in the tourist industry lies primarily with the Scottish Tourist Board and the Highlands and Islands Development Board. Both bodies are in close contact with the relevant interests and operate well-publicised financial assistance schemes to support tourism projects. Overlap between the bodies is avoided by a long-standing agreement that developers seeking assistance in the highlands and islands should approach HIDB in the first instance and that STB should confine its assistance for the most part to developments outwith the highlands and islands. These arrangements do not preclude joint collaboration by the boards in appropriate cases.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what fluctuations have taken place in the annual number of foreign visitors to Scotland over the past four years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The numbers of trips made by overseas visitors to Scotland in the past four years are as follows:

	Number
1982	972,000
1983	1,062,000
1984	1,142,000
*1985	1,211,000

* Provisional.

The figures show a substantial and continuing increase throughout the period.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps his Department is taking to improve the status of tourist-related work and occupations.

Mr. John MacKay: The onus is on the industry to improve its own image and to emphasise the all-important role the employee plays in producing a service of quality. The Government fully recognise the importance of the industry to the economy as a whole and, in doing so, have identified a wide range of measures that need to be taken in order to ensure tourism's further expansion and continued success. As evidence of this, I refer the hon. Member to the report published last year, 'Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs — the Business of Tourism', The recently published follow-up to that report "Action for jobs in Tourism" and the Government's response to the Trade and Industry Committee's report "Tourism in the United Kingdom".

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to develop training courses for tourist businesses and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Much has been and is being done to develop training courses for prospective and current employees in the industry. There is, for instance, currently available a wide range of further education courses relevant to the needs of all groups of employees in the tourism and related industries such as hotel and catering. The range of courses is kept continually under review in light of assessments of requirements of particular industries and the uptake by industry of the courses available. In the higher education sector, a number of central institutions are active in providing catering and institutional management courses, business courses and other relevant education. These, two, are kept under review. The industry itself has a crucial role to play in the further development of training. The Scottish Tourist Board, as the Government's statutory adviser on tourism and main link with the industry, has been asked to consider what needs to be done in order to improve the industry's awareness of existing training courses and to identify any gaps in current provision.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance his Department has given to local authorities concerning services to tourists and the development of infrastructural support from tourist businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The general importance attached by the Government to the future development of the tourist industry has been clearly confirmed in the report "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs—The Business of Tourism" and its recent follow-up "Action for Jobs in Tourism". A copy of these reports has been sent to all Scottish local authorities. Local authorities are, therefore, well aware of the Government's intentions for this sector of the economy. The provision of services and the development of infrastructural support are, however, matters for local authorities to determine themselves in the light of local needs and priorities. Local authorities can obtain advice and guidance on the development of tourist-related services and infrastructure from the Scottish Tourist Board, the Highlands and Islands Development Board and area tourist boards.

Goods and Services (Contracts)

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the total amount spent in respect of Scottish local authorities on the acquisition of goods and services, expressed in terms of the net contract prices; and how many individual contracts comprised that volume of purchasing for each of the last five years for which figures are available, giving both the overall totals for each Scottish local authority and the totals disaggregated into the following categories: *(a)* capital and revenue expenditure, *(b)* construction and non-construction projects, *(c)* goods and services purchased from United Kingdom-based companies and non-United Kingdom-based companies and *(d)* goods and services purchased from the private sector and from other parts of the public sector.

Mr. Ancram: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has in respect of the Scottish Transport Group, the South of Scotland electricity board and the North of Scotland hydro-electric board as to the total amount spent on the acquisition of goods and services, expressed in terms of the net contract prices; and how many individual contracts comprised that volume of purchasing for each of the last five years for which figures are available, giving both the overall totals in each case and the totals disaggregated into the following categories: *(a)* capital and revenue expenditure, *(b)* construction and non-construction projects, *(c)* goods and services purchased from United Kingdom-based companies and non-United Kingdom-based companies and *(d)* goods and services purchased from the private sector and from other parts of the public sector.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is not held centrally.

Housing Action Area, Edinburgh

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why he has taken more than 28 days to approve the Edinburgh Albert Street (No. 3) housing action area for improvements; and when he is likely to communicate his decision on the matter to the City of Edinburgh district council.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) on 21 July at column 30.

Police (Complaints)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will call for reports from chief constables in Scotland to establish the number of police officers and civil staff engaged full time on the investigation of complaints against the police in 1985, and the cost of such investigations, in a form comparable to the figures quoted on page 85 of the 1985 Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Mr. John MacKay: No police officers or civilian staff were engaged exclusively on the investigation of complaints against the police in Scotland in 1985. However, five of the eight Scottish forces have full-time branches dealing with complaints and disciplinary matters and at 31 December 1985 some 30 police and civilian staff were so engaged. It is not feasible to identify separately the costs of the complaints function of these branches.

Leisure and Recreation (Management Training)

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to receive the report on management training for leisure and recreation in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have now received the report on management training for leisure and recreation in Scotland, which Professor Lewis Gunn has submitted on behalf of the working party of which he has been chairman. It will be published today and I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

I am grateful to the working party for the effort it has put into this study. Most of its principal recommendations are directed towards organisations which provide leisure and recreation services, which I know will find them a valuable source of advice and guidance. I am arranging a wide distribution of the report and will consider carefully its proposals involving action by central Government.

Gaelic Language

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the leaflets and forms which his Department prints in Gaelic or in an English/Gaelic bilingual format.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 July 1986, c. *497*]: There are no such forms or leaflets.

EMPLOYMENT

Action for Jobs Campaign

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General how many civil servants are working on the action for jobs campaign.

Mr. Lang: Six officers in the publicity and promotions unit of my department's information branch and two in the manpower policy division have worked on the campaign in addition to their other duties. Since action for jobs concerns the full range of employment, training and enterprise measures, many other officials have been involved at various stages.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General what consultations took place with the Manpower Services Commission on the action for jobs campaign; and if they have agreed to use it in conjunction with other schemes.

Mr. Lang: Various discussions have taken place between my Department and the Manpower Services Commission about such matters as the drafting of the "Action for Jobs" booklet and the distribution arrangements. The MSC have agreed that in future, publicity for their individual measures will, like that for all my Department's programmes, carry the "Action for Jobs" logo.

Gas and Oil Fields (Workers)

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General if he will give details of workers employed offshore in the United Kingdom sectors of the gas and oil fields showing total numbers employed, the number of United Kingdom nationals and the number of non-United Kingdom nationals, for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Lang: The available estimates are published in paragraph 5.1 and appendix 13 of "Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom 1986", a copy of which is in the Library.

Community Programme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General how much money the Manpower Services Commission has made available in 1985-86 for training on the community programme scheme, over and above that taken from operating costs and wages: and what sums are being made available for training on these programmes in 1986-87 which are over and above those allowed for operating costs and wages.

Mr. Lang: In 1985-86 £3·8 million was made available for training participants on the community programme over and above that available for operating costs and wages. The figure for 1986-87 is £5·7 million.

College of the Air

Mr. Williams asked the Paymaster General if he intends to provide a parallel College of the Air service in Welsh.

Mr. Trippier: The Government's intention is that the College of the Air should provide a service for all parts of the community. The precise means for achieving this, including the scope for Welsh language broadcasts, will be a matter for the College itself to determine, in discussion with broadcasters, education institutions and many others.

I refer the right hon. Member to my right hon. and noble Friend's remarks in another place on 18 July, *Official Report* columns 1098-99.

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General how many factory inspectors with special responsibility for the safety of construction sites have qualifications in building, civil engineering or a similar discipline.

Mr. Trippier: Thirty seven inspectors based in Health and Safety Executive area offices and currently employed on the inspection of construction work hold technical qualifications relating to construction disciplines.

These are supported by 22 specialist construction inspectors, all chartered members of the Institution of Civil Engineers, or the Institution of Structural Engineers, based in HSE headquarters and outstations.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to review the present recruitment procedures of factory inspectors in relation to their selection for work in Health and Safety Executive area offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Factory inspectors are recruited under arrangements made by the Civil Service Commission. The Health and Safety Executive keeps in close touch with the Commission to ensure that these arrangements are meeting their needs.

Departmental Freephone (Cost)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General what is the cost of the freephone facility now provided at the small firms centre of his Department; and if he will make a statement on estimated expenditure in future years.

Mr. Trippier: In 1985-86 the cost of the freefone service for the small firms centres in England administered by my Department was £301,000.

In Scotland and Wales the small firms service is provided by the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies.

In future years the estimated expenditure is not expected to rise in real terms.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General if he will list in the *Official Report* the total amount claimed in expenses in the financial year 1985-86, by the director general of the Health and Safety Executive; how many days he spent outside the United Kingdom in his working capacity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The total amount claimed in expenses by the director general of the Health and Safety Executive during the financial year 1985-86 was £3,792·48. He spent two days at the Marcoule nuclear fuel reprocessing plant.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of officials, by grade, of the Health and Safety Executive who, though formally retired, are still in receipt of an income from the executive for full or part-time services rendered, together with salary involved for each grade; and if he will make a statement on the retirement policies of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Trippier: The details requested are as follows:

1 Grade 5—£7,432
2 Superintending Inspectors of Factories—£22,937
1 Inspector Nuclear Installations—£16,848
1 Senior Executive Officer—£9,884

In addition one official has been engaged as a consultant with fees to a maximum of £5,075 pa. Another has been engaged as a committee chairman with fees of up to £200 pa.

Staff of the Health and Safety Executive in administration grades are subject to the Department of Employment group retirement policy. The executive's retirement policy for grades which it manages directly requires the majority of staff, particularly those in more senior grades, to retire at age 60. Staff in junior grades are required to retire at various ages beyond age 60 depending on their grade and length of service. Normally, no officer is employed beyond age 65.

Industrial Hazards (Control)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General how many companies have yet to submit full safety cases under the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazard Regulations 1984, together with the number which so far have submitted such cases; and if he will make a statement with special reference to the views expressed to his Department by the Chemical Industries Association.

Mr. Trippier: Up to 31 March 1986, 29 companies had submitted safety cases to the Health and Safety Executive for consideration. Another 243 companies are required to submit safety cases by 8 July 1989.

Ministers in the Department have received no recent representations from the Chemical Industries Association on safety cases.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Mr. Willie McCrae

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will cause to be reopened the police investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr. Willie McCrae; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The police investigation will not be reopened. A full report was received from the procurator fiscal at Inverness concerning his investigation of the circumstances surrounding the death of William McCrae. This report was considered by Crown counsel, who were satisfied that there were no circumstances to warrant criminal proceedings. The results of the procurator fiscal's full investigations were disclosed to Mr. McCrae's brother and discussed with him. He expressed satisfaction with the extent of the investigation and indicated that there was no wish on the part of the family for a public inquiry.

Procurators Fiscal

Dr. Godman asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many procurators fiscal are at present employed; and what is the salary scale for the occupation.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The numbers and salary scales for procurators fiscal are as follows:

	Number	Salary scale £
Regional Procurators Fiscal	2	32,350—35,350
Regional Procurators Fiscal	4	28,350—29,850
Upper level Procurators Fiscal	13	23,730—27,065
Lower level Procurators Fiscal	29	17,586—23,404
In addition there are:		
Assistant Procurators Fiscal	11	23,730—27,065
Senior Depute Procurators Fiscal	7	17,586—23,404
Depute Procurators Fiscal	149	8,479—22,575

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Copyright

Mr. Abse asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action the British embassy in Seoul has taken to ensure the protection of British copyright works in South Korea, following discussions on the issue between the Prime Minister and President Chun in May.

Mr. Pattie: The British embassy has continued to press the Korean Government to provide appropriate protection to British copyright works. The Minister for Trade also raised the issue during his recent visit to Seoul.

Mr. Abse asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what assessment he has made of the consequences for British copyright of the proposed bilateral agreement between the Government of South Korea and the United States of America;

(2) what information he has about whether the retrospective protection to be given to United States literary works by South Korea will also be extended to British works; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The agreement between the United States of America and Korea on copyright and certain other matters has only just been announced, and the full details are not yet known. However, I understand that the agreement provides for copyright protection in Korea for foreign works published since 1977. I do not yet know the extent of this protection, and whether it will apply to works first published in the United Kingdom, but urgent inquiries are being made on these points.

Mr. Abse asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy on the protection of British copyright in the light of the United Kingdom Anti-Piracy Group's report "International Piracy—the threat to the British copyright industries", a copy of which was presented to him.

Mr. Pattie: The Government's policy is to provide all the support they can to United Kingdom copyright owners in their efforts to combat piracy of their material in overseas markets. They will continue to press for comprehensive and enforceable copyright law in countries which lack it, and to encourage and participate in international initiatives against piracy and counterfeiting, for example, within the general agreement on tariffs and trade, the World Intellectual Property Organisation, and the European Community. As President of the Council of the Community the Government will do all they can to take these initiatives forward.

The Government have agreed, in concert with their OECD partners, that trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights should be addressed in the new round of multilateral trade negotiations in the GATT, which it is hoped will be launched in September. They are also pressing that protection of foreign intellectual property rights should be included in Community discussions on trade matters with appropriate countries.

The Government were grateful for the report of the anti-piracy group and for the valuable information it contained. They hope to be in a position in the early autumn to discuss with the copyright industries the development of a detailed strategy in regard to those countries where copyright piracy and counterfeiting are most prevalent, following consultations with other countries whose copyright industries are also affected.

F. W. Clews (Furnishers) Ltd.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether F. W. Clews (Furnishers) Ltd. has lodged all its accounts as required under the Companies Acts; if he will list its last registered directors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: This company re-registered with unlimited liability on 1 April 1982 and, as a result, was not required to file accounts with the Registrar of Companies from that date. At the time of re-registration, filing of accounts was up-to-date. The current directors are shown on the public file as Alan Barry Kiley and K. T. Secretaries Ltd. The Registrar will strike the company off the register on 29 July 1986, because, on the basis of information supplied by the company, he has reason to believe that it is no longer in business or operation.

Midland Ideal Homes (Holdings) Ltd.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what date the company entitled Midland Ideal Homes (Holdings) Ltd. was removed from the Register of Companies at Companies House; for what reason it was removed; who were the directors of the company at the date at which it was removed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The company has not been removed from the register. It has been an unlimited liability company since 1 April 1982. The current directors are shown on the public file as Alan Barry Kiley and K T Secretaries Ltd.

Central Service (Kettering)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the date on which Central Service (Kettering) was first registered at Companies House; whether any action under the provisions of the Companies Acts has been taken against this company; and who were the last recorded directors of this company.

Mr. Howard: Central Services (Kettering) was originally registered as a limited company on 18 June 1958. It re-registered as unlimited on 3 February 1982, and was struck off the register on 14 January 1986, because the registrar had reason to believe that the company was no longer in business or operation. The last recorded directors were Alan Barry Kiley, Brian Wilfred Baggs and Leila Hart.

M. B. P. Russell and Co. Ltd.

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what reply has been given to the application of 21 April by M. B. P. Russell and Co. Ltd. for the appointment of inspectors; and when he expects to announce a decision on the matter.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does not propose to appoint inspectors for M. B. P. Russell & Co. Ltd., and the company has been informed accordingly.

Audio Tapes (Levy)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he proposes to exempt hospital radio organisations from the proposed levy on blank tape.

Mr. Pattie: Under the proposals for a levy on blank audio compact cassettes announced in the White Paper "Intellectual Property and Innovation" (Cmnd. 9712), the levy collecting society will be required to give rebates of the levy to organisations making significant use of leviable tapes for purposes that do not infringe copyright. Thus, hospital radio stations using blank audio compact cassettes for such purposes will be eligible to claim a rebate.

Scotch Whisky (Japan)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received from the Scottish Whisky Association about Japan's taxation of imported alcoholic drinks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Department maintains close contact with the Scottish Whisky Association about the problem of discriminatory taxation of imported alcoholic drinks in Japan. The Foreign Affairs Council of the European Community has recently invited the Commission to press for early action to remove discriminatory import barriers, with a view to initiating action under the GATT if this is not successful.

Goods and Services (Contracts)

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the proportions of total sales by United Kingdom companies which were accounted for by *(a)* Government Departments, *(b)* local government, *(c)* nationalised industries and *(d)* non-departmental public sector bodies in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: The information is not available.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has in respect of British Shipbuilders, British Steel and the Post Office as to the total amount spent on the acquisition of goods and services, expressed in terms of the net contract prices; and how many individual contracts comprised that value of purchasing, for each of the last five years for which figures are available, giving both the overall totals in each case and the totals disaggregated into the following categories *(a)* capital and revenue expenditure, *(b)* construction and non-construction projects, *(c)* goods and services purchased from United Kingdom-based companies and non-United Kingdom-based companies and *(d)* goods and services purchased from the private sector and from other parts of the public sector.

Mr. Butcher: British Shipbuilders, British Steel and the Post Office estimate that their purchases of raw materials, goods and services amount to just less than £4,000 million a year. I regret that figures are not available over a period of five years and that within this total figure it is not possible to identify purchases in the detail requested.

GEC-Plessey

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has yet received the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the General Electric Company takeover bid for Plessey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he received the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the proposed merger between Plessey and GEC; if he will publish the report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend received the MMC's report on the proposed merger between GEC and Plessey on 18 July. He will announce the outcome of the MMC's investigation, and publish its report, as soon as practicable.

Counterfeiting

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the effect of abolition of the anti-counterfeiting unit in his Department on the prevention of industrial counterfeiting.

Mr. Pattie: The unit reviewed the problems arising from counterfeiting of goods. The Government are as determined as ever to combat counterfeiting, and look forward to early adoption of proposed European Community legislation. We shall work in the forthcoming GATT negotiations for adoption of a code on counterfeiting. My Department's new unfair trade unit follows up individual complaints about international trading practices, including counterfeiting.

Egypt (Trade)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what items entered into trade between the United Kingdom and Egypt in each of the years 1981 to 1985, inclusive, giving their values.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information within acceptable cost limits is given in the table.

United Kingdom exports to Egypt in 1981 to 1985

Description	*1981 £ million*	*1982 £ million*	*1983 £ million*	*1984 £ million*	*1985 £ million*
Meat and meat preparations (1)	1	2	5	24	17
Petroleum, petroleum products and related materials (33)	14	5	7	9	22
Medicinal and pharmaceutical products (54)	10	10	10	16	16
Chemical materials and products, nes (59)	17	28	18	15	24
Iron and steel (67)	9	13	17	10	17
Manufactures of metal, nes (69)	14	17	19	20	18
Power generating machinery and equipment (71)	15	28	18	37	28
Machinery specialised for particular industries (72)	42	42	44	47	55
General industrial machinery, equipment and machine parts, nes (74)	30	27	33	43	47
Telecommunications, sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment (76)	13	18	20	16	18
Electrical machinery, apparatus, appliances and parts thereof, nes (77)	15	14	17	15	14
Professional, scientific and controlling instruments and apparatus, nes (87)	19	14	13	18	19
SUB-TOTAL	198	216	220	270	294
Balance	127	123	151	158	177
TOTAL EXPORTS	325	339	371	428	471

Source: Table V of the United Kingdom *Overseas Trade Statistics.*
Notes:
(i) Numbers in parenthesis after commodity descriptions refer to the divisions of the Standard Industrial Trade Classification (Rev. 2).
(ii) Totals may not correspond exactly to individual figures due to rounding.
(iii) nes = not elsewhere specified.
(iv) Exports are valued fob.
(v) 1985 figures are provisional.

United Kingdom imports from Egypt in 1981 to 1985

Description	*1981 £ million*	*1982 £ million*	*1983 £ million*	*1984 £ million*	*1985 £ million*
Vegetables and fruit (5)	16	19	15	22	16
Textile fibres and wastes (26)	2	3	4	4	5
Petroleum, petroleum products and related materials (33)	382	365	35	120	100
Textile yarn, fabrics, made-up articles nes, related products (65)	4	4	5	7	8
Power generating machinery and equipment (71)	2	8	4	4	10
SUB-TOTAL	405	398	63	157	139
Balance	10	15	17	23	23
TOTAL IMPORTS	415	413	80	180	162

Source: Table II of the United Kingdom *Overseas Trade Statistics.*
Notes:
(i) Numbers in parenthesis after commodity descriptions refer to the divisions of the Standard Industrial Trade Classification (Rev. 2).
(ii) Totals may not correspond exactly to individual figures due to rounding.
(iii) nes = not elsewhere specified.
(iv) Imports are valued cif.
(v) 1985 figures are provisional.

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received British Shipbuilders annual report and accounts for 1985-86 and the 1986-87 corporate plan.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In accordance with sections 17(9) and 18(6) of the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Act 1977, I am laying before each House copies of British Shipbuilders' annual report and accounts for 1985-86. I am also placing in the Library a version of British Shipbuilders 1986-87 corporate plan, with commercially confidential information deleted.

The corporation made a total historic cost trading loss of £125 million in 1985-86. The trading loss on the continuing business was £137 million. This includes provisions against the possible calling of customer credit guarantees of £43 million and under-recovered overheads of £41 million. The extent of the under-recovered overheads underlines the need for the action announced by British Shipbuilders in May to bring capacity more closely into line with anticipated work load.

As I announced on 16 June, British Shipbuilders' external financing limit in 1986-87 has been increased to £130 million to accommodate the costs of the restructuring announced on 14 May. The corporate plan presented by

British Shipbuilders is intended to allow it to maintain its business at the size it will reach after the present restructuring. The Government accept this plan, but its success will depend on sufficient orders being won. The Government's intention is to continue to set tight and degressive levels of financial support.

British Steel Corporation

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is able to announce a revised external financing limit for the British Steel Corporation; and if he will make a statement about the corporation's financial target.

Mr. Morrison: I am glad to be able to tell the House that BSC's external financing limit for the current year has been reduced by £95 million from £146 million to £51 million. This reflects a revised view of the outlook for the year, taking account of recent changes in external conditions. Exchange rate developments and a reduced need for working capital to finance stocks have played a major part.

I am also able to announce an interim financial target for the corporation. In recent years BSC has had to work to annual rather than medium-term targets, and although I hope next year to establish a medium-term target, it has not proved practicable to do so at this stage. The Government have set a target for the financial year 1986-87 of a return of 5 per cent. before interest and exceptional items on BSC's total capital employed, including short-term borrowings, as at 29 March 1986.

Iran (Car Kits)

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further support is to be provided for the contract between Peugeot-Talbot motor company and Iran for the sale of car kits.

Mr. Alan Clark: The cover to which my predecessor referred in his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 28 October 1985, at column 310, has been extended for a further limited period.

Company Law (Reform)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has for the reform of company law.

Mr. Howard: My Department has today published a consultative document on reform of the ultra vires rule inviting comments on the report on that subject which Dr. Dan Prentice of Oxford university has prepared at my request. Copies of the document have been placed in the Library. A further consultative document on requirements regarding the filing of annual returns and accounts at the companies registration offices will be published shortly. More generally, we are considering a number of other possible reforms with the need to remove unnecessary administrative burdens and the particular interests of small companies very much in mind.

Register of Companies

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made by the Companies Registration Office to improve the reliability of the Register of Companies.

Mr. Howard: As was reported to the Public Accounts Committee on 20 June 1984, the Registrar of Companies has been aiming to achieve compliance by 80 per cent. of the companies on the register by the middle of 1986. I reported to the House on progress on 11 December 1985.

At 30 June 1986, 88 per cent. of active companies were up to date with their filing of annual returns and 84 per cent. up-to-date with accounts. These figures compare with 52 and 45 per cent. respectively at the end of May 1984.

79·4 per cent. of active companies were compliant for both returns and accounts (compared with 41·0 per cent. in May 1984). A further 12·2 per cent. had been in default for less than six months.

I am pleased with the progress that has been made. I have asked the Registrar of Companies to maintain the pressure on compliance and to try to raise further the level of it. This will not be easy—it will mean a good deal of further hard work for him and his staff.

However, an up-to-date register is vital if creditors, potential investors and others who have dealings with companies, are to have the information they need to take soundly based decisions. The public availability of the data is also an important deterrent to fraud.

The registrar could not have made the progress he has without the co-operation of the business and professional community, which I gratefully acknowledge. I am sure that this co-operation will continue as the registrar and his staff maintain their efforts.

Small Companies (Financial Information)

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is able to give details of the measures announced on 22 May, *Official Report*, columns *247-48*, to relax the amount of financial information that small companies have to disclose in their accounts.

Mr. Howard: The financial thresholds defining small and medium-sized companies will be increased so that over 90 per cent. of companies will now have the option of filing modified accounts at companies registration offices. I intend to introduce the necessary subordinate legislation shortly.

We have also decided to reduce the amount of information that small companies are required to give shareholders in full accounts. However, shareholders will still be able to ask for all the information to which they are entitled at present under the Companies Act. We aim to bring this proposal forward at the first opportunity for primary legislation.

I shall be considering the practicalities further in consultation with the profession.

ENERGY

Sellafield

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will indicate the extent of leakage of all types from the British Nuclear Fuels concrete storage silos at Sellafield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by British Nuclear Fuels plc that there are two concrete silos, B41 and B38, located at Sellafield, containing solid wastes arising from the reprocessing of irradiated fuel. B41 contains approximately 5,000 cubic metres of solid waste retained

in a dry environment to which no further additions have been made since 1964. Environmental and structural conditions are routinely monitored and demonstrate a completely stable situation with no problems relating to aerial or liquid discharges.

B38 contains approximately 9,000 cubic metres of solid waste retained in water filled compartments. Localised ground contamination found in 1970 during B38 phase II construction was attributed to a below-ground leak from one of the compartments of phase I. Measurements demonstrated that the activity released was firmly held in the clay sub-strata and did not extend beyond three to four metres from source. Group activity continues to be stable, with no further migration of activity, as evidenced by frequent routine monitoring and groud surveys, both in the immediate vicinity of the silo and elsewhere within the site boundaries.

Silo water level measurements have indicated that there have been no further leakages. This is attibuted to the leak path being blocked by the particulate products of magnesium corrosion, a natural process where Magnox fuel cladding material is stored under water.

Subsequent phases of B38 silo construction have utilised different design concepts, allowing for double containment, inter-space leak detection, and return of any leakage to silo. Cooling and recirculation systems were also installed in later compartments to control reaction rates and maintain low temperatures. No further leakages have occurred.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is satisfied with current storage arrangements for spent Magnox fuel at Sellafield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Yes. I am advised by British Nuclear Fuels plc that the new fuel handling plant is being commissioned, that receipts of irradiated fuel from Magnox stations are now received there prior to reprocessing, and that excellent storage conditions prevail.

The inventory of Magnox fuel received prior to commissioning of the fuel handling plant is held in one of the older Sellafield storage ponds and work is in hand to have this fuel reprocessed so that the pond can be prepared for eventual decommissioning.

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish the report of the safety and reliability directorate entitled "The Consequences of a Hydrogen Explosion in B38 Magnox Silo Second Extension".

Mr. Goodlad: No. I am advised that the document, which was commissioned from the Safety and Reliability Directorate (SRD) by British Nuclear Fuels plc, was one of a number of studies which formed part of the consideration by Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the safety case for the second extension of the B38 Magnox silo. Subsequent to the SRD study, improvements have been progressively introduced to the existing silos and to the design proposed for the second extension, following which Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate gave consent for its operation in February 1982.

Plutonium

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all those establishments which were licensed to handle plutonium in each year since 1956; if he will describe the procedures by which establishments receive a licence to handle plutonium and list those establishments for which applications for new or renewed licences are pending and, for each establishment, indicate the owners and operators of each establishment and site during each year it has been so licensed.

Mr. Goodlad: The Health and Safety Executive does not issue licences for the specific purpose of handling plutonium. However, BNFL's Sellafield and Springfields sites are licensed, inter alia, to handle plutonium. Licences are issued in accordance with section 1(1) of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate Act 1965. In addition, any person, other than the Crown or the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority requires a permit to carry out the treatment of irradiated nuclear fuel so as to extract therefrom plutonium. Such permits are granted by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority or a Government Department, and are required in addition to a current nuclear site licence. British Nuclear Fuels plc has held a permit in respect of its site at Sellafield since 1971.

The function and powers of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to deal with all kinds of radioactive substances including plutonium, are given in the Atomic Energy Authority Act 1954 and related legislation.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *566*, he will indicate *(a)* to which organisations the plutonium exported to France in the years stated in his reply was transferred, *(b)* whether the plutonium was loaned or sold, or exchanged for an equivalent quantity of nuclear material, *(c)* under whose ownership this plutonium now resides, *(d)* whether any of the exported plutonium has since been reimported in any form, *(e)* whether the plutonium was processed or manufactured in any way whilst in France, *(f)* whether one export licence for such materials covers more than one contract or more than one load and *(g)* what other nuclear materials have been exported, and in which years; in relation to *(g)*, which materials were involved, and in what chemical and physical form they were when exported in each year; and which of these exports were subject to an export licence.

Mr. Goodlad: This information could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give details of the controls introduced to enforce the ban on the sale and export of oil to South Africa as agreed in the Commonwealth accord on southern Africa adopted on 20 October 1985.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I refer to my reply of 6 February 1984 to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) at column *460*.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met representatives of the oil companies to discuss Government policy towards the development of North sea oil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My right hon. Friend and I frequently meet representatives of the oil companies both formally and informally, and will continue to do so, to discuss all matters of mutual interest.

Severn Barrage

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects the final study of the Severn barrage project to be completed.

Mr. David Hunt: I expect that the advanced investigations and site exploration of a Severn barrage on a line near to Cardiff and Weston which my right hon. Friend announced on 9 July will be completed in approximately two years.

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many jobs have been created as a result of the activities of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. in each region; how many potential jobs have been created; how much money has been invested; and if he will list for each region the name of the firm, its main activities, the number of jobs before NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. activities, and the number of people employed at the latest known date.

Mr. David Hunt: At 28 June 1986, NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. to be known as British Coal Enterprise Ltd. from 31 July, had committed £12·9 million to 639 projects to help create 5,203 job opportunities initially and another 3,025 potential job opportunities, without further investment. The regional breakdown is as follows:

Region	*Initial jobs created*	*Further jobs*	*Total*
Scotland	1,107	595	1,702
North East	848	249	1,097
Yorkshire	1,097	684	1,781
Midlands	458	201	659
Western	400	386	786
South Wales	1,193	877	2,070
South East	100	33	133
TOTAL	5,203	3,025	8,288

It is not NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.'s policy to publish details of the individuals and firms assisted. To do so would be a breach of commercial confidentiality.

Community Programme

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for Energy what plans exist for new community programme opportunities to be provided by his Department.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Energy Efficiency Office sponsors a national initiative within the community programme which provides a low-cost or free insulation service for low-income households. This programme has insulated almost 200,000 homes since it began, and currently employs around 5,000 in 270 separate local projects; 200 more projects are being planned, and I expect perhaps 80 of those to start up, creating another 1,500 jobs, by the end of the year, with further expansion thereafter.

There are no present plans to sponsor new employment programmes beyond the one I have mentioned.

British Coal (Northern Area)

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what information he has as to how many tonnes of coal per month were produced by how many miners at how many pits in British Coal northern area *(a)* in the most recent month for which figures are available and *(b)* in February 1984; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will provide details of improvements in productivity reported to his Department by British Coal for its northern area.

Mr. David Hunt: The total deep mine revenue output, number of pits, average men on colliery books and average revenue output per man shift for the north-east area of the NCB in June 1986 and February 1984 were as follows:

	June 1986 (four weeks)	*February 1984 (four weeks)*
Revenue output (thousand tonnes)	893	846
Number of pits	9	16
Average manpower	16,930	22,990
Output per man shift (tonnes)	3·08	2·20

Men and management in the north-east are to be congratulated on this record growth in productivity which reflects a continuing effort by all concerned to reduce costs.

Goods and Services (Contracts)

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what information he has in respect of the British Gas Corporation, the Central Electricity Generating Board, the Electricity Council and British Coal as the total amount spent on the acquisition of goods and services expressed in terms of net contract prices; and how many individual contracts comprised that volume of purchasing for each of the last five years for which figures are available, giving both the overall totals for each case and the totals disaggregated into the following categories *(a)* capital and revenue expenditure, *b)* construction and non-construction projects, *(c)* goods and services purchased from United Kingdom-based companies and non-United Kingdom-based companies and *(d)* goods and services purchased from the private sector and from other parts of the public sector;

(2) what information he has in respect of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority as to the total amount spent on the acquisition of goods and services, expressed in the terms of net contract prices; and how many individual contracts comprised that volume of purchasing for each of the last five years for which figures are available, giving both the overall totals for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and the totals disaggregated into the following categories: *(a)* capital and revenue expenditure, *(b)* construction and non-construction projects, *(c)* goods and services purchased from United Kingdom-based companies and non United Kingdom-based companies and *(d)* goods and services purchased from the private sector and from other parts of the public sector.

Mr. Peter Walker: These are matters for the industries.

Coal

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give for each year since 1979 to date *(a)* the amount of coal/solid fuel used by all sources in the United Kingdom, *(b)* the amount of coal exported and to which country and *(c)* the amount of coal in stock.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is as follows:

	United Kingdom	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
(a)	*Consumption* (000 tonnes)							
	Coal: total inland consumption	129,378	123,460	118,386	110,998	111,475	77,309	105,364
	Coke and breeze: total inland consumption	11,549	6,350	8,072	7,335	7,664	7,742	8,247
	Other manufactured solid fuels: total inland disposals	2,379	2,265	1,987	1,933	1,897	1,186	1,658
(b)	*Coal Exports* (000 tonnes)							
	Country of destination							
	EC Countries (as at 1985)							
	Belgium/Luxembourg	189	185	347	134	105	74	44
	Denmark	176	606	1,925	2,057	1,571	612	1,278
	Federal Republic of Germany	609	1,150	1,498	789	624	122	191
	France	750	1,474	2,624	1,911	1,565	778	231
	Irish Republic	226	289	491	469	429	309	392
	Italy	16	9	67	6	6	6	—
	Netherlands	161	222	783	502	318	71	14
	Greece	—	—	—	—	3	25	13
	Total EC	2,127	3,935	7,735	5,868	4,621	1,997	2,163
	Non-EC countries (000 tonnes)							
	Portugal	4	5	34	59	133	5	111
	Spain	—	—	88	54	11	21	3
	Finland	10	8	1,168	1,102	765	114	2
	Norway	78	62	64	45	68	24	13
	Sweden	115	30	218	113	201	34	65
	Israel	—	—	77	94	158	58	—
	Morocco	—	—	—	39	192	87	168
	Switzerland	—	—	14	—	169	83	—
	Others	5	2	115	13	21	17	33
	Total Non-EC	212	107	1,778	1,519	1,718	443	395
	Total Coal Exports	2,339	4,042	9,513	7,387	6,339	2,440	2,558
(c)	Coal stocks (distributed and undistributed) at end December	27,908	37,687	42,253	52,377	57,960	36,548	34,979

Sources:
(a) and *(b)* to 1984: Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics;
(c) Department of Energy, Energy Trends. All 1985 information is provisional.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information was provided to the International Atomic Energy Agency on the performance of the Dounreay nuclear power station in 1984 for publication in the International Atomic Energy Agency's report, "Operating Experience with Nuclear Power Stations in Member States in 1984."

Mr. Goodlad: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

British Gas

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Energy what incentives will be offered to encourage small investors to purchase shares in the forthcoming sale of British Gas.

Mr. Peter Walker: We have decided that small investors will be offered a choice of incentives when the sale of British Gas takes place. They will be able to opt either for gas vouchers, to help pay their domestic gas bills, or for an issue of bonus shares. Small investors will qualify for these incentives by continuing to hold their British Gas shares for specified periods after the sale. Further details will be announced closer to the flotation.

Electricity (Revenue Collection)

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has been made by the electricity supply industry in responding to the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the revenue collection system of four area electricity boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I have now received from the Electricity Council a second response to the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission published in January 1985 on the revenue collection systems of the East Midlands, South Eastern, North Eastern and South Western area electricity boards (Cmnd. 9427). This describes progress on steps taken by the industry to meet the commission's conclusions. I am placing copies of the response in the Library of the House.

The industry has made useful progress in considering the MMC's recommendations since my statement to the House on 25 July 1985 concerning the initital response, and has been able to reach a considered response on a number of issues. I welcome this.

The commission's central conclusions dealt with the variations which it found in boards' differing practices and procedures for revenue collection. The response indicates that the council is now well advanced in carrying through a systematic and detailed study of these differences across all 12 area boards. The study is designed to lead to the indentification and implementation of best practice wherever possible throughout the industry, taking due account of boards' local circumstances. The recent internal reorganisation of the Electricity Council mentioned in the response to conclusions 4 and 5 should assist progress towards this goal.

In conclusion 8, the commission recommended that each board should set a quantified cost objective for revenue collection as a whole with the medium term objective of achieving continued cost reduction in real terms. The reference boards have accepted this general objective and reviewed their practices and productivity accordingly. The specific objectives set by the four boards are detailed in the response. SEEB has now established an audit committee as recommended by the commission at conclusion 10. Although NEEB has not followed this example, I have noted that it is taking steps to increase the participation of non-executive members in looking at specific issues including the comparative performance of the board.

A number of other recommendations raise complex issues relevant to all 12 boards, not just the four examined, and the wider implications of these are being actively pursued by the industry. The Electricity Council is continuing to direct and co-ordinate follow-up work to ensure that full value is taken from the investigation. I shall take a close interest in developments and have asked the council chairman to let me have a further report on progress in the course of next year, by which time I hope that follow-up action will have been completed.

In my statement of 25 July 1985 I noted that the industry had recognised the desirability of greater consistency in the application of performance indicators to revenue collection. As the commission points out, consistency is also desirable in the methods of cost allocation which underlie inter-board performance comparisons. The council's new general management committee, which has a specific duty to monitor board's corporate objectives and performance targets and to review the appropriateness and effectiveness of performance indicators, will be taking the lead in this.

I should like to take this opportunity to convey the Government's thanks to the MMC for its constructive and effective investigation. The Government value its findings in the effort to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

WALES

Acute Surgery (Waiting Lists)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the number of people on the waiting lists for acute surgery every six months since September 1982 for each health authority in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Acute surgery is not a category which is used in relation to waiting list information. The following table gives information on general surgery waiting lists, including urology, for urgent in-patients, non-urgent in-patients and out-patients.

Numbers on waiting list—general surgery (including urology)

Authority	*Sept. 1982*	*March 1983*	*Sept. 1983*	*March 1984*	*Sept. 1984*	*March 1985*	*Sept. 1985*
In-patients—urgent							
Clwyd	9	8	51	30	34	47	53
Dyfed	2	5	—	—	3	—	—
Pembrokeshire	97	63	57	82	128	226	306
Gwent	342	264	361	502	437	545	414
Gwynedd	44	36	4	12	13	12	—
Mid Glamorgan	265	151	84	71	51	39	23
Powys	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan*	206	157	365	16	434	579	553
West Glamorgan	161	172	208	107	192	157	246
In-patients—non-urgent							
Clwyd	1,016	1,110	947	1,197	1,111	1,130	1,300
East Dyfed	429	501	547	545	464	396	427
Pembrokeshire	871	856	845	869	1,048	1,023	1,151
Gwent	1,615	1,537	1,691	1,535	1,468	1,425	1,594
Gwynedd	588	426	452	344	402	474	570
Mid Glamorgan	2,880	2,699	2,713	2,646	2,502	2,662	2,987
Powys	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan*	1,256	1,404	1,181	1,919	1,565	1,839	1,484
West Glamorgan	1,455	1,321	1,349	1,307	954	1,021	1,021
Out-patients							
Clwyd	889	860	1,066	1,061	1,158	1,071	1,347
East Dyfed	914	901	1,166	1,124	1,215	1,141	966
Pembrokeshire	239	241	275	531	328	631	558
Gwent	1,663	1,775	1,958	2,109	2,325	2,675	2,808
Gwynedd	613	608	530	495	623	558	758
Mid Glamorgan	2,227	1,985	2,406	2,399	2,331	2,600	3,692

Authority	Sept. 1982	March 1983	Sept. 1983	March 1984	Sept. 1984	March 1985	Sept. 1985
Powys	29	30	57	27	51	37	71
South Glamorgan	2,024	1,507	2,247	1,801	1,993	1,653	2,491
West Glamorgan	2,122	1,957	1,637	1,888	2,406	2,464	2,750

• The total waiting list for South Glamorgan includes the following cases which cannot be classified as either urgent or non-urgent: September 1984—199, March 1985—214, September 1985—386.

Sheep (Radiation)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library details of the following: *(a)* how many live lambs have been tested in Wales since 1 May for an excess of radiation, *(b)* by parishes, where the tests were performed and *(c)* the results of such testing; if he will introduce a system of continuing local monitoring of radiation levels in sheep in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: All the results of tests on lambs are being placed in the Library of the House. I regret the information is not readily available according to parish boundaries. The monitoring of radio caesium levels in lambs is continuing.

Tests have now identified further areas where restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep can be lifted. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I have therefore today laid a new order under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, to come into effect at midnight, to release areas in Gwynedd, Clwyd and Powys.

A map which shows the areas to be released in more detail and the results of tests up to 21 July are being published today and a copy is being placed in the Library of the House.

Chernobyl Incident (Environmental Information)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available, separately, the Welsh data included in the National Radiological Protection Board's compilation of environmental information collected in response to the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: An extract of the data covering Wales is being published today. A copy is being placed in the Library of the House.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Test Ban

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications of the latest United States nuclear weapon test for Her Majesty's Government's attitude towards a further summit between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; whether Her Majesty's Government have any involvement in this test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We share the widespread hope that there will be a summit meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev this year, and that it will succeed in reaching decisions on arms control. This view is not affected by the latest United States test which was not related to the United Kingdom nuclear programme.

Cultural Representation (USA)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the annual cost of, and how many people are involved in, the United Kingdom's cultural representation in the United States of America.

Mr. Eggar: The British Council's country programme costs for the United States in 1986-87 are estimated to be £613,000. It employs one and a half United Kingdom based staff and two local staff, who work from her Majesty's embassy in Washington. In addition, four locally engaged staff paid for by the FCO work full time in the cultural section of the embassy, at an estimated cost of £48,000.

A large number of private organisations are involved in British cultural activities in the USA but their cost is not quantifiable.

Chemical Weapons

Sir John Osborn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the United Kingdom's recent initiative on chemical weapons.

Mr. Renton: Her Majesty's Government attaches a high priority to the conclusion of a comprehensive and verifiable ban on chemical weapons. Although some progress has been made on verification arrangements at certain declared sites, a serious obstacle remains on the verification mechanism of last resort challenge inspection. A valuable standard for the stringency that will be required for a challenge inspection regime has been set by the United States draft treaty, tabled in the negotiations in April 1984. However, the Soviet Union has refused to negotiate on these ideas.

On 15 July I tabled a new United Kingdom paper at the conference on disarmament, CD715, "Verification and Compliance—The Challenge Element" designed to seek a way forward in this vitally important area. Our proposals would give each state a right to request a challenge inspection. The challenged state would then be under an obligation to demonstrate compliance within a tight time scale of 10 days. The obligation would normally be met by comprehensive investigation by an international team; but direct inspection could be refused in exceptional circumstances, subject to the challenged state being able to demonstrate its compliance by other means.

We believe these ideas would impose a stringent political obligation on a challenged state which would deter any contemplated violation; they would at the same time enable a state to safeguard its legitimate security interests.

I have placed copies of the United Kingdom working paper and of my speech to the conference on disarmament in the Library.

In my speech I asked the conference to set itself the goal of presenting a complete chemical weapons invention to the United Nations General Assembly in 1987. That remains our aim.

Hong Kong

Sir Paul Bryan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the state of public and private housing in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 20 May at column 143.

Sir Paul Bryan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the opportunities for sport available to the people in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The provision of sports facilities in Hong Kong continues to improve and expand through co-operation between the Hong Kong Government, the municipal councils, the governing bodies of sport and voluntary organisations. Opportunities now exist for the population to participate in almost every type of sporting activity at all levels. Sporting facilities, including multi-purpose indoor stadia, international standard swimming pool complexes, athletics grounds and water sport centres are provided by the urban and regional councils. In addition, since its completion in 1982, the Jubilee sports centre has been the focal point for sports training, and has provided excellent facilities for many sports.

Chile

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has received in relation to recent abuses of human rights in Chile as regards the arrests of Messrs Soto Tellez, Cifuentes Cifuentes, Vega Poza, Ecobar Sanchez, Gamboa Alaredo, Sanhueza Azaredo, Rojas de Negri and Ms Quintana Arancibia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None. We share the widely felt concern over the human rights abuses associated with the 2-3 July national strike, especially the death of Sr Rojas and the injuries suffered by Srta Quintana. We welcome the appointment of a civilian judge to investigate these cases and hope that he will report fully on the facts.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings with human rights, trade union and community organisations in Chile have been held by British diplomatic staff since November 1984.

Mr. Eggar: We have regular contact with Chilean human rights, trade union and community organisations both in Santiago and London.

El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what human rights organisations in El Salvador have held meetings with British diplomatic representatives in the current year.

Mr. Eggar: This year our representatives in El Salvador have held meetings with two local human rights organisations, the Commission on Human Rights and Tutela Legal, as well as the Roman Catholic Church. They have also met others with an interest in the subject, for example, the London-based El Salvador committee for human rights, the World Council of Churches, Americas Watch, Christian Aid and Oxfam.

President Reagan

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent meeting with President Reagan.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend met President Reagan in Washington on 18 July. They discussed South Africa, East-West relations and the successful conclusion of the United Kingdom–United States supplementary extradition treaty. This meeting followed other talks with Vice-President Bush, Secretary Shultz and Senator Lugar, as well as with Mr. Malcolm Fraser of Australia.

Caste System

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise the operation of the caste system at the Commonwealth conference.

Mr. Eggar: The sole subject of the agenda of the forthcoming meeting of seven Commonwealth Heads of Government, scheduled for 3 to 5 August, is the review of the Commonwealth accord on southern Africa agreed last October at Nassau. The question of discussing the operation of the caste system thus does not arise.

Egypt

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the United Kingdom and Egypt and their implications for a middle east peace settlement.

Mr. Renton: Relations between the United Kingdom and Egypt are excellent. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told President Mubarak on 17 July, we are concerned at the current hiatus in the peace process. Britain and the Twelve remain ready to support any realistic initiative to promote a peaceful settlement.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether British representatives attended the workshop on chemical weapon arms control organised by the Netherlands Government in June in the Hague; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: A workshop on the verification of a chemical weapons ban was held in the Netherlands from 4 to 6 June 1986. Its main purpose was to evaluate an experimental inspection of a modern chemical plant to test in practice some verification procedures. Representatives attended this workshop from most of the delegations to the conference on disarmament. Three representatives attended from the United Kingdom, including the leader of the United Kingdom delegation, Dr. Ian Cromartie, who is this year chairing the chemical weapons negotiations.

The verification of non-production of chemical weapons will be an important element of a chemical

weapons ban and the United Kingdom has tabled three papers on this topic. We were pleased that the experimental inspection was able to make use of the idea in these papers. We believe that the workshop has enabled valuable lessons to be drawn, which now need to be reflected in agreement in the negotiations.

ENVIRONMENT

Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the amount of rates payable in the current financial year by, respectively, the agriculture, manufacturing and industry and commerce sectors generally; and how this compares with the contribution to local authority expenditure made by the Government and by other ratepayers.

Mrs. Rumbold: Following is a breakdown of rates payable to local authorities' rate funds for 1986-87 for Great Britain:

Rate yields by sector

	(£ billion)
Agriculture	0·0
Industry*	1·7
Commerce and Public Utilities	5·6
Domestic	6·5
Schools, Government, etc.	1·9
Government grants†	17·2

* Manufacturing industry is not separately identifiable from central records. The quoted figure is for the rateable value category of "Factories, mills and other premises of a similar character".

† Government grants included are aggregate exchequer grant, rate rebate grants and specific grant on mandatory student awards.

Planning Permission (Revocations)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many cases there have been since May 1979 in which planning permission has been revoked under sections 45 and 46 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971; in how many of these compensation has been paid by the local authority, and by his Department respectively; and if he has reimbursed part or all of any compensation paid by a local authority arising out of a revocation order.

Mr. Tracey: Statistics are available only for the period from April 1979 to December 1985. In that period 993 revocation orders were confirmed by the Secretary of State. No statistics are available for unopposed orders where his confirmation was not required.

Compensation under these provisions is paid by the local planning authority, and information on amounts paid as a result is not available centrally.

Waste Management (Report)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the Government's response to the eleventh report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution, entitled, "Managing Waste: the Duty of Care."

Mr. Ridley: The Government's response will be published on 15 September. In the meantime, I have arranged for typescript copies of the response to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Durham Beaches (Colliery Spoil)

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has completed his consideration of the representations made to him about the tipping of colliery spoil on the Durham beaches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The practice of tipping colliery spoil along the Durham coast has been recognised as a serious environmental problem by successive Governments for some 20 years. There are, however, no easy solutions which do not pose a threat to jobs.

In recent years tipping has ceased at Blackhall and extensive reclamation works removing the evidence of a long history of despoliation have been carried out, paid for by derelict land grant; at Horden and Easington some improvements have been made in recent years by the construction by British Coal of an experimental spoil disposal pipeline funded in part by my Department, and a spoil conveyor respectively. Tipping at Horden will cease by the Autumn and reclamation work funded by derelict land grant will start this year to remove the legacy of dereliction. Reclamation works are also planned at Easington. The Dawdon complex at Seaham is now the most urgent problem in this area. Late last year my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy and I met the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand) and representatives from the local authorities to discuss the situation in the area. At that meeting the local authority representatives pressed for beach tipping to be brought to an end and for the waste either to be dumped at sea or else taken inland to fill quarries and urged the Government to fund any additional costs involved. We have closely examined these proposals. We are satisfied that the disposal of waste at sea is not an acceptable alternative on environmental grounds. The disposal of waste to quarries inland would present fewer environmental problems, but the site proposed does not have sufficient capacity to take all the spoil that is expected to be produced over the life of the collieries. The costs of transportation are in any event high and could not be borne by the collieries concerned without placing their future in jeopardy, thus posing a serious threat to jobs in an area of high unemployment. We have carefully considered whether these additional costs should be funded by central Government. We have concluded that this would not be in accordance with this Government's commitment to the polluter pays principle. It must be for the industry—and ultimately the consumer—to pay the costs of meeting the environmental standards of the day. In practice these standards have to take into account the benefits that can be achieved and the costs they impose on industry. Clearly the benefits to be gained from the option of disposal at inland quarries could not be achieved without putting at risk the 6,000 jobs in the mines which currently dispose of waste at Seaham. That is not a practical solution.

We have therefore concluded that a partial solution proposed by British Coal, which would result in a concentration of tipping at the Bankside disposal point,

while perpetuating undesirable beach tipping, represents the best practicable environmental option, at least in the short term. This would enable real environmental improvements to be made at a reasonable cost without placing jobs at risk.

This scheme will also provide substantial opportunities for reclamation at Noses Point and around the colliery and this work forms part of the proposal put forward by British Coal. There will also be opportunities to reclaim colliery despoliation away from the immediate vicinity of the mine, for example, the Blast Beach, and qualifying schemes will receive a high priority in the derelict land grant programme in the region. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy and I are calling on the local authorities and British Coal to come forward jointly with reclamation schemes for this area in order that we may together improve an extremely despoiled environment as quickly as possible.

Goods and Services (Contracts)

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has in respect of local authorities as to the total amount spent on the acquisition of goods and services, expressed in terms of the net contract prices; and how many individual contracts comprised that volume of purchasing for each of the last five years for which figures are available, giving both the overall totals for each local authority and the total disaggregated into the following categories: *(a)* capital and revenue expenditure, *(b)* construction and non-construction projects, *(c)* goods and services purchased from United Kingdom-based companies and non-United Kingdom-based companies and *(d)* goods and services purchased from the private sector and other parts of the public sector.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is not available centrally.

Royal Docks (STOLport)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that the London Docklands Development Corporation complies with the code of practice concerning consultation with local authorities, as required by section 140 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 in respect of planning applications relating to the proposed STOL airport in the Royal docks.

Sir George Young: The corporation has informed my Department of the steps it is taking to comply with the code of practice in respect of planning applications relating to STOLport, and I am satisfied.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the amounts in rate support grant paid to the city of Liverpool in each of the financial years 1974-75 and 1985-86, inclusive, giving the percentage change in each case.

Mrs. Rumbold: The rate support grant paid to the city of Liverpool in respect of the years 1974-75 to 1985-86 inclusive are shown in cash terms, along with the year-on-year percentage changes.

	£ million	Percentage change from previous year
(1) 1974-75 to 1980-81		
1974-75	65·6	—
1975-76	81·3	+23·8
1976-77	85·9	+5·8
1977-78	95·1	+10·7
1978-79	102·6	+7·9
1979-80	116·2	+13·2
1980-81	141·1	+21·4
(2) 1981-82 to 1985-86		
1981-82	120·5	See notes
1982-83	117·3	−2·7
1983-84	123·6	+5·4
1984-85	118·7	−4·0
1985-86	125·4	+5·6

Notes:

The figures for 1974-75 to 1980-81 are not comparable with those for 1981-82 to 1985-86 because:

i. They compromise the needs, resources and domestic elements whereas from 1981-82 onwards the figures comprise block grant and domestic rate relief grant;

ii. Grant in support of services provided by metropolitan county councils was paid to the districts up to 1980-81 and to the counties thereafter.

All figures are in cash terms. Those for 1981-82 are final entitlements. Domestic rate relief grant figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 are final entitlements; those for 1985-86 are first estimates. Block grant figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 are entitlements after holdback based upon provisional outturn; those for 1985-86 are entitlements after holdback based on budgets.

Birlsbury Wood

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the answer of 30 June, *Official Report*, column *366*, he will now state the sum paid to the owners of Birlsbury Wood for not clearing the woodland; and if he will break down the figure given for woodland agreements into individual woodlands.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not my Department's practice to give details of individual agreements.

Croxteth Hall and County Park, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of Croxteth Hall and Country Park, Liverpool, before the summer Adjournment.

Mrs. Rumbold: The residuary body, in conjuction with the Countryside Commission, has consulted widely on the prospects of the future of Croxteth and on the alternatives for its long-term management. Croxteth is a much valued amenity, which receives widespread support. My right hon. Friend and I are glad that there has now been so much open discussion about the opportunities it offers, rather than pessimistic talk about closure.

There is much support for the view that the best way forward now would be to set up a trust charged with both the ownership and management of Croxteth Hall and Country Park. With good will on all sides such a trust could attract financial assistance from a variety of sources and manage the estate as a whole. We would hope that local district councils would form the nucleus of the trust

and bear the primary responsibility for safeguarding Croxteth's future. However, there will be others with a positive role to play, and opportunities for a number of national agencies concerned with the heritage and tourism to give financial support. I will now be discussing with the chairman of the residuary body the details of setting up a trust. In the meantime, he will be commissioning a marketing survey and a new management plan which can then be used as the blueprint for Croxteth's management team.

Homeless Families

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will take steps to extend the definitions of accommodation within current housing legislation such as would allow a local authority to accommodate homeless families on moored ships;

(2) what approaches he has received from the London borough of Tower Hamlets seeking his approval for plans to accommodate homeless families on shipping moored on the Thames; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has received no such approaches. It is for the local authority concerned to consider how to fulfil its duties to secure accommodation for homeless people under part III of the Housing Act 1985, having regard to our code of guidance and its powers under housing and other legislation.

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homeless families are currently housed in bed and breakfast accommodation in each of the London boroughs; and what is the estimated cost per annum, for each council concerned.

Sir George Young: I refer the right hon. Member to my Department's published tables of homeless households reported by local authorities for the first quarter of 1986, and to the reply to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 23 June on the cost to local authorities. Copies of the relevant papers have been placed in the Library.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current housing investment programme allocation to each of the London boroughs.

Sir George Young: HIP allocations for 1986-87 are at column 1. Most boroughs supplement their allocations with the prescribed proportion of available capital receipts. They therefore spend well above their basic allocations; provisional expenditure figures for 1985-86 are at column 2.

	HIP 1986-87 (1)	*Expenditure 1985-86* (2)
City of London	365	1,189
Barking	3,205	3,966
Barnet	4,951	11,757
Bexley	3,537	7,443
Brent	22,208	24,973
Bromley	4,751	10,907
Camden	29,078	37,154
Croydon	6,422	14,783
Ealing	11,779	18,127
Enfield	5,122	12,475
Greenwich	17,205	13,239
Hackney	31,767	25,212
Hammersmith and Fulham	15,852	18,820
Haringey	26,587	29,482
Harrow	4,281	6,892
Havering	3,655	10,798
Hillingdon	6,069	15,663
Hounslow	8,499	11,051
Islington	29,355	31,899
Kensington and Chelsea	12,962	21,443
Kingston upon Thames	1,522	5,928
Lambeth	35,587	47,341
Lewisham	22,725	21,950
Merton	3,815	7,700
Newham	21,699	24,140
Redbridge	4,265	14,051
Richmond upon Thames	3,667	4,151
Southwark	31,767	28,167
Sutton	2,176	4,210
Tower Hamlets	16,429	9,479
Waltham Forest	7,716	12,385
Wandsworth	17,388	n/a
Westminster	13,824	19,045

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he proposes to give in the next allocation of housing investment programme moneys to Lambeth borough council to the demand for house renovation grants along with other demands on resources for housing in Lambeth.

Sir George Young: Decisions on the method of allocating housing resources for 1987-88 will be taken in the autumn in the usual way, after consultation with the local authority associations.

Housing Improvements Grants

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been *(a)* allocated and *(b)* spent on housing improvement repair grants in each of the last 10 financial years up to and including 1986-87 for (i) England and Wales and (ii) Northampton.

Mr. John Patten: The following is the available information on the amounts of repair grants paid.

	England and Wales £'000	*Northampton* £
1978-79	235	†1,305
1979-80	343	553
1980-81	578	0
1981-82	12,738	25,455
1982-83	109,731	92,094
1983-84	393,383	423,120
1984-85	326,698	‡115,711
1985-86	*165,516	n.a.

* Provisional.
† Fourth quarter only.
‡ First half.

Figures for earlier years for England and Wales could be provided only at disproportionate cost: earlier returns from Northampton are not available.

Separate allocations for repair grants are not made.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many tons of hazardous waste have been imported into the United Kingdom every year since 1983.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department's Hazardous Waste Inspectorate recorded in its 1986 report that the approximate annual totals of hazardous waste imported into the United Kingdom during 1983, 1984 and 1985 were respectively 15,000, 5,000 and 25,000 tonnes.

Victoria and Albert Museum

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by the inquiry set up to investigate the flooding at the Victoria and Albert museum on 21-22 March; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Early in the morning of 22 March 1986 it was discovered that a temporary water main at the Victoria and Albert museum had failed, causing serious flooding of the basement area and damage to the artifacts stored there. On 25 March, at cols. 425-26, I announced that, in consultation with my right hon. Friend the Minister of the Arts, I had ordered a full independent investigation into the accident. The inquiry, led by Mr. John Bartlett, CBE, MA, FENG, FICE, has now produced its report.

The inquiry concludes that the flooding is attributable to the failure of a joint on a temporary mains pipe as the joint came under increasing water pressure during the night. The temporary main was installed by a contractor employed by the Property Services Agency while he carried out his main task of replacing the existing services (drainage, water, gas, electricity) in the east access road which runs along the eastern side of the museum. A repair clamp was used to join an existing water pipe protruding from the museum wall to a new and different size pipe, which was part of a temporary diversion of the museum's mains pipe. The clamp is designed to repair damaged pipes and not to join separate pipes. On this occasion, however, it was used to connect two pipes of significantly different outside diameters, one of which fell outside the manufacturer's recommended range for the clamp used. The inquiry further considers that the joint and adjacent temporary pipework were inadequately propped when they were installed on 21 March, and that the overnight build up of pressure in the main was more than the repair clamp and the limited strutting were capable of resisting.

The inquiry found no evidence of flooding inside the V and A at 4.50 am on 22 March, when a warder patrolled the relevant section of the basement. It concludes that the joint failed in the early hours and that water started to enter the museum at about 5 am. Because of a combination of circumstances, water entered the basement for up to one and half hours before the flooding was discovered by warders on patrol at 6.25 am.

Once the alarm was raised, the museum staff acted with commendable speed to turn off the water supply and, with the assistance of the contractor, to start immediate pumping operations. Staff from the museum, the PSA, the fire brigade and the contractor dealt with the emergency speedily and efficiently over the weekend of 22-23 March. The cost of the damage was approximately £¼ million.

The contractor reassembled the temporary pipework on 22 March and instituted 24-hour surveillance of his site. Following an inspection of the reassembled temporary pipework by the contractor and the PSA, additional strutting was installed in a number of locations. The PSA has instructed the contractor that the relevant section of pipework should be dismantled in one piece when it is no longer required on site and sent for testing. The inquiry will report again should the results of these tests bring any new evidence to light.

The design and installation of the temporary mains were entirely the responsibility of the contractor, as for any other temporary work. The inquiry concludes that the PSA staff supervising the contract acted properly in the context of existing rules and guidance, but believes that there is a need to distinguish between such important and vulnerable temporary works and others. It therefore recommends that the agency should review the status of temporary work within a contract and consider creating a new category of temporary works where a client is relying on a vital service for a significant time and where its failure would have serious consequences for people other than the contractor. Such work should be accorded greater scrutiny, supervision and testing than is usual for temporary works.

Other recommendations made by the inquiry are that:

—the PSA and its clients should formally consider the risks associated with building projects during the design stages;

—the current review of the V and A's security systems should consider the need for alarms to indicate the presence of water and for bulkheads to prevent the flow of water;

— the V and A should review its night patrolling arrangements;

—the V and A should review its arrangements for calling in help in emergencies;

—floor plans should be readily available for use by the fire brigade and other emergency services;

— the national museum and galleries should consider establishing "salvage teams" for major accidents and formalising the arrangements for helping to deal with the consequences.

I am grateful to Mr. Bartlett and the other members of the inquiry team for their detailed and constructive report. I am also grateful to all those who co-operated with the inquiry team in their works and, in particular, to the director, trustees and staff of the V and A museum for the help they gave to the inquiry.

I have placed copies of the report in the Libraries of both Houses and I shall now be considering with my right hon. Friend the Minister for Arts and other interested parties how the report's recommendations should be followed through.

Merseyside Development Corporation

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans there are for the building of a private hospital on Merseyside Development Corporation land; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if there have been any representations to the Merseyside Development Corporation for the building of a private hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: Merseyside Development Corporation has received a number of inquiries about the possibility of leasing land within its designated area for the establishment of private health care facilities. One such scheme incorporates a small private hospital. Negotiations are continuing.

Community Programme

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans exist for new community programme opportunities to be provided by his Department.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government announced in the House on 14 July, at column 683 a new initiative — UK 2000 — to encourage more local environmental improvement work by community programme teams and volunteers.

M25 (Shopping Developments)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications for shopping developments within 10 miles either side of the M25 have been notified to his Department.

Sir George Young: Since the beginning of the current parliamentary Session, 20 such planning applications have been notified to the Department, either as departures from development plans, or in accordance with the request in DOE circular 96/77 to local planning authorities to inform the Secretary of State of planning applications for shopping developments outside existing city, town or district centres, involving gross floor space of 100,000 sq ft or more.

County of Avon

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those people and bodies which have made representations to him on the subject of planning appeals at Falfield, Hicks Common and Charfield, in the county of Avon.

Mr. Tracey: My Department has so far received representations in respect of the Hicks Common appeal from 260 individuals as well as from the Winterbourne parish council and the Winterbourne Society. No representations have yet been received in respect of the Charfield appeal. To date, no appeal has been received in respect of proposed residential development at Falfield.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions, and in relation to which sites, in each of the last three years for which figures are available, a shortfall in the landbank has been a material consideration in his decisions to allow appeals against refusals of planning consent contrary to the Avon county structure plans.

Mr. Tracey: The availability of land for housing is a material consideration in all appeals involving residential development. It is not possible in the time available, except at disproportionate cost, to list all those cases in Avon has been subsequently allowed on appeal. However, housing land availability was a determining factor in the following large-scale residential appeals in Avon allowed in the last three years:

The Deans, Portishead
Weston Big Wood, Portishead
Castle Farm, Wickwar

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to ensure that all grant and funding moneys distributed by the London Docklands Development Corporation and drawn from the J4 local community budget have been allocated solely to local community projects, and that on no occasion funds from this local community budget have been passed to commercial companies or private individuals; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Isle of Dogs

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans exist for the development of the London Docklands Development Corporation site in the Isle of Dogs currently occupied by the Mudchute Farm and Park Association; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The site occupied by the Mudchute Farm and Park Association is owned by the London borough of Tower Hamlets, not the London Docklands Development Corporation. Plans for the development of the site have been drawn up by the association and are presently under discussion.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Sunday Trading

15. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received seeking a change in the law on Sunday trading.

Mr. Waddington: Since the rejection of the Government's Bill on 15 April, we have received 48 representations seeking reform of the law on Sunday trading and two representations that maximum fines for breaches of Sunday trading regulations should be increased.

28. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the Government's current policy towards Sunday trading.

32. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans any further evaluation of Sunday trading.

70. **Sir M. Fox** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the partial deregulation of Sunday trading.

Mr. Waddington: In view of the recent rejection of the Government's Bill to deregulate shop opening hours, the Government have no plans at present to carry out any further review or to introduce new legislation.

Licensed Premises

16. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from membes of the public about opening hours in premises licensed to sell liquor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Since 19 May, when my right hon. Friend announced the Government's support in principle for reform of permitted opening hours of licensed premises in England and Wales, we have received 22 letters from

members of the public and 14 letters from hon. Members on behalf of constituents expressing views on the licensing hours. Of the 36, 22 supported relaxations in the law and 14 were opposed.

Victims of Crime

17. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to increase the information available to his Department and the public about the age, sex, race and occupation of victims of crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans to increase the centrally collated information on victims beyond that already available to the Home Office from the British crime survey and the statistics on homicide. Publications this year by the Home Office in this area include the research report "Personal Violence" and articles in the "Home Office Research Bulletin".

Civil Defence

18. **Mr. Neil Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from local authorities about the implications of his Department's civil defence planning assumptions for the implementation by local authorities of the Civil Defence Regulations 1983.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Department has received comments on the Government's planning assumptions from a total of 46 local authorities (11 county and 35 district councils). Of these, 13 authorities (six county and seven district councils) have sought grant-aid for local planning assumptions studies.

20. **Mr. Franks** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest assessment of the extent to which local authorities are implementing the Civil Defence Regulations 1983.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki) on 22 July announcing our proposals for a planned programme for implementation of the Civil Defence Regulations 1983.

26. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of the Chernobyl disaster, he will take steps to ensure that all local authorities comply with all the requirements of the Civil Defence Regulations 1983.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government's review of contingency arrangements in the light of Chernobyl will include the role of local authorities. I would again refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki) on 22 July.

41. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy, in implementing the provisions of the Civil Protection in Peacetime Act 1986, to require all local authorities to prepare local evacuation and relocation plans and to expedite local shelter surveys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Civil Protection in Peacetime Act 1986 imposes no specific requirements on local authorities but will allow them to use their civil defence resources more flexibly in responding to peacetime emergencies. Advice on its implications is included with our proposals for a planned programme of implementation of the Civil Defence Regulations 1983. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 22 July.

59. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions his Department has had with those local authorities who are still refusing to implement the 1983 Civil Defence Regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki) on 22 July. I am not aware of any outright refusal to implement the 1983 regulations, but we are considering representations from three authorities on the withholding of civil defence grant for failing to submit their civil defence plans as required by my right hon. Friend.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

19. **Miss Maynard** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available a copy of the document in which the prison department accepted responsibility for the injuries inflicted on the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Hurd: By an amended defence presented during exchange of pleadings in connection with the civil suits pursued by the six men against the Department it was admitted that the men had been assaulted and injured while in prison. It is not the usual practice to make such documents available to anyone other than the parties to the proceedings, but copies of the amended defence and an accompanying explanatory letter were made available to the solicitors of all plaintiffs.

37. **Mr. Redmond** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reach a conclusion of the review of the case of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Mellor: I cannot say when consideration of the case will be completed; that will depend on the extent of any further inquiries my right hon. Friend finds necessary. A decision will be reached as quickly as possible.

40. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has met the chief constable of the west midlands to discuss the implications for his force of the inquiry taking place into the case of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Mellor: No.

44. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he did not ask a different police force to investigate whether the west midlands police had charged the wrong men with the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Mellor: We saw no reason to approach a different police force. The report which my right hon. Friend sought was on Mr. Mullin's claims to have identified four men involved. It seemed sensible to seek this from the force which was most closely involved in the investigations and which has most knowledge of the case.

46. **Mr. Bermingham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has

received from prison officers, then at Winson Green prison, as to injuries on the six men later convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings at the time of their admission to the prison.

Mr. Mellor: I am not aware of any such representations.

51. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the Archbishop of Westminster regarding any of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Mellor: Cardinal Hume wrote to my right hon. Friend on 19 November last to express his concern about the case and to ask that it be reopened.

53. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available a copy of the letter he has recently received from the chief constable of the west midlands regarding the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Mellor: No.

66. **Mr. Ernie Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the Irish Government concerning the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings; and what was his response.

Mr. Mellor: Formal representations were made to the Government by the Government of the Republic of Ireland in October last year, expressing concern that a miscarriage of justice might have occurred, and asking that the case be reviewed. The Government reply noted the concern expressed, and indicated that my right hon. Friend would consider whether or not it would be right to refer the case to the Court of Appeal.

In addition, he has received two letters referring to the case from the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Racially Motivated Crimes

21. **Mr. Mikardo** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last discussed with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and chief constables the subject of crimes with an apparently racial motive.

Mr. Hurd: I have discussed the problem of racially-motivated incidents with individual chief officers of police on many occasions since taking office. I last raised this issue in my speech to the summer conference of the Association of Chief Police Officers in June this year when I stressed that it is vital the police respond to racial attacks with understanding and are seen by the ethnic minority communities to do so.

52. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department is currently conducting any research into racially motivated attacks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 22 May 1986 at column 254.

61. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further proposals he has to reduce the incidence of racially motivated offences.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 10 July 1986 at column 222.

Public Order Legislation

22. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences took place in England and Wales in 1985 which were related to public order legislation.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information that is available on offences recorded by the police relates to offences of riot, unlawful assembly, causing an affray, and placing and despatching articles to cause a bomb hoax, most of which are offences under common law. A total of 844 such offences were recorded by the police in England and Wales in 1985.

Crime Prevention

23. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent representations he has received about Her Majesty's Government's crime prevention policy.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I am encouraged by the many letters we receive on crime prevention which show the increasing interest in our policy.

At last month's crime prevention seminar my right hon. Friend and I had a welcome opportunity to discuss and reach practical conclusions on the further development of that policy with representatives from a wide range of interests, including industry, trades unions, central and local government and education.

63. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any further proposals to increase financial support by his Department for crime prevention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government already make a significant contribution to crime prevention. This year the Home Office will spend some £2·5 million on crime prevention publicity, £682,000 on the crime prevention centre at Stafford and approximately £250,000 on research. The five-town crime prevention initiative will cost the Home Office £170,000 in the first year. Substantial funds for crime prevention projects are also available through the urban programme (£6·3 million in 1985) and community programmes (under which some 5,000 places for crime prevention have so far been approved.)

Burglary

24. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to reduce the incidence of burglary in high crime areas.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Home Office standing conference on crime prevention has established a working group on residential burglary. It is preparing a low-cost security package for inner city households. I understand the group is making good progress and will present its report at an open meeting of the standing conference on 18 November 1986.

Plastic Bullets

27. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the possible use of plastic bullets by the police in England and Wales.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Since 1 September last year we have received 101 letters from hon. Members and others about plastic baton rounds. Fourty two have expressed support for such equipment and 59 have expressed concern or opposition.

Drug Misuse

29. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the Government's strategy against the misuse of drugs.

Mr. David Mellor: The Government's five-point strategy for tackling drug misuse has been overseen and co-ordinated since July 1984 by the Ministerial Group on the Misuse of Drugs, which I chair. In that time we have intensified our response to the drugs problem on all fronts, and implemented a wide range of initiatives aimed at reducing both the supply of and the demand for drugs. I am sending my hon. Friend a copy of "Progress in the fight against drugs", a note summarising our measures and achievements since 1984, which has been placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

30. **Mr. Forth** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were serving prison sentences for drug trafficking offences on the most recent date for which figures are available; and how this compares with each of the previous three years.

Mr. Mellor: The information recorded centrally on prisoners relates to all drug offences and is published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (table 1.5 of the volume for 1984, Cmnd. 9622). The provisional figures for 1985 are 2,162 males and 189 females. Information on custodial sentences imposed for drug trafficking offences is published annually in "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs; Supplementary Tables" (table 2.12 of the Issue for 1984, as revised in November 1985).

33. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in the fight against drugs in the two years since the establishment of the ministerial group on the misuse of drugs.

Mr. Mellor: The Government's five-point strategy for tackling drug misuse has been overseen and co-ordinated since July 1984 by the ministerial group on the misuse of drugs, which I chair. In that time we have intensified our response to the drugs problem on all fronts, and implemented a wide range of initiatives aimed at reducing both the supply of and the demand for drugs. I am sending my hon. Friend a copy of "Progress in the fight against drugs", a note summarising our measures and achievements since 1984, which has been placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent provision he has made for dealing with the increase in drug abuse in rural areas.

Mr. Mellor: Under our five-point strategy we aim to combat drug misuse wherever it may occur. Measures of particular relevance to rural areas include a 27 per cent. increase during 1985 in the strength of police drugs squads in provincial forces; the expansion of treatment and rehabilitation services throughout England and Wales; allocation of £4 million to the appointment of a prevention co-ordinator in every local education authority; and the launch last week of the latest phase of our anti-heroin advertising campaign.

Crimes of Violence

34. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the change in the number of crimes of violence against the person in England and Wales in the year ended March 1986 compared with the year ended March 1979.

Mr. Mellor: 123,100 offences of violence against the person were recorded by the police in England and Wales in the 12 months ending 31 March 1986, 34,800 more than in the 12 months ending 31 March 1979. Numbers of offences recorded in the most recent 12-month period are published quarterly in Home Office statistical bulletins (table 4 of issue 16/86), and annual figures are published in the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales".

Immigration

31. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the number of individuals who were refused admission to the United Kingdom in 1985 and in 1986 to date.

Mr. Waddington: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) on 10 July at column 221.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many wives and children refused entry at each port in the Indian subcontinent in 1985 appealed against the refusal; how many of those appeals were (i) allowed, (ii) dismissed, (iii) withdrawn and (iv) are pending;

(2) how many *(a)* husbands and *(b)* fiancés refused wholly or partly on primary purpose grounds at each port in the Indian subcontinent in 1985 appealed against the refusal; and how many of those appeals in each category were (i) allowed, (ii) dismissed, (iii) withdrawn and (iv) are pending.

Mr. Waddington: The readily available information relates to appeals dealt with by the immigration appellate authorities in 1985, analysed by broad categories of appeal and broad nationality groups, and is given in the following table. Corresponding information on appeals outstanding is not readily available; the total number of appeals to adjudicators outstanding at the end of 1985, measured in terms of the number of cases, not appellants, was 1,262 for nationals of Bangladesh or India and 781 for nationals of Pakistan.

Appeals in respect of nationals of the Indian sub-continent refused entry clearance, dealt with in 1985

Number of persons

Appeal category	*Nationality*					
	Bangladesh or India			*Pakistan*		
	Allowed	*Dismissed*	*Withdrawn*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*	*Withdrawn*
Wives, children and persons for immediate settlement						
Appeals to Adjudicators	1,375	1,826	419	366	565	235
Appeals to Tribunals by applicants	72	104	37	43	17	12
Appeals to Tribunals by Home Office	9	4	—	1	2	3
Husbands, fiances and persons for employment, business or of independent means						
Appeals to Adjudicators	134	366	88	113	135	47
Appeals to Tribunals by applicants	10	35	9	4	9	5
Appeals to Tribunals by Home Office	9	5	3	—	1	—

Dr. Frank Skuse

35. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard) on 20 February, *Official Report*, column *307*, what were the public interest grounds for the early retirement of Dr. Frank Skuse from his Department's laboratory at Chorley.

Mr. Hurd: As I indicated in my reply to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard) on 20 February, it is not the practice to give details of the grounds for retirements such as Dr. Skuse's.

Commercial Vineyards (Sampling)

36. **Mr. Steen** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider introducing legislation to provide for special arrangements so that visitors can sample English wine when visiting the commercial vineyards in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mellor: Vineyards holding a liquor licence may sell samples of wine during the permitted hours. We have no plans to introduce legislation to extend the permitted hours for vineyards specifically, but the Government support the case for relaxation in permitted hours generally, which would benefit vineyards. I cannot say when the necessary legislation might be introduced.

Police Officers

38. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of police officers at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There were 120,900 police officers in England and Wales on 31 May 1986.

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers were convicted of criminal offences in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Statistics relating to the number of police officers in provincial forces convicted of criminal offences is contained in the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary. Statistics for the Metropolitan police for the years 1979 onwards are contained in the annual reports of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. The Metropolitan police statistics for earlier years are not available.

Roskill Report

39. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received on the Roskill report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have received 33 letters and submissions from a variety of groups and individuals about the recommendations made by the fraud trials committee.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

42. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the effect of neighbourhood watch schemes on the crime figures for the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The full effects of neighbourhood watch schemes on national crime figures would be difficult to assess. However, where police forces have isolated crime figures for individual schemes, the results have indicated that neighbourhood watch can reduce local crime.

Community Radio Stations

43. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from applicants seeking a licence to run a community radio station about his decision not to proceed with this scheme.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As at 22 July we have received 21 letters of complaint from those who applied for experimental community radio licences.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters *(a)* of protest and *(b)* of approval he has received in respect of his announcement of the indefinite postponement of the community radio experiment.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As at 23 July we had received 39 letters of complaint and three of approval in respect of my right hon. Friend's decision that the community radio experiment should not take place.

Kidnap Insurance

45. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received on the issue of kidnap insurance.

Mr. Hurd: We have received a number of letters, including some from representatives of the insurance industry. I am still considering the issues involved.

Metropolitan Police District

47. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from Waltham Abbey, and elsewhere in Essex, about changing the boundary of the Metropolitan police district; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have received no such representations.

Crime Clear-up Rates

48. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is available to his Department about the proportion of crimes cleared up as the result of information volunteered to the police by members of the public.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is not regularly collected centrally. However, the hon. Member may be interested in the results of a recent study of a small sample of burglaries, published in "Investigating burglary: the measurement of police performance" (Home Office Research Study No. 88), which showed that about a half of the offences cleared up were cleared up entirely or substantially as a result of information or other assistance (for example, physically detaining the suspect) provided by the public.

Drug Abuse (Merseyside)

49. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions have taken place between his Department and the Merseyside police authority in respect of the problem of drug abuse on Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None.

Trespass

50. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to amend the law of trespass in relation to publicly owned land.

Mr. Mellor: The consideration which we are giving to protection from trespassers extends to land occupied or managed by public bodies as well as individuals.

Peacock Committee

54. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received on the report of the Peacock committee into the financing of the BBC.

69. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received following the publication of the Peacock report.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson).

News International Dispute

55. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is now the total number of arrests at Wapping in connection with the print workers' dispute.

Mr. Giles Shaw: 1,098 up to today.

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis first gave directions under section 52 of the Metropolitan Police Act 1839, enabling the police to restrict pedestrian and vehicular traffic in the whole of the London borough of Tower Hamlets in connection with the industrial dispute at the News International plant in Wapping; and whether these directions are still in force;

(2) what consultations the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis had with Tower Hamlets borough council and with his Department before making directions under section 52 of the Metropolitan Police Act 1839;

(3) on what basis the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis determined that his directions under section 52 of the Metropolitan Police Act 1839 should cover the entire borough of Tower Hamlets;

(4) how many people have been, or are being, prosecuted for failing to comply with the Commissioner's directions relating to Tower Hamlets under the Metropolitan Police Act 1839;

(5) how many of the people arrested for failing to comply with the Commissioner's directions relating to Tower Hamlets under the Metropolitan Police Act 1839 are normally resident in the London borough of Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner that directions under section 52 of the 1839 Act in connection with this dispute continue to apply. Directions were first issued on 22 January. The giving of such directions is entirely a matter for the Commissioner, and he does not require my right hon. Friend's consent or that of the borough council. The Commissioner informs me that it is necessary to include all streets in the borough in order to facilitate the policing of demonstrations held at Wapping both near and at some distance from the News International plant. Failure to comply with the Commissioner's directions, which are issued to police officers, is not in itself a criminal offence, though a refusal to comply with police instructions issued in pursuance of the directions could, in certain circumstances, constitute an offence. Information about any arrests or prosecutions in connection with such offences is not readily available.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary State for the Home Department if he will, further to his answer of 10 July, *Official Report*, column *225*, update to the latest date for which figures are available the figures on the cost of police action at Wapping, the number of officers deployed and the police man hours spent.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Risley Remand Centre

56. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many female prisoners were detained on remand at Risley remand centre on 1 July 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information is given in the table.

Female remand population of Risley remand centre
Number of prisoners

	Untried	*Convicted unsentenced*	*Total*
30 June 1983	52	22	74
30 June 1984	70	26	96
30 June 1985	80	27	107
30 June 1986*	86	20	106

* Provisional figures.

Air Weapons

57. **Mr. Sydney Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further initiatives he intends to discourage the misuse of air weapons.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I intend to mount further campaigns in those areas in which the highest number of air weapons offences have been recorded.

Mr. John Stalker

58. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the progress of the inquiry into the conduct of Mr. John Stalker as deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet received any information as to whether the inquiry into the conduct of Mr. John Stalker, deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester, has been concluded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This is a matter for the Greater Manchester police authority, which has appointed the chief constable of West Yorkshire to conduct the investigation; he is acting under the supervision of the Police Complaints Authority.

Metropolitan Police (Strategy Report)

60. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what matters he discussed with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis before the latter presented his strategy report for 1986.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The matters covered when my right hon. Friend and I met the Commissioner to discuss his draft strategy report included the force goal, resources, racial attacks, ethnic minority recruitment, community/police consultative arrangements, drugs and public order.

Jury Age Limit

62. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to increase the jury age limit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The present upper age limit for jury service is 65. The White Paper on plans for criminal justice legislation (Cmnd. 9658) invited comments on a proposal that those between 65 and 70 years of age should in future be eligible for jury service but excusable on request. The proposal has been well received. It would give older people an opportunity to participate in an important form of service to the community, while widening the pool from whom jurors are drawn. We have therefore decided to take an early opportunity to bring forward legislation to effect the change.

Airborne Radiation

64. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what equipment he proposes to issue to local authorities to measure levels of radiation in the air.

68. **Mr. Aspinwall** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what British-made radiation detection equipment is available for issue to local authorities for measuring levels of radiation in the air.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Local authorities are being issued with the British-made portable dose rate meter (PDRM) 82.

67. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how, in the light of the Chernobyl disaster, he proposes to ensure that levels of radiation in the air can be monitored at local level.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Monitoring arrangements will be included in the Government's review of emergency procedures following the Chernobyl disaster.

Prison Officers Association

65. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on his most recent discussions with representatives of the Prison Officers Association.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 18 June at columns 541-42. The NEC of the Prison Officers Association announced on 15 July that the members of the association had balloted by a majority of over 5:1 to call off their national industrial action. The way is therefore clear for the start of substantive discussions on the agenda for the future of the service set out in my right hon. Friend's letter of 22 April to the POA general secretary, on which he hopes to announce his proposals shortly.

Greater Manchester (Chief Constable)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chief constable of Greater Manchester; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Hurd: Mr. Anderton was one of six chief constables to whom I gave dinner on 16 June. Discussions with the group included a number of matters affecting the police in England and Wales.

Motoring Offences

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many convictions there were for motoring offences in each of the past five years in the United Kingdom;

(2) what has been the number of convictions for dangerous driving offences in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: The latest available information on findings of guilt for motoring offences, by type of offence, is published in table 5 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin

28/85 "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales". In 1984, there were about 5,000 findings of guilt for offences of dangerous or reckless driving and nearly 2 million findings of guilt for [illegible]otoring offences.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. Kilroy Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number and proportion of prisoners from different ethnic groups received into custody between July 1984 and March 1985, broken down by sex and by different offence group, who had *(a)* no previous convictions, *(b)* one or two previous convictions and *(c)* three or more previous convictions.

Mr. Mellor: The information available for males is given in the table. It should be noted that for many categories this information is to a substantial extent incomplete and where the numbers involved are small the figures may be subject to wide variation. The numbers of females involved are too small to provide satisfactory figures, as may be seen from table 9 of the Home Office Statistical Bulletin 17/86.

Receptions into prison department establishments under sentence in the period 1 July 1984 to 31 March 1985; by ethnic origin, offence group and number of previous convictions; all ages, males*

England and Wales *Per cent.*

Offence Group/ Number of previous convictions	*White*	*West Indian/ Guyanese, African*	*Ethnic Origin Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi*	*Chinese, Arab, Mixed Origin*	*Other, Not recorded (including refusal)*	*All Males*
Wounding						
Nil	5	5	13	8	6	5
One or two	16	16	21	17	16	16
Three or more	63	58	33	49	46	61
Not recorded	16	21	33	26	32	18
Number of receptions† (= 100 per cent.)	4,478	371	108	92	97	5,146
Other offences of violence against the person						
Nil	6	6	10	18	5	6
One or two	14	13	24	7	14	14
Three or more	58	55	31	51	60	57
Not recorded	22	26	35	24	21	23
Number of receptions† (= 100 per cent.)	1,784	234	29	60	50	2,157
Sexual offences						
Nil	15	8	10	13	7	18
One or two	17	12	19	—	10	17
Three or more	46	55	42	75	43	46
Not recorded	22	25	29	12	40	23
Number of receptions† (= 100 per cent.)	1,076	67	31	8	21	1,203
Burglary						
Nil	3	2	13	5	2	3
One or two	12	12	25	11	9	12
Three or more	72	63	47	71	68	72
Not recorded	13	23	15	13	21	13
Number of receptions† (= 100 per cent.)	14,020	662	142	224	268	15,316
Robbery						
Nil	6	10	17	4	6	7
One or two	17	21	40	22	22	19
Three or more	61	44	33	47	45	56
Not recorded	16	25	10	27	27	18
Number of receptions† (= 100 per cent.)	1,930	334	39	51	54	1,408
Theft and handling						
Nil	4	3	12	3	4	4
One or two	10	11	19	13	9	10

Offence Group/ Number of previous convictions	White	West Indian/ Guyanese, African	Ethnic Origin Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi	Chinese, Arab, Mixed Origin	Other, Not recorded (including refusal)	All Males
Three or more	68	58	33	58	61	67
Not recorded	18	28	36	26	26	19
Number of receptions† (= 100 per cent.)	12,523	811	162	192	223	13,921
Fraud and forgery						
Nil	6	6	18	3	10	6
One or two	11	13	19	18	11	12
Three or more	59	48	28	59	43	57
Not recorded	24	33	35	20	36	25
Number of receptions† (= 100 per cent.)	1,993	133	55	31	47	2,259
Criminal damage (including arson)						
Nil	6	8	3	5	6	6
One or two	14	13	35	10	15	15
Three or more	58	50	41	61	58	57
Not recorded	22	29	21	24	21	22
Number of receptions† (= 100 per cent.)	2,447	83	27	40	35	2,632
Drugs offences						
Nil	8	28	29	19	12	14
One or two	15	10	26	17	20	15
Three or more	57	33	16	28	42	48
Not recorded	20	29	29	36	26	23
Number of receptions† (= 100 per cent.)	1,294	365	135	60	56	1,910
Other specified offences						
Nil	3	6	11	7	2	3
One or two	7	7	16	3	3	7
Three or more	65	59	51	66	63	65
Not recorded	25	28	22	24	32	25
Number of receptions† (= 100 per cent.)	2,491	136	54	30	45	2,756
Other unspecified offences						
Nil	5	11	28	14	9	7
One or two	12	16	16	5	11	12
Three or more	60	48	22	52	49	58
Not recorded	23	25	34	29	31	23
Number of receptions† (= 100 per cent.)	2,118	194	55	38	53	2,458
All offences						
Nil	4	7	16	7	5	5
One or two	12	13	23	12	11	12
Three or more	66	54	33	58	58	64
Not recorded	18	26	28	23	26	19
Number of receptions† (= 100 per cent.)	45,664	3,390	837	826	949	51,666

* Excluding fine defaulters
† As published in Table 8 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 17/86

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number and proportion of prisoners from different ethnic groups in prison on 30 June 1985, broken down by sex and by different offence groups, who had *(a)* no previous convictions, *(b)* one or two previous convictions and *(c)* three or more previous convictions.

Mr. Mellor: Analyses of the prison population on 30 June 1985 by ethnic origin and type of offence are currently being prepared for inclusion in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales, 1985". On publication, my noble Friend will write to the hon. Member giving the additional information requested.

Asylum

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for asylum were *(a)* received and *(b)* granted in 1985 and the first six months of 1986.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is as follows. Annual figures were published in Home Office Statistical Bulletin 12/86 "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom, 1985"; figures for the first quarter of 1986 are provisional and figures for the second quarter of 1986 are not yet available. Decisions made in a particular period do not necessarily relate to applications received in that period.

Applications for asylum and refugee status received and decided

	1985	*1986 1st quarter**
Applications received for asylum	4,899	531
Grants of refugee status	836	87
Refused asylum but granted leave to remain on exceptional grounds	2,032	285

* Provisional

Citizenship

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated waiting time for those applying now for *(a)* registration with entitlement and *(b)* naturalisation; and for how long those granted citizenship in 1986 in those two categories have been waiting.

Mr. Waddington: The average time taken to deal with these applications for registration from adults, mostly on the basis of entitlement, which were completed in June 1986 was four months, and for naturalisations it was 14 months. This is an improvement on the situation in December 1985 when the comparable figures were seven months and 20 months, respectively. It is not possible to give a reliable forecast of how long it will take to deal with citizenship applications which are now being received.

Mr. Peter Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to make available information about the ending of entitlements to registration as British citizens under the British Nationality Act 1981.

Mr. Hurd: The Government have taken opportunities to inform community organisations and others about the provisons for those who have a right to register as British citizens, for which applications have to be made by 31 December 1987. I am today publishing a free information leaflet entitled "Your Right to British Citizenship" which describes as clearly as possible those who have the right to British citizenship under these provisions and answers the principal questions which applicants are likely to ask. The leaflet makes clear that there is no obligation to apply and that people may still apply for naturalisation at any time. The leaflet is today available from the nationality division of the Home Office and is being sent to community relations councils, citizens advice bureaux and other organisations so that they can give them to inquirers. The same bodies will also receive a poster designed to draw people's attention to the leaflet. I am placing copies of the leaflet in the Library. I hope this information will help people who have the right to register as British citizens to decide in good time whether they wish to do so.

Overseas Visitors

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers by nationality were refused leave to enter in each month since January 1985; and what percentage of passenger traffic from these countries these figures represent.

Mr. Waddington: The available information relates to passengers removed from the United Kingdom after having been refused leave to enter. The table gives the figures by nationality for the first three months of 1985. Figures for subsequent months were given in the reply to a question from the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 11 July 1986 at column 284.

Total admission figures for 1985 by nationality, but excluding European Community countries, were published in table 1 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom 1985" (Cmnd. 9863).

Commonwealth citizens and foreign Nationals refused leave to enter and removed from the United Kingdom January-March 1985

Number

Nationality	*January*	*February*	*March*
Commonwealth citizens			
Australia	3	3	10
Bangladesh	55	42	53
Barbados	—	—	—
Canada	5	3	5
Cyprus	4	9	10
Ghana	87	84	113
Guyana	—	2	—
Hong Kong BDTC	15	9	9
India	215	125	124
Jamaica	5	7	2
Kenya	3	3	4
Malaysia	18	5	13
Malta	2	3	1
Mauritius	8	4	21
New Zealand	1	5	1
Nigeria	177	156	183
Sierra Leone	4	3	3
Singapore	2	—	—
Sri Lanka	41	18	13
Tanzania	5	5	7
Trinidad and Tobago	1	—	—
Uganda	—	5	2
Zambia	5	3	2
Zimbabwe	3	5	3
British Overseas Citizens	3	2	3
Other Commonwealth Countries	12	12	7
Commonwealth Total	674	513	589
Foreign Nationals			
Algeria	13	31	34
Argentina	4	2	6
Austria	3	—	4
Belgium	—	—	2
Brazil	3	9	9
Bulgaria	1	1	2

Nationality	January	February	March
Chile	5	1	2
China	—	7	64
Colombia	9	13	63
Cuba	—	—	1
Czechoslovakia	—	—	—
Denmark	1	3	3
Egypt	3	3	5
Ethiopia	1	—	1
Finland	2	—	4
France	14	9	16
German Democratic Republic	1	—	—
Germany Federal Republic	7	2	5
Greece	11	4	1
Hungary	—	—	2
Indonesia	2	1	1
Iran	34	33	75
Iraq	11	5	17
Israel	10	8	6
Italy	3	13	7
Japan	3	3	2
Jordon	3	3	4
Kuwait	1	—	—
Lebanon	6	2	6
Libya	15	4	6
Mexico	2	—	2
Morocco	41	29	37
Netherlands	6	4	7
Norway	2	1	5
Pakistan	120	105	96
Peru	2	1	3
Philippines	12	7	13
Poland	19	18	4
Portugal	16	15	19
Romania	2	1	1
Saudi Arabia	7	1	5
Somalia	—	—	—
South Africa	2	8	7
Spain	34	31	27
Sudan	4	2	11
Sweden	6	15	6
Switzerland	4	1	6
Syria	4	6	—
Thailand	4	2	—
Tunisia	10	6	10
Turkey	37	19	20
United States of America	55	24	35
USSR	4	6	4
Uruguay	—	1	—
Venezuela	—	—	2
Yugoslavia	11	3	8
Other Foreign Countries	29	27	24
Stateless	51	25	34
Foreign Total	650	515	734
All Nationalities	1,324	1,028	1,323

Chilean Nationals (Asylum)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for asylum have been received from Chilean nationals per month since November 1984.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is as follows:

Month	Number of applications
1984	
November	1
December	1
1985	
February	1
May	4
July	1
August	1
October	1

The figures do not include dependants. No application has been received from Chilean nationals between the end of October 1985 and March 1986, the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Dharminder Singh

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Mr. Dharminder Singh, a passenger arriving on flight M5777 at terminal 3, Heathrow airport on 13 July, was detained for four hours by immigration officials; why his passport, address book and a wedding invitation were removed from him; why they have not yet been returned to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Mr. Dharminder Singh arrived at the immigration control at approximately 1300 hours on 13 July and sought admission as a visitor. At 1310 hours he was required by an immigration officer to submit to further examination under the Immigration Act 1971. This continued until 1645 hours when he was granted temporary admission until 1430 hours on 29 July so that further inquiries could be made. Mr. Singh's documents have been retained by the immigration officer pending the completion of his examination and the grant or refusal of leave to enter.

Prisons (Education Equipment)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what rules govern the provision of educational equipment to the inmates of Her Majesty's prisons.

Mr. Mellor: The learning needs of inmates are determined by the education officer at each establishment after interviews with the inmates and in consultation with the teaching staff. Subject to the requirements of security and control and the availability of resources, educational equipment is provided to meet these needs.

Prisoners (Literacy)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the inmates of Her Majesty's prisons can neither read nor write; and what facilities are provided to enable them to communicate with their friends and relatives.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the number of prisoners who can neither read nor write is not available. But of 62,963 inmates tested in 1984-85, 19 per cent. had a reading age of less than 12 years and 5·8 per cent a reading age of less than eight years. Prisoners who have difficulty in reading or writing are encouraged to attend classes to improve these and other basic skills. Assistance in reading and writing letters is available from education and other prison staff.

Mr. and Mrs. Tariq Mahmood

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he expects to be able to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Stockton, South dated 28 May concerning Mr. and Mrs. Tariq Mahmood of 16 Westbourne street, Stockton-on-Tees;

(2) how long he has been considering the case of Mr. and Mrs. Tariq Mahmood of 16 Westbourne street, Stockton-on-Tees; when he expects to make a decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Member first wrote to me on 20 March 1986. I have now considered his representations and written to him today giving my decision on them.

Mr. Majid Hadjarpour

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long he has been considering the case of Mr. Majid Hadjarpour of 21 Whitwell close, Stockton-on-Tees; when he expects to make a decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: An application was made on behalf of Mr. Hadjarpour in May 1985 and after certain inquiries had been made he was interviewed on 19 February 1986. A decision on the application is expected shortly.

Prisons (Drugs)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will instigate an inquiry into the availability of drugs in the prisons;

(2) what arrangements there are to prevent drugs from being smuggled into prisons; how many cases there have been over each of the past five years of prisoners' visitors being found to be engaged in such activities; and how many prosecutions there have been for such offences.

Mr. Hurd: Because it is so important to keep illegal drugs out of prisons we are consistently reviewing and seeking to improve the means of doing so. Regular and special searches are conducted, including the use of dogs specially trained in drug detection work. The number of trained dogs has been increased. The quality of the information available centrally about the incidence of drugs in prisons has been improved. Staff training on drugs has been improved. A new training package aimed specifically at the problems and needs of the prison service was issued to all establishments last year. Further instructions, which pay particular attention to the prevention of smuggling, will soon be issued. The normal procedure is to refer to the police a case in which a visitor is found to be engaged in smuggling, or in which there is reason to believe that a visitor intends to smuggle drugs into an establishment. Information is not at present available centrally about the numbers or the outcome of such cases. If I thought that a general inquiry into the subject would help to improve our procedures further I would set one up, but that is not my judgment at present.

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has of cocaine and heroin being smuggled into Highpoint prison in Suffolk.

Mr. Mellor: Highpoint's records show that, since 1 January 1983, heroin has been discovered there on two occasions — once in 1983 and once this year — and cocaine on no occasion. Police and internal inquiries are being conducted into recent allegations regarding the smuggling and abuse of drugs at this establishment.

Acklington Prison (Construction Work)

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why roofs and floorboards were removed by contractors from two officers' quarters at Her Majesty's prison, Acklington, which were not scheduled for demolition; whether the properties will be made good; and what charge on public funds will arise from this action.

Mr. Mellor: The two quarters had been scheduled for demolition. The demolition contractor had sublet part of the work to a local firm which was salvaging materials. There was a misunderstanding by prison staff about the firm's right to remove the materials, but this was later resolved. No charge on public funds will arise from this incident, and demolition of the quarters will be completed later this year.

Visas

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to extend the scope of the requirement for visitors from abroad to possess visas to enter the United Kingdom; if he will list those countries from which an entry visa is currently required; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The appendix to the immigration rules (HC 169 as amended) specifies the overseas nationals who need visas for the United Kingdom. All immigration control arrangements, including the extent of visa requirements, are kept under continuous re-examination in the light of changing patterns of travel and traffic.

Job Applicants (Police Records)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department who is to decide whether a criminal record of a prospective employee who aims to work with children is relevant to the public sector job in question; whether the information passed will include details of any crime committed by that prospective employee; and what criteria are used to weed the information disclosed.

Mr. Mellor: One senior officer in each relevant local authority department will be responsible for requesting checks from the police and deciding the relevance of convictions to the appointment in question. The information supplied by the police will include, in addition to the full record of convictions, details of any recorded cautions or bind over orders, and, where readily accessible, cases recorded or detected where no proceedings were taken. The information disclosable will be weeded in accordance with the established criteria for weeding police records.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Data Protection Registrar in relation to the order that gives local authorities access to police records of prospective employees who will work with children; whether that access will include data from criminal intelligence files of police forces; and if he will seek to ensure that police forces keep separate and complete records of the disclosure of information to the local authority.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The registration of police computer systems in accordance with the Data Protection Act is in a form which covers the disclosure of the police records of those seeking employment involving substantial access to children. The information supplied by the police will show details of convictions, recorded cautions, bind over orders, and, where readily accessible, cases recorded as detected where no proceedings were taken. It is for chief officers of police to make any arrangements they consider appropriate for the keeping of records of the disclosure of information in these circumstances.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is envisaged that a prospective employee who works with children will be told when the reason why he was not employed was the existence of a criminal record; and what appeals procedure he is establishing to resolve conflicts.

Mr. Mellor: Criminal record checks will be made only at the point when an applicant has otherwise been found acceptable for the post in question. Where convictions are revealed that have not been disclosed by the applicant, the senior nominated officer in the employing authority will be required to take up the discrepancy with the applicant and resolve any disagreement. The decision on employment will therefore be taken in the light of an agreed record.

Child Carers (Criminal Records)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the general categories of crimes that make individuals unsuitable to work with children; and how many entries there are in the criminal names index of the police national computer that fall within those categories.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is for the employing authority to make a judgment as to the suitability of the applicant taking into account only those offences which may be relevant to the particular job or situation in question. In deciding the relevance of convictions a number of points will be considered, including the nature of the appointment and the nature, time and frequency of the offence. With reference to the number of entries in the criminal names index of the police national computer, I refer the hon. Member for the reply given to his question on 9 July 1986, at column 182, as subsequently corrected.

Child Abusers (Therapy)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to promote new forms of therapy for child abusers, as an alternative to prison sentences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Those who have been convicted of serious offences of child abuse are properly sentenced to imprisonment. Therapy may be made available but not as part of a sentence by the courts.

Immigration Services (Interpreting Facilities)

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in the review of interpreting facilities throughout the immigration services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The first stage of the review which is of the facilities available to the immigration service and their cost, is approaching completion. The second stage will then consider the options available for enhancement of the facilities and for securing the best possible return from expenditure in a way that meets the needs of the service and reduces inconvenience to passengers.

Prisons (Reclassification)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Deartment what is the current possition with regard to the reclassification of prisons in the Yorkshire and Humberside area.

Mr. Mellor: On 24 February 1986 Hull, previously a training prison, became a local prison and Thorp Arch, previously a remand centre, became a training prison.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect the reclassification of prisons in the Yorkshire and Humberside area has had on the population of Leeds prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The average population of Leeds prison between January 1985 and February 1986 was nearly 1,300. Between March 1986 and May 1986 (the latest date for which figures are available) the average population was 1,175.

Child Abuse (Voluntary Groups)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what support he is giving to voluntary groups working with the victims and offenders of child abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Home Office makes grants to a number of voluntary organisations offering a wide range of rehabilitative projects for offenders of all kinds, and provides funding both for local victims support schemes and their national association. Funding is also provided by the Department of Health and Social Security to a range of voluntary organisations in the child care field.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of crimes reported in the following categories for *(a)* Merseyside, *(b)* Greater Manchester, *(c)* Lancashire, *(d)* Cheshire and *(e)* Cumbria, separately, and for each year since 1979: (i) theft, (ii) burglary, (iii) vandalism, (iv) rape and (v) drug offences; and how many of the crimes in each category were cleared up.

Mr. Mellor: Statistics of notifiable offences recorded by the police for the offence groups theft and handling stolen goods, burglary and criminal damage are published annually, by police force area, in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (table 2.5 of the volume for 1984, Cmnd 9621) and most recently in table 6 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 4/86. I shall write to the hon. Member regarding the other information requested.

Police (Complaints)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from chief

constables in England and Wales to establish the number of police officers and civil staff engaged full-time on the investigation of complaints against the police in 1985, and the cost of such investigations, in a form comparable to the figures quoted on page 85 of the 1985 Report of the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Research Councils

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the measures which he is taking to resolve the problems relating to the designation of research councils under section 2(3) of the British Nationality Act 1981, and Statutory Instrument 1766 of 1984; and whether he will ensure that these difficulties receive early discussion through the departmental Whitley machinery.

Mr. Waddington: Home Office officials are in close touch with officials in the Department of Education and Science, which is responsible for the research councils which have been designated under section 2(3) of the British Nationality Act 1981, to identify the detailed terms under which persons may be in service under these councils. We shall then consider whether any change should be made to the designation order. I understand discussions will continue between the research councils and the relevant staff associations. I hope this matter can be resolved as soon as possible.

Juvenile Courts (School Reports)

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the disclosure of school reports in the juvenile court in the light of proposals made by a NACRO working group report in "Schools Reports in the Juvenile Court."

Mr. Hurd: The working group report recommended that the contents of school reports submitted to juvenile courts to assist with sentencing decisions should be disclosed in full to both the juvenile and his parents.

After considering the comments of a wide range of interested bodies, I have concluded that young people should be aware of information which might influence the court's decision, so they have an opportunity to challenge any allegations which the reports may contain. On the other hand, full disclosure might well be harmful to the young person in some instances.

I have therefore decided that the juvenile court rules should be amended to make it clear that the disclosure provisions should apply to school reports as to others. Reports should be fully disclosed to the parents and to the child's legal representative. Reports should normally be disclosed to the juvenile, unless the court directs otherwise on the grounds of the serious harm which might be caused to the juvenile or the likelihood that the report would be beyond his or her ability to understand. These changes will be included in the next revision of the Magistrates' Courts (Children and Young Persons) Rules 1970.

Passport Fees

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to increase passport fees this financial year.

Mr. Hurd: I have no plans to increase passport fees this financial year. These fees, which have been at their present levels since November 1983, are designed to cover the cost of providing passport facilities in the United Kingdom and at Foreign and Commonwealth Office consular posts overseas, and also the costs of those consular services for which fees are not charged. The latest projected costings indicate that full cost recovery will be achieved this financial year on the basis of current fee levels.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the average weekly flying hours of Metropolitan police helicopters on traffic patrol duties during the past year.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *338*]: The Commissioner of police of the Metropolis tells me that from 1 July 1985 to 30 June 1986, the Metropolitan police helicopters flew an average of about five hours a week specifically on traffic patrol duties.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for each of the past five years what was the number of write-offs obtained by Metropolitan police officers from confessions by prisoners serving sentences for other unrelated offences.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1986, c. *509*]: I understand from the Commissioner of police of the Metropolis that an experimental scheme of interviewing prisoners about otherwise unsolved crimes was introduced force-wide in April 1984 following an earlier pilot scheme in two divisions. Offences cleared up through this scheme have not been separately identified for the regular returns on offences cleared up, but a separate evaluation, which may not be entirely consistent with those returns, suggests that in the period April to December 1984 the number of offences cleared up through the scheme was less than 3,000 and in 1985 less than 5,000. The latter figure represents some 3 to 4 per cent. of all offences cleared up by the Metropolitan police in 1985. It is planned to identify separately offences cleared up in this way in the regular returns for 1987, following the introduction by the Home Office of more detailed returns on the ways in which offences are cleared up.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Minoxidil

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what side effects have been reported to the Committee on Safety of Medicines in respect of Minoxidil; when it was approved for prescription-only use; if he has any plans to permit its sale without prescription; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: There have been 46 reports of suspected adverse drug reactions associated with Minoxidil received by the Committee on Safety of Medicines and these are set out in the table. It should be noted that, such a report does not necessarily indicate a causal relationship between a product and the reported reaction, and considerable caution should be exercised in interpreting these numbers in the absence of data on the prescription volume and other relevant factors.

*Reports to the Committee on Safety of Medicines on adverse reactions associated with Minoxidil since June 1978**

Reaction	Reports
Face oedema	1
Hair abnormal	1
Hirsutism	9
Hypertrichosis	3
Oedema periorbital	1
Rash maculo-papular	1
Rash pustular	1
Urticaria	1
Headache	1
Mouth dry	1
Vasospasm	1
Conjunctivitis	1
Vision loss temporary	1
Deafness	1
Diarrhoea	3
Haemorrhage rectal	1
Vomiting	1
Cirrhosis biliary	1
Gynaecomastia	3
Hepatic function abnormal	1
Jaundice cholestatic	1
Hyponatraemia	1
Pericardial effusion	1
Myocardial infarction	1
Pericarditis	1
Cardiac arrest (death)	1
Abnormal bruising	1
Peripheral ischaemia	1
Lymphadenopathy	1
Ascites	1
Granulomatous lesion	1
Pain	1

* Date of first report.

Minoxidil was granted a product licence in 1979, as a prescription-only medicine, and I have no plans to change this.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Jackson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will add to the limited list branded drugs which are available at the same price as the generic equivalent on the selected list.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. A recent High Court judgment found that the policy of prescribing, wherever possible, by generic name within the selected list scheme meets the relevant legal requirements. I intend therefore to continue with this policy.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the ceiling on the rent which a landlord may charge where the rent is being paid via housing benefit.

Mr. Major: The regulations do not specify a maximum allowable rent for housing benefit purposes, but if a rent is registered housing benefit is payable only on the registered rent. However, local authorities can in certain circumstances limit the amount of rent which is taken into account in calculating entitlement to housing benefit if they consider that the rent charged is unreasonable. We propose to strengthen local authorities' powers to withhold benefit and that the Secretary of State should have a reserve power to limit the level of rent eligible for housing benefit.

NHS (Administrative Staff)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for each year since 1979, the number of administrative staff in the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: The figures are shown in the table.

NHS Directly Employed Administrative and Clerical Staff at 30 September of each year
England

Whole time equivalent

	Number
1979	103,000
1980	105,400
1981	108,800
1982	108,800
1983	110,000
1984	110,300
1985	111,000

Source: DHSS Annual Census of Non-Medical Manpower.

Supplementary Benefit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent on supplementary benefit additional requirements in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: Some £500 million.
Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry. December 1984 (provisional)

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent on supplementary benefit paid on grounds of sickness or disability in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: In the financial year 1984-85, the latest year for which the information is available, the expenditure is estimated to have been approximately £325 million.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people at the latest date for which information is available were receiving supplementary benefit because they were sick or disabled (i) with contributory benefit and (ii) without contributory benefit.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

	Number of claimants (thousands)
With contributory benefit	98
Without contributory benefit	175

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry: December 1984 (provisional)

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people at the latest date for which information is available were receiving supplementary benefit over pension age (i) with retirement pension and (ii) without retirement pension.

Mr. Newton: As many recipients of widows pension have an underlying entitlement to retirement pension, information is given in the table of numbers of supplementary pensioners with retirement pension, those with widows pension, and those without either pension.

	Numbers of supplementary pensioners (thousands)
(a) With retirement pension	1,521
(b) With widows pension	8
(c) Without either retirement or widows pension	100

Source: Quarterly Statistical Enquiry, December 1985

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people at the latest date for which information is available were receiving supplementary benefit additional requirements for (i) disabled persons heating addition, (ii) laundry, (iii) diet, (iv) wear and tear on clothing, (v) special clothing, (vi) baths, (vii) blindness, (viii) domestic assistance, (ix) over 80 age addition, (x) attendance costs and (xi) hospital fares.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

	Additional requirement	Number of claimants (Thousands)
(i)	Disabled persons heating addition	136
(ii)	Laundry	185
(iii)	Diet	489
(iv)	Wear and tear on clothing	35
(v)	Special clothing or footwear	
(vi)	Baths	31
(vii)	Blindness	42
(viii)	Domestic assistance	3
(ix)	Over 80 age addition	469
(x)	Attendance needs	Less than 1,000
(xi)	Hospital fares	4

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry. December 1984 (provisional).

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people claimed supplementary benefit at his Department's local office in Princess drive, Liverpool, in each of the years 1979 to 1985, inclusive; and what percentage change each represents;

(2) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at his Department's local office in Princess drive, Liverpool, between 1979 and 1985;

(3) how many people claimed supplementary benefit at his Department's local office in Parthenon drive, Liverpool, in each of the years 1979 to 1985 inclusive; and what percentage change each represents;

(4) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at his Department's local office in Parthenon drive, Liverpool, between 1979 and 1985.

Mr. Major: Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	Total
Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)					
Princess Drive	10,863	9,615	8,572	8,159	
Percentage change		−11·5	−10·8	−4·8	(−24·9)
Parthenon Drive	6,619	6,296	5,472	5,574	
Percentage change		−4·9	−13·1	+1·9	(−15·8)
*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**					
Princess Drive	10,321	10,188	10,556	10,643	
Percentage change		−1·3	+3·6	+0·8	(+3·1)
Parthenon Drive	8,172	8,661	8,686	8,488	
Percentage change		+6·0	+0·3	−2·3	(+3·9)

Percentages represent changes over the previous year but those in brackets represent the percentage change 1982-83 to 1985-86.
* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

The percentage change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86 is as follows:

	Supplementary benefit staff per cent.
Princess Drive	+4·2
Parthenon Drive	+1·7

Both offices deal only with supplementary benefit so the change in all staff will be the same as above.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Liverpool, West Derby, constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents;

(2) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at his Department's local offices in Liverpool between 1979 and 1985, inclusive.

Mr. Major: Liverpool, West Derby is covered by four of the Department's offices, Norris Green, Huyton and the two offices at West Derby. Their boundaries are not

conterminous with the boundary of the constituency. One of the West Derby offices is a national insurance office and does not deal with supplementary benefit.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested. Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Huyton	Norris Green	West Derby
1982-83	13,944	6,619	10,863
1985-86	11,913	5,574	8,159
Percentage change	−14·6	−15·8	−24·9

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Huyton	Norris Green	West Derby
1982-83	14,959	8,172	10,321
1985-86	16,191	8,488	10,643
Percentage change	+8·2	+3·9	+3·1

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

The percentage change in complement for Liverpool offices 1982-83—1985-86 is as follows:

	Supplementary benefit staff	All staff
Belle Vale	−12·5	−19·6
Bootle*	−11·3	−21·4
Breckfield	+8·4	−4·7
City†	−16·0	−23·8
Crosby	+11·5	+1·0
Edgehill‡	+5·0	−8·2
Garston‖	−15·9	−20·0
Huyton	+10·5	−4·4
Kirkby*	+22·2	+18·4
Norris Green¶	+1·7	+1·7
Toxteth‡‖	+29·6	+10·5
West Derby Area Office¶	+4·2	+4·2
West Derby NIO	n.a.	−34·8

Notes:

* In January 1983 30 posts were transferred to Kirkby because of a boundary change. In 1983-84 two posts were transferred to Kirkby following re-location of work in respect of Walton prison.

† In 1984-85 nine posts were removed from the office following transfer of social security appeal tribunal work to the office of the President of the Tribunal.

‡ In April 1983 two posts were transferred to Toxteth following boundary changes.

‖ In April 1983 12 posts were transferred to Toxteth following boundary changes.

¶ Deals only with supplementary benefit.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of Housing Benefit and postal claim forms.

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Sheffield, Brightside in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major: Sheffield, Brightside is covered by two of the Department's offices, Sheffield, North-East and Sheffield, North-West, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Sheffield, North East	Sheffield, North West
1982-83	17,472	23,784
1985-86	15,748	19,962
Percentage change	−9·9	−16·1

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Sheffield, North East	Sheffield, North West
1982-83	18,560	16,293
1985-86	19,806	18,418
Percentage change	+6·7	−13·0

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

The percentage change in complement for these offices 1982-83—1985-86 is as follows:

	Supplementary benefit staff	All staff
Sheffield, North East	+22·2	+7·8
Sheffield, North West	+18·2	−1·1

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of Housing Benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the period of time it takes to deal with new claims for supplementary benefit, additional supplementary benefit and single payments made as a result of the Cleveland county council benefits take-up campaign; if he can indicate what is the average time delay for each office in Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool, Redcar and Eston; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: This information is not available. These claims are treated no differently from any others, urgent claims being given priority. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to his previous question on 21 July at columns *104-106*.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the local offices of his Department in Leyton and Leytonstone between 1979 and 1985.

Mr. Major: Leyton and Leytonstone are covered by two of the Department's offices, Leytonstone and Walthamstow, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the area.

Staffing figures are not available before 1982-83.

The percentage change in complement for these offices 1982-83—1985-86 is as follows:

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Leytonstone	+20·9	− 3·4
Walthamstow	+ 2·1	−11·8

Staffing levels reflect overall changes in work loads brought about as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the value of the supplementary benefit scale rates excluding housing costs, for a couple with two children, one aged under five years, the other five to 10 years as a proportion of net male earnings for November 1985 and July 1986 using an estimate for the latter on the same basis as his reply of 29 October 1985 to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) *Official Report*, column *446*.

Mr. Major: The provisional figure for November 1985 is 45·1 per cent. It is not yet possible to make any estimate for July 1986.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the value of the long-term supplementary benefit scale rates, excluding housing costs, for a single person and a married couple as a proportion of average net adult earnings for each year from November 1979 to July 1986, using an estimate for the latter figure.

Mr. Major: The information requested is as follows:

Date	*Long-term scale rates as percentage of average net adult earnings*	
	Single householder	*Couple*
November 1979	29·7	45·0
November 1980	29·1	44·4
November 1981	29·3	44·9
November 1982	30·4	46·5
November 1983	29·5	45·0
November 1984	28·4	43·1
November 1985	27·9	42·3

Notes:
1. The figures for 1985 are provisional.
2. It is not yet possible to provide estimates for July 1986.
3. Net average weekly earnings are the estimates of gross weekly full-time earnings of adult males (aged 21 and over up to November 1982 and from November 1983 all males on adult rates) whose earnings are not affected by absence, less tax and national insurance contributions at the non-contracted out rate plus child benefit (which is off-set against the supplementary benefit scale rates).

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the numbers of recipients of supplementary benefit and the numbers dependent on them in 1984, broken down into the following categories *(a)* retirement pensioners, *(b)* unemployed, *(c)* sick and disabled, *(d)* national insurance widows, with and without children, and *(e)* lone parents.

Mr. Major: Provisional informaton is as follows:

(thousands)

	Claimants	*Partners*	*Children/other dependants*	*Total*
Retirement pensioners	1,674	262	9	1,944
Unemployed	1,953	655	1,096	3,704
Sick and disabled	273	69	61	403
Lone parents	492	—	832	1,325
Widows with children	4	—	7	11
Widows without children	25	—	—	25
Others	188	100	29	317

Notes:
1. Totals may not balance because of rounding.
2. Widows includes those over age 60.
3. Lone parents are those not included elsewhere.

Source: Annual Statistical Inquiry.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the latest take-up estimates for family income supplement, one-parent benefit, free welfare milk, free school meals, standard housing benefit, certificated housing benefit and housing benefit supplement, derived from the 1983 families with low income tables showing for each benefit *(a)* the number entitled to benefit, *(b)* the proportion receiving benefit, *(c)* the number eligible but not receiving benefit, *(d)* the estimated amount of benefit unclaimed and *(e)* the average weekly amount unclaimed.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of people claiming supplementary benefit in the Glasgow, Maryhill constituency in 1979 and 1985; what percentage change that represents; and if he will give the percentage change in staff handling supplementary benefit and in total staff at local offices of his Department in the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986 c. *410*.]: Glasgow, Maryhill is covered by four of the Department's offices, Maryhill, City, Partick and Springburn, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency. Springburn is a National Insurance Office and does not deal with supplementary benefit.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the offices is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Maryhill	Partick	City*
1979-80	12,384	8,401	5,072
1985-86	13,770	12,787	8,227
Percentage change	+ 11·2	+ 52·2	+ 62·2

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Maryhill	Partick	City†
1979-80	8,274	4,435	3,354
1985-86	12,179	7,577	8,949
Percentage change	+ 47·2	+ 70·8	+166·8

* Based on 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.
† In 1981-82 staff and work were transferred from Woodside office to City.

Percentage change in complement 1979-80—1985-86:

	Supplementary benefit staff	All staff
Maryhill	+ 46·9	+ 6·3
Partick*	+ 45·8	+ 45·8
City†	+139·5	+ 15·9
Springburn	n/a	− 53·7

n/a = Not applicable.
* Deals with Supplementary benefit only.
† In 1981-82 staff and work were transferred from Woodside office to City.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the number of people who claimed supplementary benefit in the Jarrow constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change this represents;

(2) what was the percentage change in staff handling supplementary benefit between 1979 and 1985;

(3) how many staff were employed in local offices of his department in: *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his replies*, 14 July 1986 *c.410 and 418*]: Jarrow is covered by three of the Departments offices, South Shields and two offices in Jarrow, one of which is a national insurance office and does not deal with supplementary benefit. Their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency. Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)

	Jarrow	South Sheilds
1982-83	7,515	12,462
1985-86	8,879	15,801
Percentage change	+18·2	+26·8

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Jarrow	South Sheilds
1982-83	7,867	8,731
1985-86	8,490	11,950
Percentage change	+18·2	+26·8

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February

Percentage change in complement 1982-83—1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff
Jarrow Area Office	+5·0
Jarrow National Insurance Office	Not Applicable
South Shields	0

	Complement 1982-83	1985-86
Jarrow Area Office*	60	63
Jarrow National Insurance Office	28	22
South Shields	148	132

* Deals with Supplementary benefit only.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of Housing Benefit and postal claim forms.

Dr. Bray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Motherwell and Wishaw constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985, what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at his Department's local offices for the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *410*]: Motherwell, South is covered by three of the Department's offices, Motherwell, Hamilton and Wishaw, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency. Wishaw is a national insurance office and does not deal with supplementary benefit.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the offices is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)

	Motherwell	Hamilton
1979-80	12,740	14,665
1985-86	13,641	21,714
Percentage change	+7·1	+48·1

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Motherwell	Hamilton
1979-80	7,134	8,443
1985-86	11,797	15,556
Percentage change	+65·4	+84·3

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1979-80 to 1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Motherwell	+60·3	+6·1
Hamilton	+64·8	+8·4
Wishaw	n/a	−42·4

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Falkirk, West constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. 410]: Falkirk, West is covered by one of the Department's offices, Falkirk, but the office's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the office is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)	*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**
1979-80	14,651	7,494
1985-86	19,533	14,147
Percentage change	+33·3	+88·8

Percentage change in complement 1979-80—1985-86:

Staff	
Supplementary benefit staff	+77·6
All staff	+15·8

Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work-loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Glasgow, Garscadden constituency in: *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change in the number of claimants occurred between 1979 and 1985; and what was the percentage change in the number of staff: (i) handling supplementary benefit claims and (ii) the total number of staff at local offices of his Department serving the constituency over the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *410*]: Glasgow, Garscadden is covered by two of the Department's offices, Anniesland and Partick, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the offices is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	1979-80	*1985-86*	*Percentage change*
Anniesland	11,091	10,115	−8·8
Partick	8,401	12,787	+52·2

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	1979-80	*1985-86*	*Percentage change*
Anniesland	6,938	11,285	+62·7
Partick	4,435	7,577	+70·8

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1979-80—1985-86:

	Supplemetary benefit staff	*All staff*
Anniesland	+49·4	−2·2
Partick*	+45·8	+45·8

* Deals with supplementary benefit only.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Easington constituency in 1979 and 1985, respectively; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff employed on supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff employed at his Department's local offices, Peterlee and Seaham, for the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *410*]: Easington is covered by two of the Department's offices, Peterlee and Seaham, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested. Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Peterlee	*Seaham*
1982-83	9,314	3,312
1985-86	10,170	4,038
Percentage change	+9·2	+21·9

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Peterlee	*Seaham*
1982-83	6,497	2,747
1985-86	6,960	3,043
Percentage change	+7·1	+10·8

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Peterlee	+8·9	−12·2
Seaham	+13·0	−8·3

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many staff were employed at the local Wrexham office of his Department in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; how many of the staff were involved in handling supplementary benefit; and how many of these staff were involved in handling supplementary benefit for the Wrexham constituency area;

(2) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Wrexham constituency area in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change this represents.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *410*]: Wrexham is covered by one of the Department's offices, Wrexham, but the office's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1981-82 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for Wrexham office is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)	*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**
1981-82	26,499	17,681
1985-86	25,015	20,805
Percentage change	−5·6	+17·7

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February

	Complement Supplementary benefit staff	*Complement Total staff*
1981-82	117	222
1985-86	148	245

Figures are not available on the number of staff involved in handling supplementary benefit for the constituency area.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Barnsley,East constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local office of his Department over the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *410*]: Barnsley, East is covered by three of the Department's offices, Barnsley, East, Wath on Dearne and Goldthorpe. Goldthorpe is a national insurance office and does not deal with supplementary benefit. Their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Barnsley East	*Wath on Dearne*
1982-83	10,786	9,350
1985-86	10,889	9,393
Percentage change	+1·0	+0·5

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Barnsley East	*Wath on Dearne*
1982-83	*9,384*	*6,958*
1985-86	*11,087*	*8,174*
Percentage change	*+18·1*	*+17·5*

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86:

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Barnsley East	+18·8	−15·2
Wath on Dearne†	+17·9	+17·9
Goldthorpe	Not applicable	−32·0

† Deals with Supplementary Benefit only.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Copeland constituency in *(a)* June 1979 and *(b)* June 1985; what percentage change this represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local office of his Department over the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *410*]: Copeland is covered by two of the Department's

offices, Barrow in Furness and Whitehaven, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Barrow in Furness	Whitehaven
1982-83	10,538	6,520
1985-86	10,265	6,529
Percentage change	−2·6	+0·1

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Barrow in Furness	Whitehaven
1982-83	8,183	4,864
1985-86	8,427	4,893
Percentage change	+2·9	+0·6

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	All staff
Barrow in Furness	+3·4	−12·2
Whitehaven	+28·1	−10·0

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the St. Helens, North constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change this represents;

(2) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at local offices of his Department in the St. Helens, North constituency between 1979 and 1985.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *410*]: St. Helens, North is covered by two of the Department's offices, St. Helens and Warrington, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83, and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	St. Helens	Warrington
1982-83	19,407	20,123
1985-86	18,491	19,854
Percentage change	−4·7	−1·3

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	St. Helens	Warrington
1982-83	17,501	16,609
1985-86	18,743	18,695
Percentage change	+7·1	+12·6

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February

Percentage change in complement 1982-83—1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	All staff
St. Helens	+16·7	−6·6
Warrington	+15·6	−4·2

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of Housing Benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Glasgow, Garscadden constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change in the number of claimants occurred between 1979 and 1985; and what was the percentage change in the number of staff (i) handling supplementary benefit claims and (ii) the total number of staff at local offices of his Department serving the constituency over the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *410*]: Glasgow, Garscadden is covered by two of the Department's offices, Anniesland and Partick, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the offices is as follows:

Number of new and repeal claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Anniesland	Partick
1979-80	11,091	8,401
1985-86	10,115	12,787
Percentage change	−8·8	+52·2

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefits**

	Anniesland	Partick
1979-80	6,938	4,435
1985-86	11,285	7,577
Percentage change	+62·7	+70·8

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1979-80 to 1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	All staff
Anniesland	+49·4	−2·2
Partick*	+45·8	+45·8

* Deals with supplementary benefit only.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by

type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislation, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Caerphilly constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents; change

(2) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at his Department's local offices in the Caerphilly constituency between (i) 1979 and (ii) 1985.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *410*]: Caerphilly is covered by three of the Department's offices Caerphilly, Bargoed and Merthyr Tydfil but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1981-82 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Merthyr Tydfil	Bargoed	Caerphilly
1981-82	7,687	6,181	7,648
1985-86	7,452	6,119	7,924
Percentage change	−3·1	−1·0	+3·6

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Merthyr Tydfil	Bargoed	Caerphilly
1981-82	6,691	4,639	4,988
1985-86	7,999	6,120	6,599
Percentage change	+19·5	+31·9	+32·3

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action in February.

Percentage change in complement 1981-82 to 1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	All staff
Merthyr Tydfil	+10·9	− 5·9
Bargoed	+17·5	−16·3
Caerphilly	+ 9·1	−12·6

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Alyn and Deeside constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department over the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 July 1986, c. *447*]: Alyn and Deeside is covered by two of the Department's offices, Wrexham and Mold, but the offices' boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency. Mold is a national insurance office and does not deal with supplementary benefit.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1981-82 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for Wrexham office is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)	Number of people receiving supplementary benefit*
1981-82	26,499	17,681
1985-86	25,015	20,805
Percentage change	−5·6	+17·7

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1981-82 to 1985-86

	Percentage change
Supplementary benefit staff	+26·5
All staff	+10·4

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the figures for the number of claimants of supplementary benefit in the Govan constituency at the most recent date for which figures are available and comparable figures for 1979; and what percentage change the latest figures represent;

(2) what were the numbers of staff employed on supplementary benefit work in his Department's local offices in the south west of Glasgow at the latest available date; and if he will give comparative figures for 1979.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 July 1986, c. *447*]: Govan is covered by two of the Department's offices, Southside and Craighton, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested. Information for the number of claimants for these offices is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Craighton	Southside
1979-80	10,617	14,203
1985-86	9,969	13,778
Percentage change	−6·1	−3·1

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Craighton	Southside
1979-80	6,936	7,511
1985-86	11,567	13,264
Percentage change	+66·8	+76·6

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action in February

South west Glasgow is covered by four offices, Southside, Craighton, Rutherglen and Laurieston. Complement figures for supplementary benefit staff in these offices are as follows:

	Number of staff	
	1979-80	*1985-86*
Southside	80	130
Craighton	70	110
Rutherglen	97	154
Laurieston*	43	124

* Laurieston did not open until 1980. Previously there were two separate offices, Hutchesontown Area Office and national insurance office. The complement for the area office, which dealt with supplementary benefit only, is given for 1979. In May 1985 Laurieston gained 26 posts following the closure of Queens Park area office.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claims forms.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit at the latest available date in 1986 and the comparable month in 1979 at each of the Coventry offices of his Department; what percentage change that represents; and what was the change in numbers and in percentage terms in the staff handling supplementary benefit and in all staff at those offices for the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 July 1986, c. *447*]: Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested. Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Coventry, East	*Coventry, West*
1982-83	22,908	20,159
1985-86	17,838	17,528
Percentage change	−22·1	−13·1

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Coventry, East	*Coventry, West*
1982-83	14,248	11,728
1985-86	22,235	18,091
Percentage change	+56·1	+54·3

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	
	Number	*per cent.*
Coventry, East 1982-83	129	—
1985-86	164	+27·1
Coventry, West 1982-83	87	—
1985-86	118	+35·6

	All staff	
	Number	*per cent.*
Coventry, East 1982-83	233	—
1985-86	234	+0·4
Coventry, West 1982-83	171	—
1985-86	175	+2·3

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the St. Helens, South constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change this represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 July 1986, c. *447*]: St. Helens, South is covered by one of the Department's offices, St. Helens, but the office's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the office is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)	*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**
1982-83	19,407	17,501
1985-86	18,491	18,743
Percentage change	−4·7	+7·1

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86

	Percentage change
Supplementary benefit staff	+16·7
All staff	−6·6

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Cunninghame, South constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change this represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 July 1986, c. *447*]: Cunninghame, South is covered by one of the Department's offices, Irvine, but the office's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the office is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)	*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**
1979-80	12,447	6,227
1985-86	15,170	12,484
Percentage change	+21·9	+100·5

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1979-80 to 1985-86

	Percentage change
Supplementary benefit staff	+86·3
All staff	+29·3

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Warley, East constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department over the same period.

Mr. Major *[pursuant to his reply,* 16 July 1986, *c. 554]*: Warley, East is covered by one of the Department's offices, Smethwick ILO but the office's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1980-81 and no information is available on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit throughout the year.

Information that is available is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)	*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**
1980-81	19,065	13,253
1985-86	15,419	20,579
Percentage change	−19·12	+55·28

Percentage change in complement 1980-81—1985-86

	Change
Supplementary benefit staff	+47·19
All staff	+7·07

*Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of Housing Benefit and postal claim forms.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) ho many people claimed supplementary benefit in Thurrock in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents;

(2) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the local offices of his Department in Thurrock over the same period.

Mr. Major *[pursuant to his reply,* 16 July 1986, *c. 554]*: Thurrock is covered by one of the Department's offices, Grays ILO but the office's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and no information is available on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit throughout the year.

Information that is available is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)	*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**
1982-83	14,272	11,545
1985-86	11,495	11,807
Percentage change	−19·5	+2·3

Percentage change in complement 1982-83—1985-86

	change
Supplementary benefit staff	+10
All staff	−4·5

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of Housing Benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Clelland asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at his Department's local offices serving Tyne Bridge constituency in the period 1979 to 1985;

(2) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Tyne Bridge constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents.

Mr. Major *[pursuant to his reply,* 17 July 1986, *c. 613]*: Tyne Bridge is covered by two of the Department's offices, Newcastle St. James and Newcastle East, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Newcastle St. James	*Newcastle East*
1982-83	17,693	17,153
1985-86	17,636	17,251
Percentage change	−0·3	+0·6

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Newcastle St. James	Newcastle East
1982-83	15,212	15,080
1985-86	17,173	16,874
Percentage change	+12·9	+11·9

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action in February.

Percentage change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	All staff
Newcastle St. James	+8·8	−4·4
Newcastle East	+6·4	−6·7

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons claimed supplementary benefit in Barnsley, West and Penistone constituency in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1983, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1986 to date; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at local offices of their Department for the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986, c. *613*]: Barnsley, West and Penistone is covered by one of the Department's offices, Barnsley West, but the office's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and no information is available on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit throughout the year.

Information that is available is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)	Number of people receiving supplementary benefit*
1982-83	8,585	6,640
1985-86	9,486	8,269
Percentage change	+10·50	+24·53

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86

	Change
Supplementary benefit staff	+29·17
All staff	−7·96

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Greenock and Port Glasgow constituency in: *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in: (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department over the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986, c. *613*]: Greenock and Port Glasgow constituency is covered by two of the Department's offices, Greenock and Port Glasgow, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the offices is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)

	Greenock	Port Glasgow
1979-80	13,013	7,118
1985-86	12,898	5,675
Percentage change	−0·9	−20·3

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Greenock	Port Glasgow
1979-80	6,465	2,978
1985-86	11,386	5,030
Percentage change	+76·1	+68·9

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1979-80—1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	All staff
Greenock	+63·8	+20·6
Port Glasgow†	+47·4	+5·7

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.
† Port Glasgow Area Office and Greenock west national insurance office merged into Port Glasgow integrated local office in October 1981.
The combined complements for 1979-80 have been used for comparative purposes.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Tooting constituency in (i) 1979 and (ii) 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff in his Department's local offices for the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986, c. *662*]: Tooting is covered by three of the Department's offices, Balham, Streatham and Wandsworth, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Balham	Steatham	Wandsworth
1982-83	19,454	11,793	13,106
1985-86	19,353	12,615	10,729
Percentage change	−0·5	+7·0	−17·6

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Balham	Steatham	Wandsworth
1982-83	12,378	8,028	8,514
1985-86	13,111	9,277	9,285
Percentage change	+5 9	+15·6	+9·1

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action in February.

The percentage change in complement for these offices 1982-83 to 1985-86 is as follows:

	Supplementary benefit staff	All staff
Balham	+ 9·4	+ 1·9
Streatham	+58·2	+14·5
Wandsworth	− 6·3	−15·8

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Manchester, Wythenshawe constituency and the city of Manchester, respectively in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change the figures represent; and what were the percentage changes in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at his Department's local offices for the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986, c. *662*]: Manchester, Wythenshawe constituency is covered by one of the Department's offices, Wythenshawe and the office's boundary is conterminous with the boundary of the constituency. The city of Manchester is covered by the Department's offices of Manchester Central, Cheetham, Chorlton, Failsworth, Longsight, Openshaw, Rusholme and Wythenshawe but the offices' boundaries not conterminous with the boundary of the city.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested. Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	1982-83	1985-86	Percentage change
Wythenshawe	12,375	11,892	− 3·9
Central	9,489	7,752	−18·3
Cheetham	10,971	10,836	− 1·2
Chorlton	12,030	10,221	−15·0
Failsworth	15,644	12,510	−20·0
Longsight	14,605	14,684	+ 0·5
Openshaw	11,237	9,912	−11·8
Rusholme	18,865	13,965	−26·0

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

Wythenshawe	13,454	14,195	+ 5·5

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	1982-83	1985-86	Percentage change
Central	5,947	6,057	+ 1·8
Cheetham	10,962	11,817	+ 7·8
Chorlton	8,805	10,242	+16·3
Failsworth	12,123	13,586	+12·1
Longsight	10,906	11,923	+9·3
Openshaw	10,177	10,465	+ 2·8
Rusholme	11,140	12,499	+12·2

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

The percentage change in complement for these offices 1982-83—1985-86 is as follows:

Percentage change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	All staff
Wythenshawe	+11.0	− 1·9
Central	+10·9	− 1·7
Cheetham	+33·3	+ 4·8
Chorlton	+11·9	− 2·9
Failsworth	+12·5	− 5·8
Longsight	+15·2	+ 2·3
Openshaw	− 1·4	−13·6
Rusholme	+ 6·1	− 6·2

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Coventry, North-West constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department over the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986, c. *662*]: Coventry, North-West is covered by two of the Department's offices, Coventry, West and Coventry, East, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1980-81 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the offices is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Coventry, East	Coventry, West
1980-81	22,908	20,159
1985-86	17,838	17,528
Percentage change	−22·1	−13·1

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Coventry, East	Coventry, West
1980-81	14,248	11,728
1985-86	22,235	18,091
Percentage change	+56·1	+54·3

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1980-81 to 1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Coventry, East	+27·1	+0·4
Coventry, West	+35·6	+2·3

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Preston in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents;

(2) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the local offices of his Department between 1979 and 1985.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *88*]: Preston is covered by two of the Department's offices, Preston, North and Preston, South, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Preston, North	*Preston, South*
1982-83	12,993	13,838
1985-86	15,479	15,563
Percentage change	+19·1	+12·5

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Preston, North	*Preston, South*
1982-83	13,208	10,522
1985-86	14,293	11,541
Percentage change	+8·2	+9·7

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1982-83—1985-86

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Preston, North	− 2·2	−10·9
Preston, South	+18.8	− 3.2

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed benefit in the Monklands, East constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (11) all staff at the local offices of his Department over the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *88*]: Monklands, East is covered by four of the Department's offices, Aidrie, Coatbridge area office, Coatbridge national insurance office and Shotts NIO. Their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency. The national insurance offices do not deal with supplementary benefit.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the offices is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Coatbridge	*Airdrie*
1979-80	7,637	7,308
1985-86	7,889	8,417
Percentage change	+3·3	+15·2

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Coatbridge	*Airdrie*
1979-80	3,947	3,831
1985-86	6,871	7,735
Percentage change	+74·1	+101·9

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action in February.

Percentage change in complement 1979-80—1985-86:

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Coatbridge AO†	+56·5	+56·5
Airdrie	+107·5	+29·8
Coatbridge NIO	Not applicable	−38·9
Shotts NIO	Not applicable	−29·4

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.
† Deals only with supplementary benefit.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housng benefit ad postal claim forms.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the percentage change in individual Department of Health and Social Security offices in Leeds of *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the Leeds Department of Health and Social Security offices;

(2) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Leeds Central constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *88.*]: Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Leeds, Central is covered by two of the Department's offices, Leeds, North and Leeds, North-West but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Leeds, North	*Leeds, North-West*
1982-83	21,508	23,609
1985-86	19,409	23,515
Percentage change	−9·8	−0·4

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Leeds, North	*Leeds, North-West*
1982-83	19,617	16,188
1985-86	20,533	15,914
Percentage change	+4·7	−1·7

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Leeds is covered by five offices, Leeds, North, Leeds, North-West, Leeds, South, Leeds, South-East and Leeds, West. The offices' boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the city.

Percentage change in complement 1982-83—1985-86:

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Leeds, North	+10·2	− 4·0
Leeds, North-West	+ 6·7	− 6·2
Leeds, South	+ 2·3	− 9·2
Leeds, South-East*	− 1·1	− 1·1
Leeds, West	− 2·2	−12·3

* Deals only with supplementary benefit.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the local offices of his Department for the same period.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *88*]: Kilmarnock and Loundoun is covered by one of the Department's offices, Kilmarnock, but the offices's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

	Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)	*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**
1979-80	9,009	5,315
1985-86	11,479	8,869
Percentage change	+27·4	+66·9

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1979-80 to 1985-86

	Percentage change
Supplementary benefit staff	+55·7
All staff	+12·5

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Benefits

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent on (i) weekly disablement pensions under the industrial injuries scheme, (ii) special hardship allowance and (iii) other additions to industrial injuries benefit in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: Information is not available in the form requested. Expenditure for the year ended 5 April 1986 was as follows:

	£'000
Disablement benefit (including special hardship allowance)	405,907
Other additions to disablement benefit	4,900
	410,807

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people at the latest date for which information is available were receiving industrial injury disablement pension (i) at 20 per cent. or less, (ii) at 30 per cent., (iii) at 40 per cent. (iv) at 50 to 90 per cent., (v) at 100 per cent., (vi) special hardship allowance, (vii) constant attendance allowance, (viii) unemployability supplement, (ix) exceptionally severe disablement allowance and (x) hospital treatment allowance.

Mr. Newton: Figures for the year ending 30 September 1983 (the latest for which information is available) are as follows:

	Beneficiaries
Disablement pension	
20 per cent. and below	90,980
30 per cent.	45,570
40 per cent.	21,950
50 to 90 per cent.	23,960
100 per cent.	3,660
Special hardship allowance	144,770
Constant attendance allowance	2,170
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	710
Unemployability supplement	270
Hospital treatment allowance	50

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the cost of increasing the single person's rate of each of the following benefits by £7·35 (i) invalid care allowance, (ii) invalidity pension, (iii) severe disablement allowance, (iv) statutory sick pay and (v) unemployment benefit.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *418*]: The estimated gross cost in a full year of increasing the personal rates of the following benefits by £7·35 a week is*:

	£ million
Invalid care allowance	30
Invalidity pension	350
Severe disablement allowance	95
Statutory sick pay	†110
Unemployment benefit	335

* The gross costs would be offset to some extent by savings on supplementary benefit and housing benefit: these could be estimated only at disproportionate expense.

† Statutory sick pay is paid by employers, who recover the cost from contributions payable to the National Insurance Fund. The figure of £110 million is the estimated net reduction in National Insurance Fund income.

Organ Donors

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from doctors about the Chief Medical Officer's proposed voluntary code of practice relating to potential organ donors.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the answer of 11 July, he is now in a position to make an announcement on the introduction of a voluntary code of practice on procuring relatives' permission for the removal of organs for transplantation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Chief Medical Officer wrote to the medical profession's representative bodies asking for their views on introducing a voluntary code of practice under which doctors would agree to ensure that, whenever a patient died who was clinically suitable as an organ donor, the relatives were asked for permission for the organs to be removed. He has now received replies which are on the whole positive, though some reservations were expressed. The Chief Medical Officer's intention is that a working party be set up to take the matter forward.

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has yet decided to finance a television advertising campaign warning of the risks involved in contracting acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The possible use of television and its cost effectiveness and suitability in future stages of the AIDS information campaign remains under consideration.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to announce his decision in response to the application from the United Kingdom Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome Foundation for additional support from his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The United Kindom AIDS Foundation has written to my Department requesting additional support and a reply will be sent very shortly.

Attendance Allowance

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many reviews of attendance allowance during the currency of an award in 1984 and 1985, nationally and in each of the social security regions, were instituted *(a)* by the Secretary of State and *(b)* by the claimant: what, in each case, was the number and proportion in which (i) the allowance was withdrawn, (ii) the existing award was retained, (iii) the higher rate decreased to the lower rate and (iv) the lower rate increased to the higher rate; and what was the breakdown of these reviews into *(y)* ones because of dissatisfaction with an earlier decision and *(z)* ones because of a change in the need for attention or supervision.

Mr. Newton: For information relating to 1984 I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 26 March 1985 at columns *174-76*. The available information for 1985 is given in the following tables and relates to decisions given, not to applications made in that year.

Attendance Allowance 1985
Reviews instituted at request of claimant after award*

Region†	*Total Number of reviews after award*	*Award reduced or withdrawn‡*		*Award Maintained*		*Award Increased from lower to higher rate*	
		Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
North Eastern	3,512	123	3·5	654	18·6	2,735	77·9
Midlands	4,431	178	4·0	744	16·8	3,509	79·2
London North	2,861	121	4·2	470	16·4	2,270	79·4
London South	4,055	142	3·5	706	17·4	3,207	79·1
South West	2,704	85	3·1	437	16·2	2,182	80·7
North West (Merseyside)	1,973	83	4·2	321	16·3	1,569	79·5
North West (Manchester)	1,899	51	2·7	327	17·2	1,521	80·1
Scotland	2,135	64	3·0	440	20·6	1,631	76·4
Wales	2,074	95	4·6	337	16·2	1,642	79·2
Great Britain	25,644	942	3·7	4,436	17·3	20,266	79·0

* Details are of reviews because of dissatisfaction with the award or because of a change in the need for attention or supervision.

† The regions are Senior Medical Officer commands and do not conform precisely to social security regions.

‡ It is not possible to distinguish between reviews that led to withdrawal from those that resulted in a lower rate award.

Reviews instituted at request of Secretary of State after award

*Great Britain**	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Total number of reviews after award	747	—
Award withdrawn	312	41·8
Award maintained	361	48·3
Award reduced from higher to lower rate	40	5·4
Award increased from lower to higher rate	35	4·5

* It is not possible to provide a breakdown by Region.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people made initial applications for attendance allowance in 1984 and 1985 nationally and in each social security region; and in each case how many and what proportion *(a)* were awarded: (i) the higher rate and (ii) the lower rate, on initial application, *(b)* requested a review after: *(x)* refusal of the allowance and *(y)* award of the lower rate and *(c)* upon review: (1) were awarded the lower rate, (2) were awarded the higher rate, (3) had the lower rate increased to the higher rate and (4) had the lower rate withdrawn;

(2) how many people made renewal applications for attendance allowance in 1984 and 1985 nationally and in each of the social security regions; and in each case how many and what proportion were *(a)* awarded: (i) the higher rate and (ii) the lower rate on initial application, *(b)* requested a review after: *(x)* refusal of the allowance and *(y)* award of the lower rate and *(c)* upon review: (1) were awarded the lower rate, (2) were awarded the higher rate, (3) had the lower rate increased to the higher rate and (4) had the lower rate withdrawn.

Mr. Newton: For information relating to 1984 I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 26 March 1985 at columns *171-73*. The available information for 1985 is given in the following tables and relates to decisions made and not to applications in that year.

Table 1
Attendance Allowance—Initial Decisions 1985

Region (a)	*Number of Decisions*	*Higher Rate Awards*		*Lower Rate Awards*	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Northern	2,262	618	27·3	1,092	48·3
Yorks and Humberside	36,824	8,815	23·9	15,360	41·7
East Midlands	592	156	26·3	326	55·1
East Anglia	96	25	26·1	58	60·4
South East (GLC)	9,620	3,115	32·4	4,459	46·3
South East (Remainder)	58,595	16,680	28·4	30,095	51·4
South West	21,309	6,115	28·7	11,557	54·2
West Midlands	44,730	11,177	25·0	20,627	46·1
North West	36,287	9,416	25·9	17,306	47·7
Wales	20,997	5,385	25·7	8,029	38·2
Scotland	23,813	4,716	19·8	9,472	39·8
Great Britain	255,125	66,218	26·0	118,381	46·4

(a) Standard Regions

Table 2
Attendance allowance—Renewal Decisions 1985

Region (a)	*Number of Decisions*	*Higher Rate Awards*		*Lower Rate Awards*	
		Number	Percent.	Number	Percent.
North Eastern	3,219	1,082	33·6	1,145	34·8
Midlands	5,632	1,921	34·1	2,279	40·4
London North	3,318	1,328	40·0	1,748	52·7
London South	3,692	1,300	35·2	1,665	45·1
South West	1,602	527	32·9	767	47·9
North West (Manchester)	1,601	616	38·5	770	48·1
North West (Merseyside)	1,894	689	36·4	861	45·5
Scotland	1,773	578	32·6	775	43·7
Wales	2,046	826	40·4	741	36·2
North Fylde Central Office	31,527	11,356	36·0	20,171	64·0
Great Britain	56,230	20,223	36·0	31,222	55·5

(a) The regions are Senior Medical Officer commands and do not conform precisely to social security or standard regions.

Table 3
*Attendance Allowance—Reviews 1985**

Region	*Requests for review†*				*Result of review (where decision is altered)*					
	After refusal of award		*After award‡*		*Awards made after disallowance‖*		*Award increased from lower to higher rate*		*Award reduced or withdrawn¶*	
	Number	*Percentage of all decisions*	*Number*	*Percentage of all decisions*	*Number*	*Percentage of all decisions*	*Number*	*Percentage of all decisions*	*Number*	*Percentage of all decisions*
North Eastern	2,874	6·8	3,512	8·4	1,690	4·0	2,735	6·5	123	0·3
Midlands	2,609	6·2	4,431	10·6	1,627	3·9	3,509	8·4	178	0·4

Region	Requests for review† After refusal of award		Requests for review† After award‡		Result of review (where decision is altered) Awards made after disallowance‖		Award increased from lower to higher rate		Award reduced or withdrawn¶	
	Number	Percentage of all decisions	Number	Percentage of all decisions	Number	Percentage of all decisions	Number	Percentage of all decisions	Number	Percentage of all decisions
London North	1,727	4·1	2,861	6·8	1,100	2·6	2,270	5·4	121	0·3
London South	1,622	3·9	4,055	9·7	1,057	2·5	3,207	7·6	142	0·3
South Western	850	2·0	2,704	6·4	587	1·4	2,182	5·2	85	0·2
North West (Merseyside)	1,251	3·0	1,973	4·7	701	1·7	1,569	3·7	83	0·2
North West (Manchester)	1,101	2·6	1,899	4·5	674	1·6	1,521	3·6	51	0·1
Scotland	2,487	5·9	2,135	5·1	1,425	3·4	1,631	3·9	64	0·2
Wales	1,830	4·4	2,074	4·9	1,125	2·8	1,642	3·9	95	0·2
Great Britain	16,351	38·9	25,644	61·1	9,986	23·8	20,266	48·3	942	2·2

* It is not possible to distinguish between reviews on initial claims and reviews on renewal claims.
† Details are of reviews because of dissatisfaction with the award or because of a change in the need for attention or supervision.
‡ It is not possible to provide separate figures for lower rate awards.
‖ It is not possible to distinguish between lower and higher rate awards.
¶ It is not possible to distinguish between reviews which led to withdrawal from those which resulted in a lower rate award.
These percentages are overstated to an extent because some decisions on renewal claims are taken at North Fylde Central Office. (*See* table 2.)
Regions are Senior Medical Officer commands and do not conform precisely to social security regions.

Claimants

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will provide an estimate of the number of social security and housing benefit claimants who would cease to be eligible for each category of housing benefit or social security if child benefit were to be increased to *(a)* £15 and *(b)* £20 per week.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the number of claimants for each benefit administered by the Department of Health and Social Security in Wales;

(2) how many people are entitled to each of the benefit payments available through the Department of Health and Social Security in Wales; and what is the level of take-up.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 April 1986, c. *452*]: The latest figures for people in receipt of various social security benefits in Wales are as follows, where figures are available.

Benefit	Numbers in receipt (thousands)	Date
Retirement Pension	479	30 September 1985
Widows' benefits (excluding Widow's Allowance)	20	30 September 1985
Child Benefit	331	31 December 1985
One-Parent Benefit	23	31 December 1985
Unemployment Benefit	49	14 November 1985
Maternity Allowance	5	31 March 1985
Maternity Grant	*40	
Guardian's Allowance	†—	31 December 1985
Severe Disablement Allowance	19	30 March 1985
Sickness Benefit	17	30 March 1985
Invalidity Benefit	108	30 March 1985
Attendance Allowance	42	31 March 1985
Mobility Allowance	37	11 April 1986
Industrial Disablement Benefit	20	30 September 1983
War Pensions	15	31 December 1985
Death Grant	‡40	
Family Income Supplement	12	25 February 1986
Supplementary Benefit	259	13 February 1985

* Total number of grants in year from October 1984 to September 1985.
† Actual number of recipients is 127.
‡ Number of grants in 1985.

I regret that estimates of potential benefit entitlement and take-up are only available for Great Britain as a whole.

Children (Clinical Research)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, columns *65-6*, consultations on whether to issue further guidance to health authorities on clinical research involving children have yet begun; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I have nothing to add to my reply to the hon. Member on 23 June at columns *65-6*.

Goods and Services (Contracts)

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has in respect of regional health authorities as to the total amount spent on the acquisition of goods and services, expressed in terms of the net contract prices; and how many individual contracts comprised that volume of purchasing for each of the last five years for which figures are available, giving both the overall totals for each regional health authority and the totals disaggregated into the following categories: *(a)* capital and revenue expenditure, *(b)* construction and non-construction projects, *(c)* goods and services purchased from United Kingdom-based companies and non-United Kingdom-based companies and *(d)* goods and services purchased from the private sector and from other parts of the public sector.

Mr. Whitney: The total spent currently on goods and services by National Health Service authorities in England amounts to approximately £2·5 billion a year. We do not keep a detailed analysis centrally of the other information requested.

Disabled Persons (Discrimination)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many complaints claiming discrimination against disabled people he received in each year from 1980 to 1985, inclusive; and what his findings were and responses in each case.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

McColl Report

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now make a statement on the McColl report, taking into account the views put to his Department about its recommendations.

Mr. Newton: We have not yet completed our consideration, in the light of the responses we have received in consultation, of the issues raised in the McColl report; in particular, we think it right to take account also of the recently published report of the Royal College of Physicians on medical rehabilitation services generally.

DHSS Staff

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many staff in May 1979 were employed in each social security office, and how many are now in *(a)* west midlands offices, *(b)* the black country area of the west midlands and *(c)* the two Walsall offices; and if he will give in each case the percentage change.

Mr. Major: The black country area of the West Midlands is covered by the Department's offices at Dudley, North and Dudley, South, Smethwick, Walsall, East and Walsall, West, West Bromwich and Wolverhampton, North and Wolverhampton, South.

The complement of social security offices in *(a)* the west midlands, *(b)* the black country area of the west midlands and *(c)* the two Walsall offices in May 1979 and July 1986, and the percentage changes are as follows:

	1979	*1986*	*Per cent. change*
West Midlands*	5,559	6,000	+7·9
Black Country	1,236	1,479	+19·7
Walsall offices	299	333	+11·4

* West midlands region was merged with part of east midland and East Anglia region in 1982 to form the present midland region. For the sake of consistency, the table shows, for 1986, the total complement for those offices which were formerly part of West Midland region.

Staffing levels reflect the overall change in the work loads since 1979 brought about as a result of procedureal and legislative changes. Major examples of these changes are the introduction of statutory sick pay, Housing Benefit and postal claim forms for supplementary benefit.

Medical Boarding Centres

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for each year since 1975, and for each medical boarding centre, the number of awards based on disablement assessments of *(a)* 10 per cent., *(b)*20 per cent., *(c)* 30 per cent., *(d)* 40 per cent., *(e)* 50 per cent., *(f)* 60 per cent., *(g)* 70 per cent., *(h)* 80 per cent., *(i)* 90 per cent., *(j)* 100 per cent., respectively;

(2) if he will give for each prescribed disease and for each year since 1975 the number of applicants to special medical boards, the number of awards, the number of appeals, and the number of successful appeals;

(3) if he will give for each medical boarding centre for every year since 1975 the number of cases referred, the number of awards, the number of appeals heard, and the number of successful appeals.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations have been made to him regarding medical boarding centres.

Mr. Tony Newton: We occasionally receive representations about medical boarding centres from hon. Members, organisations and members of the public. In recent weeks we have received representations about medical boarding centres (respiratory diseases) from the General Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union and the Society for the Prevention of Asbestosis and Industrial Diseases.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what regulations exist to ensure no conflicts of interest are experienced by members of, or advisers to, special medical boards.

Mr. Newton: Regulation 36(1) of the Social Security (Adjudication) Regulations 1984 provides that a person shall not act as a member of a special medical board in any case if he is or may be directly affected by that case. The same regulation also provides that a person shall not act as a board member if he has taken any part in a case as a medical assessor or as a medical practitioner who has regularly attended the claimant or to whom any question has been referred for report or as an employer or as a witness.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the names, qualifications and background of all the doctors employed by his Department at each medical boarding centre to examine applicants to special medical boards, including both full-time employees and part-time advisers or examiners.

Mr. Newton: The names and qualifications of all medical practitioners appointed to serve on special medical boards at each medical boarding centre (respiratory diseases) are given in the table. Details of their background and experience can be found in the current edition of the "Medical Directory", which is in the Library.

London

Full-time

Dr. T. J. G. Phillips, MBBS, MRCP, MFOM, DCH
Dr. F. G. Ward, MB, ChB, MFOM
Dr. N. G. Pearson, MBBS, MFCM
Dr. W. R. Parkes, MD, FRCP, FFOM, OBE

Part-time

Dr. R. G. B. Williamson, MB, BCh, FRCP, MFOM
Dr. K. W. Browne, MBBS, MRCS, LRCP, MSC, MA
Dr. M. A. Erooga, MBBS
Dr. R. M. Archibald, MB, ChB, FFOM, DIH
Dr. B. Purdy, MB, ChB, DPH

Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Full-time
Dr. J. E. M. Hutchinson, MBBS
Dr. H. Fulton, MB, ChB, MA

Part-time
Dr. B. Couts, MD, MB, ChB
Dr. J. M. Gilmore, MD, MB,ChB, DPH

Glasgow
Full-time
Dr. W. R. Brown, LRCP, LRCS, LRFPS, MFOM
Dr. R. S. H. Pasqual, MB, BCh, DPH

Part-time
Dr. N. Horne, MB, ChB, FRCP
Dr. G. Johnston, MB, ChB, FRCP, BSc, FRPR
Dr. I. MacLeod, MB, ChB, DPH, MFOM

Manchester
Full-time
Dr. A. N. Dempsey, MB, ChB, MFOM, BAO
Dr. R. G. Rooke, BM, ChB, MFOM
Dr. G. A. Davenport, MB, ChB, MFOM
Dr. R. S. Simpson, BM, BCh

Part-time
Dr. J. B. Dowler, MB, ChB
Dr. W. B. Lister, MD, LRCP, LRCS, LRPFS
Dr. G. J. Ryder, MB, ChB, MRCS, LRCP

Cardiff
Full-time
Dr. D. J. Jones, MB, ChB, BSc.
Dr. J. B. Harse, MB, BCh, MRCS, LRCP, DMJ
Dr. H. B. Tinsley, LRCPI&LM, LRCSI&LM
Dr. C. Vinayagamoorthy, MBBS, MRCP

Part-time
Dr. J. A. Howarth, MB, ChB, MFOM
Dr. M. C. Conroy, LCRPI&LM, LRCSI&LM
Dr. H. R. S. Harley, MS, MBBS, MRCS, LRCP
Dr. A. Little, MRCS, LRCP
Dr. J. P. Lyons, MD, MB, BCh, BAO, TDD, MFOM
Dr. G. J. Ryder, MB, BCh, MRCS, LRCP
Dr. D. M. Dunbar, MB, BCh

Sheffield
Full-time
Dr. V. E. Sherburn, MB, ChB, MRCS, LRCP, AFOM
Dr. J. A. Cobb, MBBS, DA
Dr. Z. Rahman, MBBS, DTM&H, DTCD
Dr. Q. A. Sayed, MBBS, DTM&H, DTCD

Part-time
Dr. G. Ashe, MB, ChB, DTM&H, TDD
Dr. F. N. C. Holden, MD, MBBS, MRCS, LRCP
Dr. W. H. Oldershaw, MB, ChB, MFOM
Dr. J. A. Dick, MB, ChB

Stoke-on-Trent
Full-time
Dr. B. Simpson, MB, ChB, AFOM
Dr. E. L. F. Brazenor, MBBS
Dr. A. K. Chatterjee, MD, MBBS, MRCP, MFOM, DTCD

Part-time
Dr. H. J. T. Ross, FRCP, LRCP, LRCS, LRFPS
Dr. W. H. R. Smith, MBBS, MRCS, LRCP
Dr. J. McKinnon, MD, MB, ChB, FRCP
Dr. M. K. Coles, MBBS, MRCS, LRCP

Swansea
Full-time
Dr. T. J. Roy, MBBS

Part-time
Dr. I. G. Jones, MSc, MD, FRCP, MBBS
Dr. R. L. Sadler, BSc, MB, ChB, DPH

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will place in the Library the findings of the medical appeals tribunals on all occasions since 1975 when they have upheld appeals against decisions of the special medical boards.

Mr. Newton: This is a matter for the president of the Medical Appeal Tribunals, his honour Judge Byrt QC, but I understand that because the findings of medical appeal tribunals are confidential to the parties to an appeal there can be no question of the general publication of such findings.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the cost of each medical boarding centre in every year since 1978-79.

Mr. Newton: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to medical boarding centres (respiratory diseases). The following table shows total costs of each centre for the financial year 1985-86, the only year for which information is available in the form requested. These are provisional figures.

Medical boarding centre	*Cost* £
Newcastle	205,800
Sheffield	371,200
Cardiff	399,700
Stoke	236,500
Glasgow	165,000
London	180,700
Swansea	186,600
Manchester	289,500

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the responsibilities of medical boarding centres.

Mr. Newton: I assume the hon. Member is referring to medical boarding centres (respiratory diseases). In addition to their medical boarding functions medical practitioners in these boarding centres provide reports on diagnosis and recrudescence questions referred by adjudication officers. They carry out initial and perodical examinations of workers in certain dusty occupations. They also advise adjudication officers about the cause of death in connection with claims for death benefit under the industrial injuries scheme and the pneumoconiosis, byssinosis and miscellaneous diseases benefit scheme.

Disablement Benefit

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the total number of recipients of *(a)* 10 per cent. *(b)* 20 per cent., *(c)* 30 per cent., *(d)* 40 per cent., *(e)* 50 per cent., *(f)* 60 per cent., *(g)* 70 per cent., *(h)* 80 per cent., *(i)* 90 per cent. and *(j)* 100 per industrial disablement benefit.

Mr. Newton: In the year ending 30 September 1983 (the latest for which information is available), the numbers receiving disablement pensions at the levels specified were as follows:

Per cent. Disablement	*Beneficiaries*
10	13,360
20	67,140
30	45,570

Per cent. Disablement	Beneficiaries
40	21,950
50	10,880
60	6,360
70	3,700
80	2,220
90	800
100	3,660

In addition about 14,000 lump sums are estimated to have been awarded for disablement assessed at 10 per cent.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the average length of time for which 100 per cent. of industrial disablement benefit is paid.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will ensure that special training is provided for his Department's officers handling disablement claims.

Mr. Major: Yes. The Department's Local Office staff currently receive, at the workplace, technical training on industrial disablement claims. Plans are well laid to supplement this with job aids and trainer instructions for the forthcoming changes. This additional training will also be concluded in the local office and will be conducted in advance of the implementation date.

Pneumoconiosis

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1970 *(a)* the total number of claimants under the pneumoconiosis, byssinosis and miscellaneous diseases benefit scheme, *(b)* the number of awards, *(c)* the number of claimants who ask for a decision to be reconsidered and *(d)* the number of reconsiderations which have resulted in the reversal of a decision.

Mr. Newton: The following table shows the number of claimants and the number of awards under the pneumoconiosis, byssinosis and miscellaneous diseases benefit scheme since March 1982, the earliest date for which figures are available.

Year	Number of claimants	Number of awards
1982	52	21
1983	334	99
1984	311	120
1985	234	114
1986 (to 22 July 1986)	153	62

The information requested at *(c)* and *(d)* could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Meningitis Vaccine

Sir Anthony Kershaw asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects vaccines against meningitis to be available in the Stroud district.

Mr. Whitney: I am advised that it is likely to be at least a year before a vaccine against group B meningococcal meningitis (the form of the disease which has been most evident in Stroud), becomes available. Work to develop such a vaccine is being carried out at the United Kingdom Centre for Applied Microbiological Research and also, I understand, in the United States.

Mesothelioma

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in what proportion of deaths from mesothelioma industrial death benefit is paid by his Department.

Mr. Newton: In 1983, the latest year for which figures are available, industrial death benefit was awarded in approximately one-third of cases where mesothelioma was shown on the death certificate. Not all deaths where the death certificate mentions mesothelioma result in claims for industrial death benefit. In a number of cases, for example, the deceased may not have left a widow.

Doctors (Diagnostic Services)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all the bodies for which, and the circumstances in which, doctors employed by his Department diagnose individuals' complaints.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Inglehurst Nursing Home, Blackpool

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the report of his inquiry into the Inglehurst nursing home in Blackpool.

Mr. Whitney: It is unclear to which inquiry the hon. Member refers. There have been three inquiries which relate to Inglehurst nursing home. That by the Health Service Commissioner has recently been issued to the parties concerned and to the North-Western regional health authority (the next highest authority). This is in accordance with the National Health Service Act 1977. The other reports were by Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde health authority and by the regional health authority.

Pharmacists

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the benefits to patients from the new contract for retail pharmacists.

Mr. Hayhoe: The new contract for retail pharmacists is intended to ensure that the National Health Service obtains and pays for only those pharmaceutical services which the National Health Service and its patients need. Family practitioner committees will, in future, decide whether the needs of patients justify the expenditure on a new NHS contract and will refuse an application if this is not the case. The only judgment will be one of patient need. This new arrangement will ensure that there is a reasonable but not excessive supply of pharmacies with National Health Service contracts and will make progress towards a better distribution of patient services.

In addition:

there will be an increased level of financial support to essential small pharmacies which provide valuable services to patients in sparsely populated areas.

Pharmacies will be encouraged to be more cost-effective and efficient through changes in the pattern of remuneration. A more efficient service will, of course, benefit patients.

Alterations to the system of cost collection will produce savings to the taxpayer which will be "shared"

equally between the profession and the Government. This will provide some funds to help implement developments in the pharmacist's role following consultation on the Nuffield Foundation's report on pharmacy and the Government's consultative document on primary care services.

The new contract will provide a much better basis for relationships between the Government and the profession. This will make it easier to continue to improve services to the public.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the implications of the recommended distance between pharmacies of at least one kilometre in the proposed new contract for retail pharmacists for the adequacy of services to patients.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the forecast cost to the National Health Service if *(a)* 500, *(b)* 1,000 and *(c)* 1,500 pharmacists were to close with compensation under the proposed new pharmacy contract;

(2) what is the latest estimate of the net savings to the National Health Service from the new pharmacy contract proposals on the assumption that 1,000 pharmacies close with compensation, after taking account of the costs of the new pharmacy practices sub-committees and the latest proposals for an appeal system,

Mr. Hayhoe: Under the new contract pharmacies will be encouraged to be more efficient through changes in the pattern of remuneration. This will put pressure on some small pharmacies which have high unit costs and which cannot be justified in places where there are already adequate National Health Service services. For two years therefore there will be a system of payments to pharmacies who wish to relinquish the National Health Service contract.

The cost to the National Health Service of these one-off payments will, over a period, be completely offset by recurring savings in the overall cost of pharmaceutical services. For every unnecessary small pharmacy that closes a recurring saving will accrue. The level of such savings depends on a number of factors: for example, the number of small pharmacy closures over the two-year period, how demand for National Health Service services is redistributed to other pharmacies, and the efficiency of those pharmcies in dealing with the extra business. No definitive estimate is available therefore on how long it will take for savings to match payments to relinquish contracts, and any necessary administrative costs.

Additional savings of about £4 million will accrue from alterations in the way costs are reimbursed. Available information indicates that the number of contractors relinquishing their contracts will be much lower than the numbers suggested in the questions. The decision to give up a National Health Service contract will be left to the commercial judgment of the individual contractor.

Pharmaceutical Society

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest revised appeal proposals put by him to the Pharmaceutical Services negotiating committee.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) on 18 July at column *664*.

Incontinence

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he has issued on the treatment of incontinence as a qualifying condition for additional requirements for bathing under schedule 4, part II, paragraph 11 of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Guidance to adjudication officers on the supplementary benefit legislation, issued by the Chief Adjudication Officer, is published in the "S Manual", a copy of which is in the Library. The guidance on eligibility for additional requirements for baths is at paragraphs S4531—4532.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are waiting for *(a)* cataract operations, *(b)* ear operations to remedy a hearing defect and *(c)* general orthopaedic surgery; what is the average delay for each operation; and what measures are being taken to reduce waiting lists.

Mr. Whitney: For measures to be taken to reduce waiting lists I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Social Services, to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport on 21 July at column *95*. I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks. Information on waiting lists for admission to hospital is available by the specialty of treatment and not by operation, and it is not therefore possible to give waiting list information for cataract and ear operations. The total number of cases on NHS waiting lists for admission to traumatic and orthopaedic surgery departments in England at 30 September 1985, the latest date for which figures are available centrally, was 129,282. The available information on waiting time is given in the table.

NHS non-psychiatric hospitals, England
Estimated median interval in weeks between the date a patient is placed on the waiting list and the date of admission of patients discharged during 1984

Operation	*Weeks*
Middle ear and ossicles	15
Eye lens	15
Orthopaedic	12

Health Professionals

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is being done to introduce the use of screening techniques into training for health professionals; and what emphasis is being given to the need to develop preventative measures.

Mr. Whitney: The regional health authorities were asked to include policies for prevention in their 10-year strategic plans and all have done so. The content of training for health professionals is a matter for the relevant professional bodies taking into account service needs, including the development of screening programmes.

Health Education Council

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on what the Health Education Council does to promote awareness of the need to develop measures that will prevent disabilities from occuring.

Mr. Whitney: The Health Education Council makes available authoritative and sensible advice on a wide range of issues which will promote positive good health and reduce unnecessary illness.

London Ambulance Service

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the hours worked by the personnel of the London ambulance service in South-East Thames region in 1985; how many were employed by it full-time in 1985; and what are his estimates of numbers of personnel and hours to be worked in South-East Thames in 1986.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that I am unable to give the hon. Member precisely the information she requires. The number of hours worked by the London ambulance service is not available. However, a normal working week is 40 hours and applying that to the following staffing figures for the south-east division of the London Ambulance Service should give a reasonable approximation:

South East Division of London Ambulance Service Ambulance Personnel*

	Average Number of Staff in Post	*Average Weekly Overtime (wte)† Worked*	*Average Weekly Total (wte)*
Actual 1985	497	105	602
Targets 1986	497	25	522

* Follows South East Thames boundary except for Croydon District Health Authority which falls in South West Thames Regional Health Authority, but is served by staff from South East Division.
† Whole time equivalent.
Source: London Ambulance Service.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what mileage was covered by ambulances run by the London ambulance service in the South-East Thames region in 1985 and in the first quarter of 1986; and what is the estimate of that to be run in 1986.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is as follows:

*South east division of London ambulance service**

	Emergency	*Non-emergency*	*Total*
Mileage in 1985	808,687	2,029,105	2,837,792
Mileage in first quarter of 1986	192,823	423,397	616,220
Estimated mileage in 1986	838,000	1,600,000	2,438,000

* Follows South-East Thames boundary but includes Croydon district health authority which is part of South-West Thames regional health authority.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what requests have been made by the South-East Thames regional health authority to district health authorities in respect of the use of the London ambulance service; and what is the target of that authority's request of reduction in the number of non-emergency cases to be carried.

Mr. Whitney: In a letter dated 20 March 1986, the general manager of the South-West Thames regional health authority wrote to the general managers of the three other Thames regions requesting district health authorities to reduce the demand for non-emergency ambulance transport for walking cases by 40 per cent.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many non-emergency cases were carried by the London ambulance service in South-East Thames region in each of the years 1984 and 1985; and how many he expects to be carried in 1986.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that I am unable to give the hon. Member all the information she requires as the number of cases carried by the London ambulance service is not collected. However, the number of actual non-emergency journeys for the South-East division of the London ambulance service is as follows:

	Number of non-emergency patient journeys
1984 actual	513,381
1985 actual	496,742
1986 estimated	400,000

Drug Abuse

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) by what criteria he will judge the success or failure of the current programme of advertisement on radio and television designed to combat drug abuse; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much the current programme of television and radio advertising designed to combat drug abuse is costing;

(3) which advertising consultants or agencies are being employed to place advertisements on radio and television designed to combat drug abuse; and how much in fees each of them is receiving;

(4) of which voluntary or charitable organisations his current programme of advertisements on radio and television designed to combat drug abuse makes use;

(5) what arrangements he has made to link his current series of advertisements on radio and television designed to combat drug abuse with helplines or other forms of counselling.

Mr. Whitney: Our campaign of education and information on drug misuse will cost £2 million in 1986-87 including about £850,000 on radio and television advertising. Three advertising agencies have been employed—Yellowhammer Company Ltd., Young and Rubicam Ltd. (Television time buying), Leo Burnett Ltd. (Radio time buying). We do not pay fees to any of these agencies, who have to negotiate commission from media companies.

The effects of the campaign are being independently evaluated by quantitative and qualitative research. The key criteria are awareness of campaign materials and effects on young people's levels of knowledge and attitudes. Results to date are encouraging.

Both parents' and young peoples' press advertising includes a regular advert publicising "Freefone Drug Problems" run by the standing conference on drug abuse and funded by the Department.

Disability Prevention (Expenditure)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much the Government have spent in each of the last five years on the prevention of disability in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* developing countries; and in each case what are the projects being supported.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Child Abuse

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what new research initiatives he is taking into the apparent increased incidence of child abuse.

Mr. Whitney: As part of its continuing programme of research into child care matters the Department is currently funding research to evaluate various types of intervention in cases of child abuse and is in the process of commissioning new research into rehabilitative and supportive therapy in families in which child sexual abuse has occurred. There are no national statistics to show whether there is increased incidence of "child abuse", which is not easily defined. New arrangements for reports proposed in the draft circular "Child Abuse—Working Together" will enable the Department to monitor trends more effectively.

Mr. Victor Paige

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. on 16 June, *Official Report*, column *462*, what was the total taxable addition to salary received by Mr. Victor Paige in each year he served on the National Health Service management board.

Mr. Fowler: Mr. Paige was employed by the Department from 2 January 1985 to 30 June 1986. From 2 January 1985 to 31 March 1986 he received £8,625 as a taxable addition to salary and from 1 April 1986 to 30 June 1986 £2,625. Mr. Paige made his own pension arrangements and these taxable additions were to compensate him for the loss of benefits he would have received under the principal civil service pension scheme.

Rates

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the light of his answer to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye, of 21 July, he will *(a)* indicate the timescales and mechanisms involved in developing his proposals on rates through consultation and discussion on the wider proposals for the reform of local government finance, *(b)* identify those with whom he intends to so consult and *(c)* clarify the extent to which such consultations and discussions will focus on the reform of local government finance in (i) Scotland alone, (ii) England and Wales alone and (iii) some combination of (i) and (ii) above; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's remarks during the debate on the Social Security Bill yesterday.

Epilepsy (Report)

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the report of the working group on services for people with epilepsy will be published.

Mr. Newton: The report of the working group on services for people with epilepsy was published today and will be issued to helth and local authorities in England. Copies have been placed in the Library.

It is not intended as a blueprint for the provision of services by all authorities, but its recommendations to Government could be used as a basis for discussion by health and local authorities on improvements in services. The scope for adoption of recommendations in different areas will depend on the pattern of existing services, availability of resources and local priorities.

I hope that the report will stimulate discussion and be of assistance to professional staff responsible for the treatment and care of people with epilepsy and to managers and planners in the organisation of local services.

Custodianship Allowances

Mr. Wood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provision he intends to make for the treatment of custodianship allowances for supplementary benefit purposes.

Mr. Major: We intend shortly to refer to the Social Security Advisory Committee proposals to improve the position of supplementary beneficiaries who are receiving local authority custodianship allowances, and of certain young people who may receive supplementary benefit while remaining in full-time non-advanced education. We are also considering the inclusion of a number of minor clarifications and adjustments in related provisions.

School Leavers (Benefit)

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the position of school leavers who claim social security benefit.

Mr. Major: Guidance on the eligibility of school leavers for supplementary benefit is contained in the "S Manual", paragraphs 225-2292, and in circular S51/85. I am aware that there has been some confusion following a decision by Social Security Commissioners last year which meant

that certain young people who had always been regarded as still being at school for benefit purposes became eligible for supplementary benefit in their own right from Easter, with a concomitant loss of child benefit rights to their parents. There is also evidence that some children who have left school before the legal date may have been claiming benefit. The Government's policy remains that young people who are (or should legally be) still completing their education should normally be treated as dependent upon their parents. We intend to refer to the Social Security Advisory Committee proposals to ensure that the law continues to reflect this intention.

Health Authorities (Documentation)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue instructions to district health authorities reminding them of the entitlement of hon. Members to receive all documents and accounts which are available to authority members, even those for confidential consideration in connection with hospitals, services and overall management covering the constituency of the hon. Member concerned and to seek to improve compliance with those rules by all health authorities.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *67-68*]: I regret that my earlier reply contained an error. It should have read as follows. Under section 1(4) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 members of the press are entitled to receive on request, and subject to appropriate payment, copies of the agenda and related documents for items to be discussed during that part of a health authority's meeting which is open to the public. In addition copies of these documents are normally available to those members of the public who attend the meeting. There is no entitlement to receive or have access to confidential documents relating to items discussed in closed session. Hon. Members have no rights in this respect above those of any member of the public.

Diabetics (Syringes)

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to allow general practitioners to prescribe plastic syringes to diabetics up to the equivalent cost of glass syringes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: No. I am advised that such an arrangement is not practicable.

School Meals

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate the number of *(a)* families and *(b)* children who will be affected by the Government's proposed changes in eligibility for school meals under section 70 of the Social Security Bill;

(2) how many *(a)* families and *(b)* children he estimates will be affected by the Government's proposed changes in eligibility for school lunches contained in clause 70 of the Social Security Bill in (i) Wales and (ii) mid-Glamorgan.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *419*]: The proposed changes in entitlement to free school meals entail additional expenditure overall, rather than savings. We anticipate that on the basis of the illustrative assumptions in the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691), the cash compensation contained in the family credit children's rates in place of free school meals will exceed the savings to local education authorities in no longer providing free school meals to children in FIS families and to those helped under the present local education authorities' discretionary powers. It is not possible to estimate the effect on local authority manpower since this will depend on local factors, including comparative meal numbers and local manpower policies.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate the savings which will accrue to both central Government and local government in manpower and cash, respectively, as a result of the Government's proposed changes in eligibility for school meals under section 70 of the Social Security Bill;

(2) if he will estimate the savings in manpower and cash which will accrue from the Government's proposed changes in eligibility for school lunches contained in clause 70 of the Social Security Bill for *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local government in Wales.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *419*]: The estimates are as follows:

	Number currently receiving free school meals where parents are receiving FIS or under LEA discretionary powers		*Number entitled to cash compensation in place of free school meals under the new family credit arrangements**	
	Children	*Families*	*Children*	*Families*
Great Britain	545,000	N/A	610,000	335,000
Wales	30,000	N/A	†36,000	†20,000
Mid-Glamorgan	7,500	N/A	N/A	N/A

* On the basis of the illustrative assumptions in the Technical Annex to the White Paper (Cmnd. 9691).

† Reliable estimates of a regional breakdown for family credit are not available; the figures given for Wales therefore reflect the current FIS population increased on a proportionate basis.

N/A = Not available

TRANSPORT

Roads (Lighting)

Mr. Grist asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has completed his review of policy for the provision of lighting on motorways and all-purpose trunk roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. Having carefully considered the views of the bodies consulted, representing all the various interests in road lighting, and the recommendation of the Select Committee on Road Transport's report on road safety, my right hon. Friend has revised the policy for the provision of lighting on motorway and all-purpose trunk roads for which he is the highway authority.

In future, detailed consideration as to whether lighting should be provided will always be given prior to the construction stage, thus allowing for lighting proposals to be included in the public consultation process and any subsequent inquiry.

The decision whether to light in a particular case will be based on an economic assessment of the costs and benefits throughout the life of the lighting scheme, together with a full assessment of environmental factors. Account will also be taken of any significant non-quantifiable road safety factors.

When a night-time accident problem arises on an existing road which is not lit, the case for lighting will also be subject to economic and environmental assessment.

The type of lighting which will afford the best value for money in the particular case will be used except in environmentally sensitive areas where a whiter light source may be installed. This will stimulate greater competition in the industry.

The effectiveness of road lighting and other measures in reducing accidents in fog on existing roads will continue to be the subject of further study by the Department.

In future, all new lighting installations will be monitored year by year in order to assess their effectiveness.

These new arrangements are designed to improve road safety, secure better value for public money, to safeguard against environmental damage and to provide a consistency of approach with that for other highway investment. My right hon. Friend has been concerned to ensure that adequate safeguards for the environment are embodied in the new policy.

A departmental advice note TA 49/86, setting out the revised assessment method relating to the provision of road lighting on motorways and all-purpose trunk roads is being issued and copies have been placed in the Library.

Redevelopment (Hammersmith)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Transport with regard to the proposed redevelopment of the Hammersmith central island site by Bredero Projects Ltd. (1) whether London Regional Transport has entered a building agreement or granted an option with Bredero Projects Ltd., or any other company, to enable redevelopment, for which planning permisson was granted on 24 November 1980, to take place;

(2) whether London Regional Transport has disposed of any part of its ownership, or granted an option to disposal to Bredero Projects Ltd., or any other company, to enable the redevelopment for which planning permission was granted on 24 November 1980, to take place;

(3) whether London Regional Transport has granted any form of lease or option to Bredero Projects Ltd., or any other company, to enable the redevelopment for which planning permission was granted on 24 November 1980, to take place.

Mr. David Mitchell: Arrangements between London Regional Transport and Bredero Projects Ltd., for the development of the Hammersmith site are commercial matters for them.

EC (Ports Competition)

Sir Julian Ridsdale asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the implications of the financial help given by the Governments of some member states to their ports for European competition policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The last detailed study of this question was carried out between 1977 and 1980 by the European Commission with a working group of experts from major Community ports. The majority concluson was that differences between the financial regimes of ports did not seem capable of provoking serious distortions of competition. The study needs to be reviewed and the Commission has started by updating the factual background to it.

Sir Julian Ridsdale asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made to ensure fair competition between ports within the European Community.

Mr. Moore: Financial assistance to ports is subject to the state aids provisions of the EEC Treaty (Articles 92 and 93) and financial relations between public authorities and public port undertakings are covered by the provisions of the transparency directive. The Commission has sufficient powers to deal with distortions of competition resulting from financial assistance.

Goods and Services (Contracts)

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has in respect of the British Airports Authority, British Airways, the British Railways Board, the British Waterways Board, the Civil Aviation Authority and the National Bus Company as to the total amount spent on the acquisition of goods and services, expressed in terms of net contract prices; and how many individual contracts comprised that volume of purchasing for each of the five years for which figures are available, giving both the overall totals in each case, and the totals disaggregated into the following categories *(a)* capital and revenue expenditure, *(b)* construction and non-construction projects, *(c)* goods and services purchased from United Kingdom-based companies and non-United Kingdom-based companies and *(d)* goods and services purchased from the private sector and other parts of the public sector.

Mr. Moore: My Department does not maintain records of the kind of information requested by the hon. Member, apart from that which is published in the industries' own annual reports and accounts, copies of which are available in the Library. My Department is not responsible for the

British Waterways Board; questions about its activities should be directed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Road Accidents

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department has on the relationship between speed and the severity of road accidents; and what action he proposes to take on that information.

Mr. Moore: Accident risk and severity generally increase with speed. If properly chosen and enforced, speed limits constrain speeds. On local roads where most accidents happen, authorities can also influence speeds by appropriate engineering techniques. My Department has issued advice on both aspects.

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for Transport what the number of accidents and the accident rate for coaches is per 100 million vehicle kilometres, by type and class of road, and by severity, for each of the last 10 years; and whether he will take steps to ensure that future editions of "Road Accidents (Great Britain)" disaggregates the rates for buses and coaches in all the tables which refer to bus and coach accidents.

Mr. David Mitchell: I regret that the information requested is not available because the road accident report form does not distinguish between buses and coaches. The road accident reporting system is currently under review and this is one of the aspects under consideration.

Speed Governors

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent research his Department has carried out or commissioned into speed governors, or limiters, and on speed alerters, with particular reference to coaches; what the conclusions of such work have been; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Transport and Road Research Laboratory has conducted some research into the operation of speed limiters, which showed that in general these devices work satisfactorily. The BSI is about to seek public comment on a draft British standard for speed limiters prepared at the request of the Department. This standard will form the basis of regulations which we expect to make early next year to require all high-speed coaches to be fitted with speed limiters. Currently we have no work in progress on speed alerters.

M40 (Ardley Service Area)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what consultation his Department had with Cherwell district council prior to the announcement of Ardley as a site for a motorway service area on the M40 extension;

(2) on what days *(a)* Esso Petroleum plc and *(b)* Cherwell district council were told of his Department's decision to site a motorway service area at Ardley.

Mr. David Mitchell: There were informal advance consultations with the district council. These took the form of meetings and correspondence. The proposal was announced on 10 July, and an advance notice of the announcement was sent to the district council on 9 July. No advance notice was given to Esso. Formal consultations are now proposed with the district council under the procedures applying to Crown development.

Heathrow Airport (Fifth Terminal)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to the answer of 18 July, *Official Report*, column *657*, he will now list the undertakings given by his Department specifically to the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead since July 1981 regarding the Government's policy towards a fifth terminal at Heathrow airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: On 23 July 1981 my hon. Friend received an answer from the then Under-Secretary of State for Trade about a fifth terminal at Heathrow. The Government's policy remains that cited in my answer of 18 July 1986.

Motor Cycles (Noise)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the subject of a static noise test for motor cycles; and what has been his response.

Mr. David Mitchell: The National Motorcycle Council has sent us proposals for the introduction of a static noise test for motor cycles, and the Department is still considering these.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received from hon. Members, public organisations and the general public on motor cycle noise.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to my reply yesterday.

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of complaints he receives on motorcycle noise relate to unmodified standard motor cycles and motor cycles with modified or illegal replacement exhaust systems, respectively.

Mr. David Mitchell: I shall answer this question shortly.

Driving Test

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to including motorway driving as an addition to the driving test.

Mr. David Mitchell: This subject was considered fully last year following publication of the first report from the Transport Select Committee on road safety which recommended that dual carriageway driving should be included in the driving test. We were unable to accept this for reasons which similarly apply to the inclusion of motorway driving.

At present we provide both an even-handed test and a national network of centres which are reasonably accessible to everyone. As less than half the present network of L test centres are within reach of dual carriageways and even fewer are within reach of motorways we could not do this if motorway driving was prescribed as an element of the test.

Seat Belts

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of current seat belt wearing levels for front seat occupants of cars and light vans.

Mr. David Mitchell: Seat belt wearing surveys are now carried out at six monthly intervals at 55 sites, involving observation of about 100,000 cars and light vans. The latest survey, carried out in April, showed wearing rates to be 94 per cent. for both drivers and front seat passengers of cars and light vans.

Northern Lighthouse Board

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to commemorate the bicentenary of the Northern Lighthouse Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: It gives me great pleasure to offer my congratulations and best wishes to the commissioners and their staff on the occasion of the bicentenary of the Northern Lighthouse Board. I understand that its first meeting was held in Edinburgh on 1 August 1786 and I am sure it gives everyone concerned with that body the greatest satisfaction that a Scottish institution of such high distinction and with such a long and proud tradition of service to mariners, should still flourish.

Stansted Airport (Rail Link)

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is yet in a position to announce his decision on the British Railways Board's proposal to invest in a new rail link to Stansted airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am pleased to announce to the House that the Government have today approved the board's investment in a new electrified spur from the London-Cambridge main line to a new station beneath the airport terminal. We made clear in the "Airports Policy" White Paper that we would be pleased to approve a rail link to Stansted airport if there was a commercial case for providing one. BR has shown that there is. It intends to run the fast airport services with new rolling stock. This is included in the investment approval we have given. Subject to getting the necessary statutory powers to construct the rail link, the board is sure that it can provide an attractive, reliable and commercially viable rail service to the airport.

Public Utilities Streetworks Act 1950 (Review)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has yet completed his consideration of the report of the review chaired by Professor Michael Horne of the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. We are most grateful to all those who responded to our request for comments following publication of the report in November last year. Having considered the report in the light of all those comments, we accept most of the recommendations. In view of the number and detail of the recommendations, I am placing in the Library a memorandum giving our comments on each.

We endorse the central recommendation of the report that, subject to certain reserve powers in the event of default, the responsibility for carrying out reinstatements following works in the highway by public utilities should be placed upon those utilities themselves. It is envisaged however that local authorities would be able to tender for such work if they wished. We also endorse the related recommendations of the report for securing an improved standard of reinstatements, including better specifications for materials and workmanship, new performance standards, and improved training for workmen. We accept the need to strengthen the powers of highway authorities to inspect works, but with a simpler system of charging for such inspections. We are sure that the integration of responsibility for reinstatements, together with the associated improvements in standards, will promote speedier and more satisfactory reinstatements, to the benefit of all road users. We also accept generally the recommendations for improvement of traffic management, and for improving the safeguards for road users, in particular those who are handicapped.

The majority recommendation on the costs of diversionary works on utility apparatus required in consequence of highway schemes has proved controversial. We accept that there are problems with the existing system, but we are not convinced that the majority recommendation is the right solution. We think it would be preferable for the parties involved to agree a code of practice on diversionary works, in order to ensure that no unnecessary works are undertaken.

It is proposed therefore to invite the local authority associations and the National Joint Utilities Group to engage in negotiations to this end, and to report on them by the end of 12 months at the latest. In the event of the negotiations not succeeding, the Government would need to consider bringing forward a cost sharing solution in order to provide the necessary incentives.

Primary legislation will be required to implement certain of these recommendations, and the Government intend to bring it forward when there is a suitable opportunity. This legislation would take a simpler form than the present Act, and would provide for a number of matters to be dealt with by subordinate legislation. However, it is important that action should proceed on those recommendations which do not require prior legislation or on which detailed technical work is required to prepare the ground. In this work, it is important that we should keep in close touch with both the local authorities and the utilities, and have direct access to the best expert advice available. I accordingly propose at an early stage to set up a street works advisory committee on the broad lines recommended in the report.

We believe that action on the lines I have indicated will make a positive and lasting contribution to establishing a more satisfactory framework for the execution of works by public utilities in highways, and will result in safer and more convenient arrangements for all road users.

Airports Act 1986

Dame Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to implement the Airports Act 1986.

Mr. Moore: On 15 July, I approved proposals and a scheme under section 1 of the Act providing for the

reorganisation of the British Airport Authority's undertaking into separate airport companies on 31 July. On the same day I made two orders which bring into force certain sections of the Act on 31 July and 1 August and which provide for the dissolution of the BAA and the vesting of its undertaking on 1 August in BAA plc. From 1 August, therefore, the whole of parts I and V of the Act (and certain related sections) will be in force.

I propose to make two further orders shortly, to designate the BAA's seven airports — following their transfer to subsidiary companies — under section 88 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 (detention and sale of aircraft) and under section 35 of that Act (facilities for consultation). This will provide for continuity of powers to detain and sell aircraft in default of payment of airport charges and of the duty to provide adequate facilities for consultation with interested parties on matters concerning the management or administration of their airports.

On 8 September, two months after Royal Assent, parts II and III and other provisions, such as exemption from Sunday trading restrictions for certain airports, will come into force, as provided for in section 85(4) of the Act. Once these parts of the Act are in force, I intend to use my powers under sections 13 and 15 to direct local authorities to form airport companies and to submit schemes for the transfer of property, rights and liabilities to those companies. In addition, as was said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) on 21 July, I intend to use my powers under section 31 to promulgate traffic distribution rules for the London airports system and to confirm the current rules for the Scottish Lowland airports system.

I hope to make an order bringing the remaining parts of the Act into force on 1 October. This will, amongst other things, set in place the scheme of economic regulation which requires all airports with a turnover above £1 million in two of the last three years to apply to the CAA for a permission to levy airport charges. Three related orders will also be made: an order under section 7 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982, dealing with procedural regulations governing the exercise of the Civil Aviation Authority's functions under parts III and IV of the Airports Act; an order under section 40 of the Airports Act designated Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted and Manchester international airports for the purposes of economic regulation, which will require mandatory conditions to be imposed on those airports setting a maximum limit on airport charges and requiring accounting transparency; and an order under section 47 making regulations for charges to be payable by airport operators in respect of expenses incurred by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in performing their functions under the Act.

Soon after 1 October, I propose to notify the CAA under section 53(1) that I intend to perform certain of the CAA's functions relating to the grant of permissions to and imposition of conditions on the seven BAA airport companies. I will give details of these permissions and the conditions to which they are subject nearer to the time of flotation.

British Airports Authority

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will publish the British Airports Authority's response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the Authority's commercial activities, Cmnd. 9644.

Mr. Moore: The MMC's report on its investigation of the commercial activities of the British Airports Authority was published on 10 December 1985. I have now received the authority's response to the commission's report and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

The commission was asked to report whether in carrying out its commercial activities the authority could improve its efficiency or reduce its costs or improve the service provided. The commission was particularly asked to examine four issues: the scope for increasing competition at the point of sale, the procedure for awarding concession contracts, the control of the standard of service provided by concessionaires, and the administration of leases.

The commission concluded that the authority has operated its commercial activities in a generally satisfactory manner. The Commission also concluded, with one member dissenting, that in relation to its commercial activities the authority was not pursuing a course of conduct which operates against the public interest. But the commission made a number of recommendations which would, in its judgment, improve the authority's efficiency, reduce its costs or improve the service it provides.

I endorse the commission's general conclusions, and I accept its view that the authority should make every effort to increase competition wherever possible. Like the commission, however, I recognise the opportunities for doing so, particularly at the point of sale, are limited because of operational requirements and space constraints.

The Authority's response shows that it has accepted 23 of the Commission's 34 recommendations wholly or in part, and that it has already implemented 20 of these. I welcome the Authority's response, but I am writing to the Chairman to ask him to keep under review those matters which the Commission identified specifically as worthy of continuing consideration and possible future action.

The Commission thought it necessary to consider its findings in the light of the proposed privatisation of the authority. I welcome its conclusion that there was no reason to believe the general sense of the recommendations in its report would be found inapplicable to the new organisation envisaged. However, when drafting the legislation that became the Airports Act 1986, the Government took into account the commission's view that the search by the new enterprise for higher profits for its shareholders might generate additional pressures which could lead to a possible abuse of a monopoly.

The Airports Act 1986 will establish a system of economic regulation for airports. The CAA will, after a reference to the MMC, be empowered to impose conditions on airport operators' permissions to levy airport charges which will, inter alia, prevent such operators adopting trade practices or pricing policies in their core airport activities which unfairly discriminate between users, concessionaires or prospective concessionaires, or which unfairly exploit the operators' monopoly position in respect of, for example, the handling of passengers, baggage or cargo. In addition, at airports designated by the Secretary of State (which will include Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted), the MMC will conduct

a full review of the airport business every five years and will report on any practice they find operating against the public interest.

In reviewing any matter which relates to the granting of concessions, the MMC will be required, amongst other things, to have regard to the furtherance of the reasonable interests of concessionaires. The CAA will be obliged to impose conditions remedying or preventing the adverse effects of any practices which are against the public interest. Operators of designated airports will also be obliged by the CAA to publish accounts which show separately the results of their commercial and traffic operations: the CAA may also require operators of non-designated airports to publish such information. Together, these measures are designed to ensure that any possible abuse of a monopoly position is prevented.

Given the extent to which the authority has already implemented the recommendations of the Commission, the impending privatisation of the authority, and the framework of economic regulation which will apply to the authority's airport companies, I do not consider a further statement reporting progress is necessary.

Road Traffic Control Equipment

Mr. Neil Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the market share in road traffic control equipment currently held by the Plessey Company and GEC.

Mr. Moore: Market share was one of the factors to be considered by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in assessing the proposal for a merger between GEC and Plessey in the light of the evidence submitted by them. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry now has the Commission's report before him and will make an announcement as soon as practicable.

Manchester International Airport

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has had concerning the proposed rail link from Manchester international airport; what response has been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: My predecessor met the parties particularly interested in this rail link on 14 May. At that meeting, British Rail explained their view that the link would not be commercially viable, and in the light of that, they, the airport and the PTA agreed to consider what contribution they would be prepared to make towards the cost of the scheme. When I visited Manchester airport on Monday, the local authorities reiterated their strong support for the scheme. I have asked them and British Rail, to write to me summarising where their discussions now stand.

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT

Mr. Forman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise towards costs of unsuccessful appeals by taxpayers to the independent value added tax tribunals against penalties imposed under the provisions of the Finance Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The practice of Customs and Excise in seeking costs in unsuccessful appeals heard by the VAT Tribunals was set out by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), when he was Financial Secretary to the Treasury, on 13 November 1978. There has been no change in policy since then, but with the new enforcement powers and rights of appeal, particularly on the grounds of reasonable excuse, enacted in the Finance Act 1985, it may be helpful to restate it. As a general rule, Customs and Excise do not seek costs against unsuccessful appellants. They do, however, ask for costs in certain narrowly defined cases so as to provide protection for public funds and the general body of taxpayers. They will therefore seek to continue to ask for costs at those exceptional tribunal hearings of substantial and complex cases where large sums are involved and which are comparable with High Court cases, unless the appeal involves an important general point of law, requiring clarification. They will also continue to consider seeking costs where the appellant has misused the tribunal procedure—for example in frivolous or vexatious cases, or where the appellant has failed to appear or to be represented at a mutually arranged hearing without sufficient explanation, or where the appellant has first produced at a hearing relevant evidence which ought properly to have been disclosed at an earlier stage and which could have saved public funds had it been produced timeously.

The new penalty provisions and right of appeal to the value added tax tribunals have made no change to this policy. Customs and Excise, with the agreement of the Council on Tribunals, consider that appeals against penalties imposed under section 13 of the Finance Act 1985 on the grounds that a person has evaded VAT and his conduct has involved dishonesty fall to be considered as being comparable with High Court cases. Where such appeals are unsuccessful, Customs and Excise will normally seek an award of costs.

In all cases the question whether or not costs should be awarded will, of course, remain entirely within the discretion of the tribunal concerned and the amount of any such award will be fixed either by that tribunal, or by the High Court, as provided by tribunal procedure rules.

Customs and Excise, in consultation with the Council on Tribunals, will continue to keep their policy under carefull scrutiny.

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has considered the fifth report of the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments in regard to the Value Added Tax (Repayment Supplement) Regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Yes. I recognise the concern expressed by the Committee and by my hon. Friends the Members for Stafford (Mr. Cash), for Newark (Mr. Alexander) and for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) who entered a prayer against the regulations, that the position of the taxpayer should be fully protected by law, and that there may be room for doubt whether in their present form the regulations achieve this objective. I have therefore authorised Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to revoke Statutory Instrument 1986 No. 909 and to lay before the House today new regulations which are based on objective criteria to establish the dates of the relevant events.

EC (Budget Council)

Mrs. McCurley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statememt on the latest meeting of the European Economic Community Budget Council.

Mr. Brooke: The Budget Council met in Brussels on 21-22 July. I served as chairman and my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary represented the United Kingdom.

The Council discussed the proposals put forward by the Commission in its preliminary draft budget for 1987. No agreement was reached, and the Council will meet again on 8-9 September with a view to establishing a draft budget for 1987.

Income Tax

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to the reply to the hon. Member for Kensington, *Official Report*, 3 June 1986, column *433* what is his estimate of the amount by which the income tax base was reduced in 1985-86 on account of all the income tax reliefs listed in the 1986 public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The reliefs listed in the 1986 Public Expenditure White Paper reduced the 1985-86 income tax base by approximately £100 billion. This estimate excludes reliefs (such as capital allowances) used in arriving at net profits for Schedule D, and personal allowances for individuals who are not on Inland Revenue records because their incomes are below the tax thresholds.

Taxation

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was received in direct and indirect taxation from the cement industry in the latest financial year for which figures are available.

Mr. Brooke: Net VAT in the financial year 1985-86 from the cement industry was £58·4 million. A comparable figure for the yield of direct taxes from the cement industry could only be made available at disproportionate cost.

Incomes and Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing for those above and for those below pensionable age the estimated number of incomes and average of income tax payable by range of total income on the same basis as given in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 31 January 1983, *Official Report*, columns 20-22;

(2) whether he will bring up to date the information on the number of incomes and average rate of tax payable by range of total income published in the *Official Report* on 31 January 1983, column *20*, in reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby; and if he will add figures for incomes of £50,000 or more to three places of decimals.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest estimates based on a projection of the 1983-84 "Survey of Personal Incomes" are shown in the following tables. Total income includes only those forms of income liable to tax, before the deduction of personal allowances and reliefs.

Number of incomes and estimated average rates of income tax payable by range of total income 1986-87

(i) Single people or married couples both under 65

	Range of total income (lower limit) (£ per annum)													
	2,000	*3,000*	*4,000*	*5,000*	*6,000*	*7,000*	*8,000*	*9,000*	*10,000*	*12,000*	*15,000*	*20,000*	*30,000*	*50,000*
Single people														
Number of incomes (millions)	1·1	1·0	0·9	1·1	1·0	0·8	0·6	0·5	0·7	0·4	0·2	0·1	0·04	0·010
Income tax as proportion of total income (per cent.)	2·1	8·9	13·4	15·8	17·6	19·0	19·7	20·0	20·9	20·9	22·6	25·3	31·4	43·5
Married couples without wife's earned income														
Number of incomes (millions)	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·4	0·4	0·4	0·7	0·6	0·4	0·2	0·1	0·053
Income tax as proportion of total income (per cent.)	—	0·8	4·8	7·8	11·4	13·0	13·5	15·4	17·3	18·5	19·6	22·8	30·5	43·4
Married couples with wife's earned income														
Number of incomes (millions)	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·8	1·3	1·4	0·9	0·25	0·053
Income tax as proportion of total income (per cent.)	—	—	0·3	1·5	4·8	7·2	8·4	10·4	12·6	13·9	16·3	19·5	25·4	38·1

(ii) Single people or married couples over 65

	Range of total income (lower limit) (£ per annum)													
	2,000	*3,000*	*4,000*	*5,000*	*6,000*	*7,000*	*8,000*	*9,000*	*10,000*	*12,000*	*15,000*	*20,000*	*30,000*	*50,000*
Single people														
Number of incomes (millions)	0·41	0·40	0·24	0·17	0·11	0·11	0·04	0·05	0·06	0·05	0·05	0·03	0·01	0·004
Income tax as proportion of total income (per cent.)	0·1	5·1	10·2	13·7	15·8	17·7	19·1	20·5	22·6	23·7	25·0	28·2	35·2	49·3

	Range of total income (lower limit) (£ per annum)												
	2,000	3,000	4,000	5,000	6,000	7,000	8,000	9,000	10,000	12,000	15,000	20,000	30,000	50,000
Married couples without wife's earned income														
Number of incomes (millions)	0·04	0·15	0·25	0·19	0·11	0·09	0·06	0·03	0·03	0·04	0·04	0·03	0·02	0·006
Income tax as proportion of total income (per cent.)	—	—	0·6	5·0	8·8	11·3	13·0	16·0	18·9	20·7	22·5	26·1	34·0	45·5
Married couples with wife's earned income														
Number of incomes (millions)	0·01	0·04	0·08	0·09	0·06	0·07	0·08	0·05	0·07	0·08	0·07	0·06	0·02	0·006
Income tax as proportion of total income (per cent.)	—	—	0·2	1·1	4·0	5·2	7·6	9·4	15·1	17·5	19·9	22·6	29·8	40·3

Wife's Earned Income Allowance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will bring up to date the information concerning wife's earned income allowance published in the *Official Report* on 28 March 1983, *Official Report*, columns 59-60, in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Grimsby;

(2) whether he will bring up to date the information concerning the wife's earned income allowance published in the *Official Report* on 25 January 1983, *Official Report*, column *392* and on 8 March 1983, *Official Report*, column *340*, in reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby.

Mr. Norman Lamont: All married women with earned income benefit from the wife's earned income allowance; but many with small amounts, below the PAYE reporting limit, are not known to the Inland Revenue. Excluding there, thee are about 6·8 million earning wives on record, 4·0 million of whom pay tax. In a full year at 1986-87 income levels, the yield from abolishing the wife's earned income allowance would be around £3·5 billion. This estimate does not include tax that would become due if the allowance were withdrawn from those women not on Inland Revenue records. It is based on the assumption that the election for separate taxation of wife's earnings would no longer be available as otherwise nearly all two earner couples would benefit from the election, and the yield would be substantially reduced. Further information about the distribution of earning wives, by the couple's joint taxable income and by the wife's income, is given in the following tables.

Wives with earned income on Inland Revenue records by couple's joint taxable income, 1986-87*

Joint taxable income (£)	Wives not paying tax ('000s)	Wives paying tax ('000s)
(Lower limit)		
Nil or negative	300	0
	190	0
1,000	170	0
2,000	180	40
3,000	160	100
4,000	160	120
5,000	200	130
6,000	180	190
7,000	210	240
8,000	180	270
9,000	160	340
10,000	220	630
12,000	180	720
15,000	160	640
20,000	90	420
30,000	60	160
TOTAL	2,800	4,000

* Excluding self-employed wives making a net loss.

Wives with earned income on Inland Revenue records by wife's income, 1986-87*

Wife's income (£)	Number of wives ('000s)
(Lower limit)	
1	1,030
1,000	1,090
2,000	1,140
3,000	820
4,000	620
5,000	500
6,000	460
7,000	340
8,000	230
9,000	180
10,000	220
12,000	110
15,000	30
20,000	20
30,000	10
TOTAL	6,800

* Excluding self-employed wives making a net loss.

Personal Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the current financial year the amount of tax and full rate national insurance payable in the circumstances described in the answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 5 April 1984, *Official Report*, column *630*, and if he will include any credit from child benefit and single parent benefit in this and in the earlier years referred to.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information in the following table is based on estimates of average earnings for full time female employees, from all occupations, paid at adult rates.

£ per week

Percentage of average earnings	1978-79 100 per cent.	1978-79 75 per cent.	1984-85 100 per cent.	1984-85 75 per cent.	1986-87¶ 100 per cent.	1986-87¶ 75 per cent.
Gross earnings	59·70	44·80	121·40	91·10	139·70	104·80
*Single female parent**						
NIC†	3·88	2·91	10·92	8·20	12·57	9·43
Income tax‡	7·54	2·86	18·22	9·13	20·13	10·01
Total deductions	11·42	5·77	29·15	17·33	32·70	19·44
Child benefit‖	6·52	6·52	17·38	17·38	18·72	18·72
*Married female (sole earner)**						
NIC†	3·88	2·91	10·93	8·20	12·57	9·43
Income tax‡	1·85	—	6·65	—	7·11	—
Total deductions	5·73	2·91	17·58	8·20	19·68	9·43
Child benefit‖	5·14	5·14	13·26	13·26	14·14	14·14
*Married man (sole earner)**						
NIC†	3·88	2·91	10·93	8·20	12·57	9·43
Income tax‡	7·54	2·86	18·22	9·13	20·13	10·01
Total deductions	11·42	5·77	29·15	17·33	32·70	19·44
Child benefit‖	5·14	5·14	13·26	13·26	14·14	14·14

* With two children under 11.
† At the contracted-in rate.
‡ Including child tax allowances in 1978-79.
‖ Financial year average.
¶ Assuming that earnings increase by 7 per cent. from 1985-86 to 1986-87.

Mortgage Interest

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will bring up to date the information concerning the number of taxpayers qualifying for mortgage interest published in the *Official Report* on 25 July 1985, columns 727-28, in reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby;

(2) whether he will bring up to date the information concerning mortgage interest relief published in the *Official Report* on 18 July 1985, column *258*, in answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Revised aggregate figures for 1984, and estimates for 1985, are given in the table. The average cost of mortgage interest relief per mortgage for 1986-87 is estimated to be about £580. The mortgage interest rates assumed are those currently charged by the lender.

	Advances for all purposes net of repayments (A) £ million	*Gross advances for all purposes* (B) £ million	*Of which gross advances for dwellings* (C) £ million	*Total estimated purchase price of dwellings on which advances in C were made* (D) £ million	*C as per cent. of D* (E) per cent.
1984	*14,572*	*24,034*	*21,537*	*31,200*	*69·0*
1985	*14,321*	*26,223*	*23,038*	*33,100*	*69·6*

Sources: Financial Statistics—Table 7.6
Housing and Construction Statistics—Table 1.9 and 1.13

Following the introduction of the arrangements for giving mortgage interest relief at source from April 1983, it is no longer possible to estimate the distribution of mortgage interest relief from tax records (except for relief on mortgages outside the scope of MIRAS and relief given at rates in excess of the basic rate). Some estimates of the distribution of mortgage interest relief can be obtained from alternative sources, such as the family expenditure survey, but the sample sizes do not permit reliable estimates to made in the detail requested.

Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing his estimate of the proportion of revenue from taxation in the current financial year accounted for by taxes on capital, including non-domestic rates, and taxes on labour; and if he will provide similar estimates for 1956, 1966, 1976 and 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that the information the hon. Member requires is not available for financial years 1956-57, 1966-67 and 1986-87. However, tables 6·5 and 6.B.3 in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" provide some details of the budget forecast of revenues for 1986-87. Figures for taxes on capital and labour as a proportion of total taxes for 1976-77 and 1979-80 are given below along with figures for 1985-86, the latest year for which data is available.

Percentages

Financial year	*Taxes on capital*	*Taxes on labour*	*Other*	*Total*
1976-77	17·6	54·9	27·5	100·0
1979-80	18·9	49·2	31·9	100·0
1985-86	23·9	43·4	32·7	100·0

Taxes on capital include corporation tax, North sea taxes and royalties, income tax on investment income, surtax, capital gains tax, capital transfer tax and estate duty, development land tax, the betterment levy, and local authority non-domestic rates.

Taxes on labour include income tax on earned and self-employment income—including pensions, benefits to the unemployed, and statutory sick pay—employers' and employees' national insurance contributions and national insurance surcharge. The data for earlier years have been adjusted, to reflect the current arrangements for giving relief at source for life assurance premiums and mortgage interest, in order to produce a consistent series.

Taxation (Tobacco)

Mr. Dubs asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue from corporation tax he estimates will be lost to the Treasury in the current fiscal year as a result of the deduction from assessable profits of the tobacco companies contributing to the cost of the advertising campaign to publicise the law against the sale of cigarettes to children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that this information is not available.

Wife's Earnings Elections

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated number and cost of wife's earnings elections by range of income at 1986-87 income levels at current rates of taxation together with the total.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates are as follows:

Number and cost of wife's earnings elections in 1986-87

Range of joint total income (lower limit) £ per annum	*Number ('000s)*	*Cost (£ million)*
20,000	—	—
25,000	30	10
30,000	100	50
40,000	30	50
50,000	40	130
Total	200	240

Taxation (Benefits)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will bring up to date the information given in the reply dated 25 July 1985, *Official Report*, column *724*, to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on the taxable value of benefits subject to taxation under special rules; and if he will add (i) the estimated value of benefits not subject to such rules, (ii) the proportion by number and value of new private cars purchased by businesses of all kinds for the use of a nominated persons, (iii) the estimated value of cars so purchased and (iv) the estimate of the yield in tax on profits if all non-pecuniary benefits were disallowed as a business expense and made taxable in the hands of the recipient.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Provisional estimates for 1986-87 of the taxable values of benefits subject to taxation under special rules, are as follows:

	£ million
Company cars and car fuel available for private use	1,200
Accommodation	15
Vouchers, including luncheon vouchers	35
Cheap and interest-free loans	40
Private medical insurance	100

The taxable value of other benefits and expenses that is, those subject to taxation under the general rules) is provisionally estimated, for 1986-87, at £300 million.

So far as the details requested at (ii), (iii) and (iv) are concerned, I regret that insufficient information is centrally available on which to base estimates.

Pensions

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will bring up to date the information on the growth of life assurance pension schemes given in the answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 7 March 1984, *Official Report*, columns *581-82*, and if he will add figures for unit trusts and investment trusts together with his estimate of the gain in revenue to the Exchequer which would result from the ending of tax relief for pension schemes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information on the growth of life assurance and pension funds is published in "Financial Statistics", copies of which are in the Library. Tables are also included about unit trusts and investment trusts. The revenue effect of withdrawing reliefs from pension schemes would depend on the alternative tax regime adopted. Direct revenue costs of some of the components of these reliefs are given in table 2.24 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89" (Cmnd. 9702).

Principal Scientific Officers

Mr. Jackson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on the unification of payments of principal scientific officers in new unified grade 7; what payments are involved; and by what date the principal scientific officer grade will reach the maximum of the new unified grade.

Mr. Brooke: The Government's policy on extending unified grading in the Civil Service to principal level was announced on 26 July 1985 at column 776. Arrangements were then made to bring the 11,000 staff concerned,

including principal scientific officers, into the new structure. The benefits to staff, particularly PSOs, of the extension of unified grading in terms of enhanced career opportunities and substantial increases in pay are considerable. The grade 7 scale will ultimately provide a pay increase of almost £2,000 for former PSOs on the maximum of their scale.

With such substantial sums involved for a large group of staff — there are more than 2,000 PSOs in Government Departments and as many again in non-departmental public bodies—it was important to devise arrangements which would phase in the considerable cost. The assimilation arrangements for former PSOs provide for them to be fully assimilated to the pay of the new unified grade by January 1990. The same approach was adopted for other grades entering the new grade 7, but the time taken varies according to the size of the overall increase in pay.

As part of this year's Civil Service pay award for scientists, the Government have already agreed to improve substantially the rate of assimilation to the final grade 7 pay scale for former PSOs by awarding an additional £500 for those on the maximum of the scale and £400 for those on other points over and above the general 6 per cent. offer for other Civil Service grades.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to introduce a procedure whereby members of the public can complain to an independent authority about the behaviour of officers working in the Department of Customs and Excise.

Mr. Brooke: No. I consider to be adequate the well established procedures for considering complaints against actions by Customs and Excise staff through Members of Parliament or the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the procedure and who must be present when the Post Office opens private mail at the request of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mr. Brooke: Postal staff are required to produce to the appropriate Customs officer any imported mail which the officer wishes to examine in the course of his statutory duties. When mail is opened both Customs and Post Office staff would normally be present.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer under what circumstances and by what authority Her Majesty's Customs and Excise may ask the Post Office to open private mail.

Mr. Brooke: Customs and Excise staff may ask the Post Office to open mail in any circumstances where they consider it necessary to ensure that any duty or tax is properly assessed and charged or to prevent the unlawful importation of prohibited or restricted goods. The legal authority for this is the Postal Parcels (Customs and Excise) Regulations 1986.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library a copy of directives issued to officers of the Department of Customs and Excise relating to the detention of imported articles.

Mr. Brooke: No.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what procedure is available to members of the public to claim compensation from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; and under what circumstances compensation is normally paid.

Mr. Brooke: Members of the public may claim compensation from HM Customs and Excise either directly or by means of a civil action in the courts. The main area where compensation may be paid is in cases where the Department accepts liability for causing damage to goods as a direct result of actions by the Department and where, for example, the goods were themselves not prohibited or used to conceal prohibited goods.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what safeguards exist over the use by officers in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise of the power to request the Post Office to open private mail.

Mr. Brooke: Customs officers are empowered to request the Post Office to open private mail to protect the revenue or to enforce import prohibitions. They are required to respect the privacy of personal correspondence. Officers are instructed to act solely within their legal powers. Allegations of abuse may be pursued through internal disciplinary procedures, complaint to MPs or the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, or civil action in the courts.

Obscenity

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in the light of the judgment of the European Court in the Conegate case, case 121/85, and the abandonment of the case against Gay's The Word bookshop, he intends to introduce legislation to amend the law on the prohibition of the importation of indecent or obscene articles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: In the light of the judgment of the European Court, Customs and Excise will apply the import prohibition on indecent or obscene articles in line with relevant domestic legislation, both in respect of imports from the European Community and those from elsewhere. Whether United Kingdom legislation requires amendment will be considered in the light of experience of the new arrangements.

Government Supplies and Contractors

Mr. Straw asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what procedures or machinery exist to monitor adherence to contractual terms by Government suppliers and contractors; if any firm has ever lost a contract with a Government Department, or been removed or suspended from an approved list maintained by a Government Department, or has been penalised in any other way, through its failure to comply with *(a)* any contractual term, *(b)* the term relating to the Race Relations Act 1976 and *(c)* any other statutory duty.

Mr. Brooke: The Department letting a contract is responsible for monitoring adherence to contractual terms and for taking any action which would be necessary. Central records are not kept and the information sought could not be obtained without disproportionate expenditure.

Goods and Services (Contracts)

Mr. Straw asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Departments maintain approved lists of contractors or suppliers; how many firms appear on each approved list maintained by each Department; which firms appear on each approved list maintained by each Department; what policy each Department pursues in relation to the frequency with which it reviews its approved lists and in respect of admissions to or exclusions from the lists.

Mr. Brooke: All major purchasing Departments maintain approved lists of contractors or suppliers. No records are kept centrally, and policy in respect of frequency of review and admissions to and exclusions from the lists are matters for individual Departments. There is, however, a standard list of questions dealing with financial and general information.

Mr. Straw asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the 1,000 largest public supply contracts entered into by all nationalised industries where the contract was entered into with a private sector organisation, in the last five years for which figures are available, naming in each case the Government Department and the private sector concern, as well as the nature of the product or service supplied.

Mr. Brooke: This information is not held centrally. Purchasing by nationalised industries is a matter for the industries themselves.

Mr. Straw asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the 1,000 largest public supply contracts entered into by all Government Departments where the contract was entered into with a private sector organisation, in the last five years for which figures are available, naming in each case the Government Department and the private sector concern, as well as the nature of the product or service supplied.

Mr. Brooke: This information is not held centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Straw asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount spent in respect of each Department on the acquisition of goods and services expressed in terms of net contract prices; and how many individual contracts comprised that volume of purchasing for each of the last five years for which figures are available, giving both the overall totals for each Department and the totals disaggregated into the following categories: *(a)* capital and revenue expenditure, *(b)* construction and non-construction projects, *(c)* goods and services purchased from United Kingdom-based companies and non-United Kingdom-based companies and *(d)* goods and services purchased from the private sector and from other parts of the public sector.

Mr. Brooke: Information in the form requested is not available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost. Information on new contracts let for goods and services in the calendar years 1983 and 1984, excluding construction contracts and Ministry of Defence warlike expenditure, is as tabulated below. Similar figures for earlier years are not available.

£ million

Department	*1983 Total*	*1983 Percentage Overseas**	*1984 Total*	*1984 Percentage Overseas**
Ministry of Defence	7,897	6·8	8,351	5·4
Crown Suppliers	353	2·9	358	2·0
Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency	204	36·7	227	25·8
Her Majesty's Stationery Office	212	20·2	187	18·0
Northern Ireland Departments	57	3·1	107	2·0
Home Office	76	7·4	107	5·0
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	93	0·8	95	1·1
Department of Transport	62	1·2	88	1·0
Department of National Savings	65	—	76	—
Inland Revenue	67	—	64	—
Scottish Office	59	14·2	61	15·5
Department of Health and Social Security	43	5·6	51	2·2
Department of Trade and Industry	65	74·2	48	50·0
Central Office of Information	40	0·5	46	1·4
Royal Mint	30	7·8	44	9·8
Welsh Office	31	9·0	42	5·4
Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce	41	—	39	—
Customs and Excise	2	30·9	37	0·5
Department of Environment	22	2·3	30	1·7
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	20	7·5	24	3·8
Overseas Development Administration	20	25·6	21	4·5
Department of Energy	48	1·5	18	0·4
Department of Employment	3	—	3	—
Others	2	—	4	—
Totals	9,472	7·9	10,128	5·9

* Overseas purchases are those made abroad, or from agents in the United Kingdom; or where most of the content is known to be foreign.

Income Tax (Refunds)

Mr. Higgins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the Inland Revenue does not provide taxpayers receiving cheques covering refunds of income tax with information on that tax year and other details to enable them to identify the period to which any refund relates.

Mr. Lawson: It is the Inland Revenue's normal practice to accompany refund payments with a computation and explanation. If my right hon. Friend has a specific case in mind where this has not happened, perhaps he would like to send me details.

Crown Estates Commissioners

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the Crown Estates Commissioners have met their obligations in respect of the land left to them by the late Colonel McEwan in the village of Kippen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The title arising from this bequest by the late Colonel McEwan contained no restrictions on the future management of the estate. I am satisfied that the Crown Estate Commissioners have met their obligations in their management of the land.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many requests for transfer to mainland police forces have been made since 1 January to the latest available date by officers based at Antrim Royal Ulster Constabulary station.

Mr. Scott: During the period 1 January 1986 to 11 July 1986 no recruitment inquiries have been received by the RUC from GB forces about any member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary based at Antrim Royal Ulster Constabulary station.

Drugs

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were in prison for drug misuse in each of the past five years.

Mr. Scott: The figures are as follows:

	Number
1981	9
1982	14
1983	19
1984	6
1985	10
1986	7

These figures include persons imprisoned for possession of drugs, trafficking and forgery of prescriptions to obtain drugs

Security

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement regarding security procedures in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: The Government remain committed to sustained effort under the rule of law designed to achieve the eradication of terrorism in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the security statistics for the first six months of the current year are now available together with details of persons charged with terrorist-type offences and convictions for scheduled offences for the year.

Mr. Tom King [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: Yes, the statistics together with those since 1971 are as follows:

Statistics on Security
Part I
Statistics of Terrorist Activity
Yearly totals for 1971-1985
Six monthly totals for January-June 1986

Statistics for Terrorist Activity comprise the following:

(i) Number of shooting incidents.
((ii) Number of explosions.
(iii) Number of bombs neutralised.
(iv) Weight of explosives in bombs and devices neutralised.
(v) Number of armed robberies and amount stolen.
(vi) Number of malicious fires.
(vii) Number of deaths and injuries to RUC/RUC "R" Army/UDR and civilians.

Part II
Statistics of Security Forces' Activity
Yearly totals for 1971-1985
Six monthly totals for January-June 1986

Statistics for Security Force Activity comprise the following:

(i) Number of houses searched.
(ii) Number of weapons, pounds of explosives and rounds of ammunition found.
(iii) Number of people charged with terrorist type offences (murder, attempted murder, explosives offences, firearms offences, armed robbery and other offences relating to the security situation (eg arson, membership of an illegal organisation etc)).

Part III
Statistics of Persons Convicted of Scheduled Offences
Six monthly totals for January-June 1986

Statistics on Security
Part I—Statistics of Terrorist Activity
Yearly Figures: 1971-74

	1971	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*
Shooting incidents*	1,756	10,628	5,018	3,206
Explosions	1,022	1,382	978	685
Bombs neutralised	493	471	542	428
Weight of explosives in lbs†				
Explosions	10,972	47,462	47,472	46,435
Neutralised	3,001	19,978	32,450	27,094
Armed robberies	437	1,931	1,215	1,231
Amount stolen	303,787	790,687	612,015	572,951
Malicious fires‡‖	—	—	587	636
Deaths				
Civilian	115	322	171	166
Army/UDR	48	129	66	35
RUC/RUC "R"	11	17	13	15
Injuries				
Civilian	1,838	3,813	1,812	1,680
Army/UDR	390	578	548	483
RUC/RUC "R"	315	485	291	235

* Figures in brackets refer to shots heard only and not included in the total.
† Estimated weight only.
‡ No figures for April-June 1981.
‖ Consolidated figures not available for earlier years.

Yearly Figures: 1975-78

	1975	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*
Shooting incidents*	1,803	1,908	1,081	755
Explosions	399	766	366	455
Bombs neutralised	236	426	169	178
Weight of explosives in lbs†	13,753	17,596	2,839	5,343
Explosions neutralised	11,159	16,252	2,188	5,860·5
Armed robberies	1,201	813	591	422
Amount stolen	572,105	545,497	446,988	232,650
Malicious fires‡‖	248	453	432	269
Deaths				
Civilian	216	245	69	50
Army/UDR	20	29	29	21
RUC/RUC "R"	11	23	14	10
Injuries				
Civilian	2,044	2,162	1,027	548
Army/UDR	167	264	188	135
RUC/RUC "R"	263	303	183	302

* Figures in brackets refer to shots heard only and not included in the total.
† Estimated weight only.
‡ No figures for April-June 1981.
‖ Consolidated figures not available for earlier years.

Yearly Figures: 1979-82

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*
Shooting incidents*	728	642	815 (327)	382 (165)
Explosions	422	280	398	219
Bombs neutralised	142	120	131	113
Weight of exlosives in lbs†	11,181	9,059	9,261	11,199
Explosions neutralised	4,530	6,405	9,168	7,300
Armed robberies	434	412	587	580
Amount stolen	568,359	496,825	854,929	1,392,202
Malicious fires‡‖	315	275	536	499
Deaths				
Civilian	51	50	57	57
Army/UDR	48	16	23	28
RUC/RUC "R"	14	9	21	12
Injuries				
Civilian	557	530	878	328
Army/UDR	153	77	140	98
RUC/RUC "R"	165	194	332	99

* Figures in brackets refer to shots heard only and not included in the total.
† Estimated weight only.
‡ No figures for April-June 1981.
‖ Consolidated figures not available for earlier years.

Yearly Figures 1983—June 1986

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*January-June 1986*
Shooting indidents*	290(134)	230(104)	196(41)	131(49)
Explosions	266	193	148	60
Bombs neutralised	101	55	67	23
Weight of exlosives in lbs†	6,923	8,545	11,711	4,956
Explosions neutralised	7,503	6,114	7,715	4,688
Armed robberies	622	627	459	301
Amount stolen	830,258	701,903	655,690	538,507
Malicious fires‡‖	528	840	740	583
Deaths				
Civilian	44	36	25	14
Army/UDR	15	19	6	7
RUC/RUC "R"	18	9	23	6
Injuries				
Civilian	280	513	468	303
Army/UDR	88	86	33	28
RUC/RUC "R"	142	267	415	249

* Figures in brackets refer to shots heard only and not included in the total.
† Estimated weight only.
‡ No figures for April-June 1981.
‖ Consolidated figures not available for earlier years.

Statistics on Security
Part II—Statistics of Security Forces' Activity
Year Figures: 1971-1986

	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Houses searched*	17,262	36,617	74,556	71,914	30,092	34,939	20,724	15,462	6,452
Finds									
Firearms	717	1,264	1,595	1,260	825	837	590	400	301
Ammunition (rounds)	157,944	183,410	187,399	147,202	73,604	70,306	52,091	43,512	46,280
Explosives	2,748	41,488	38,418	26,120	11,565	21,714	3,809	2,108	1,996

* Includes occupied and unoccupied houses searched.

Persons charged with terrorist type offences†

	31 July-31 December 1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Murder	13	71	77	138	120	131	60	45
Attempted Murder	16	85	76	88	121	135	79	39
Firearms Offences	242	631	545	460	353	301	225	177
Explosives Offences	86	236	161	100	215	146	79	40
Theft Act	111	186	239	314	188	203	151	159
Other	63	205	276	97	279	392	249	210
Total	531	1,414	1,374	1,197	1,276	1,308	843	670

† These figures are not available in consolidated form for earlier years.

Part II—Continued

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	Jan-June 1986
Houses searched*	4,106	4,104	4,045	1,497	1,282	812	572
Finds							
Firearms	203	409	317	200	197	238	125
Ammunition	28,078	47,127	41,452	32,451	17,211	13,748	15,757
Explosives	1,810	7,536	5,066	3,762	8,534	7,373	1,244

* Includes occupied and unoccupied houses searched.

Persons charged with terrorist type offences†

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985 Jan-June	1986
Murder	63	48	50	75	41	24	5
Attempted Murder	59	72	96	60	68	52	20
Firearms Offences	112	155	173	150	155	105	67
Explosives Offences	39	39	41	48	21	37	6
Theft Act	128	158	130	119	94	65	35
Other	149	446	196	161	149	239	235
Total	550	918	686	613	528	522	368

† These figures are not available in consolidated form for earlier years.

Convictions for Scheduled Offences—1 January to 1 July 1986

	Number convicted	Non-custodial sentence	Young Offenders Centre Training Schools	less than 5 years	5 years and less than 7 years	7 years and less than 10 years	10 years and less than 15 years	15 years and less than 20 years	20 years and over	Life
Murder	21	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	20
Attempted murder	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0
Conspiracy to murder	11	2	0	0	1	1	4	3	0	0
Manslaughter	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Causing grievous bodily harm	7	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assault occasioning grievous bodily harm	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Causing explosion	3	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0

	Number convicted	Non-custodial sentence	Young Offenders Centre Training Schools	less than 5 years	5 years and less than 7 years	7 years and less than 10 years	10 years and less than 15 years	15 years and less than 20 years	20 years and over	Life
Possessing explosives with intent	8	3	0	1	0	1	3	0	0	0
Other explosives offences	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possessing a firearm with intent	23	11	5	2	0	3	2	0	0	0
Possessing a firearm	13	6	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	0
Carrying a firearm with intent	17	10	4	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
Other major firearms offences	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Robbery	91	43	15	27	6	0	0	0	0	0
Aggravated robbery	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Membership of illegal organisations	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unlawful collection of information	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kidnapping and false imprisonment	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Contributing to resources of a proscribed organisation	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hijacking	27	16	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arson	32	14	10	6	2	0	0	0	0	0
Petrol bomb offences	34	19	11	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Criminal damage	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assisting offenders	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Withholding information	4	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possessing prohibited articles	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common Law riot	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	327	149	54	59	19	6	13	7	0	20

Note: Where a person has been convicted of more than one offence only the most serious or that which received the longest sentence is recorded in the statistics.

Police Complaints System

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any proposals for the reform of the police complaints system in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: A proposal for a draft order in Council (together with an explanatory document) has been published today, setting out the Government's proposals to reform the police complaints and discipline system in Northern Ireland.

The proposed system would follow closely that which exists in the rest of the United Kingdom, and would be based on the same principle of accountability; police officers, whose training and experience best fit them for the task, would carry out complaints investigations, but subject to the guidance, control and supervision of an independent public authority whose task would be to ensure that the investigation had been carried out thoroughly, effectively, and efficiently.

The central feature of the proposals will be the establishment of the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland; it will have extensive supervisory powers to control and direct the conduct of police complaints investigations. These powers mirror precisely those which have been given to the Police Complaints Authority in England and Wales.

In addition, the system in Northern Ireland will be supplemented by measures which give the Secretary of State and the Police Authority powers to direct the commission to supervise the investigation of matters not the subject of a formal complaint but which indicate that a police officer may have committed a criminal or disciplinary offence in cases which affect or appear to affect the public interest. The commission will therefore be able to exercise its supervisory powers in respect of the conduct of investigations into these matters.

I consider it essential that the system for handling complaints both commands the confidence of the public and is fair to the police themselves. I believe that these proposals represent a very considerable step forward and that, with the establishment of the commission, we shall have an independent organisation which can and will ensure that complaints are fully and fairly investigated. I firmly believe that this will serve to enhance the relationship between the public and the police and will foster a climate of mutual respect and co-operation in which the police will be better placed to protect the interests of the community by upholding the law and dealing more effectively with terrorism and crime.

I have arranged for copies of the proposal to be placed in the Library of the House and have made arrangements to consult interested parties about the proposals for reform. I look forward to receiving comments and views during the consultation period following publication of the proposal and I would intend bringing forward the appropriate legislation in due course.

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will give separately for magistrates' courts and Crown Courts for the first six months of the current year the number of cases involving non-scheduled offences in which pleas of not guilty were entered; in how many of these cases verdicts of not guilty were returned; and in how many of these cases trial was by jury;

(2) how many persons were charged with non-scheduled offences, how many were charged with scheduled offences and how many persons were found not guilty of all or some of the offences with which they were charged in the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: This statistical information is not yet available. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the IRA of Keiran McCann in South Tyrone on 22 January 1976; and if he will give details;

(2) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of James McCaughey in South Tyrone on 17 March 1976; and if he will give details;

(3) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of Patrick Barnard in South Tyrone on 17 March 1976; and if he will give details;

(4) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of Andrew Small in South Tyrone on 17 March 1976; and if he will give details;

(5) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by Protestants of Joseph Kelly in South Tyrone on 17 March 1976; and if he will give details;

(6) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the IRA of Ronnie Crooks in South Tyrone on 23 April 1976; and if he will give details;

(7) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the IRA of Eddie Stewart in South Tyrone on 29 April 1976; and if he will give details;

(8) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the IRA of Stanley Arthurs in South Tyrone on 3 May 1976; and if he will give details;

(9) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the IRA of Thomas Henry Evans in Fermanagh on 15 May 1976; and if he will give details;

(10) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the IRA of Francis Joseph Kettyles in Fermanagh on 15 May 1976; and if he will give details;

(11) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the IRA of Henry Francis Keys in Fermanagh on 15 May 1976; and if he will give details;

(12) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the IRA of Kenneth Nelson in South Tyrone on 16 May 1976; and if he will give details;

(13) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the IRA of Robert Dobson in South Tyrone on 17 May 1976; and if he will give details;

(14) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Thomas Dobson in South Tyrone on 17 May 1976; and if he will give details;

(15) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of John McCambridge in South Tyrone on 22 May 1976; and if he will give details;

(16) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Alan Ferguson in Fermanagh on 5 June 1976; and if he will give details:

(17) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Gordon Liddle in Fermanagh on 17 July 1976; and if he will give details:

(18) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Stanley Adams in South Tyrone on 28 October 1976; and if he will give details:

(19) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Joseph Scott in South Tyrone on 3 December 1976; and if he will give details:

(20) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Martin Walsh in Fermanagh on 9 January 1977; and if he will give details.

Mr. Scott: The information on these murders will be available in the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as information on these murders has been obtained from the Royal Ulster Constabulary. My letter will cover all questions tabled so far.

Modern Language School Assistants

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken, in the light of the arrangement between the United Kingdom Government and other EEC Governments with regard to the exchange of modern language school assistants, to arrive at an arrangement with the Government of Ireland for the provision of Irish language school teaching assistants in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Blackwater Drainage Scheme

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the latest estimated cost of the river Blackwater drainage scheme; and what the effects have been of delays in the work programme experienced during 1985 and 1986, and the need for additional bank protection on reaches already completed.

Dr. Boyson: The latest estimated cost of works in Northern Ireland on the river Blackwater drainage scheme

is £16·4 million. The alterations in the work programme have only marginally affected overall costs and, given reasonable weather conditions, the project will be back on programme in the autumn. A severe flood did cause erosion to newly excavated banks on the Oona tributary to the Blackwater. These have now been repaired.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he intends to initiate a new cost-benefit assessment of the river Blackwater drainage scheme in the light of the revised cost-benefit procedures adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in respect of arterial land drainage schemes in England and Wales.

Dr. Boyson: No.

Arterial Land Drainage

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will revise the methodology for the cost-benefit appraisal of arterial land drainage projects; and if he will make it his policy to make summary cost-benefit information publicly available on request.

Dr. Boyson: The methodology is under review. The extent to which information may be made available will be considered on completion of the review.

Sectarian Intimidation

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of sectarian intimidation have been reported to the Royal Ulster Constabulary during the month of July.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Housing Executive tenants have sought transfer of housing as a result of sectarian attacks and intimidation; and how many have been rehoused.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but I understand from the chairman that the information is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Irish Language

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many primary schools in Northern Ireland include the Irish language as a teaching subject; and what percentage that is of the maintained sector and of the primary school population as a whole.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the proposed date for publication of the Department of Education and Science's second language guidelines; and if those guidelines will cover the teaching of the Irish language in primary schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of pupils studying the Irish language in primary schools in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not available.

Foreign Languages

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many in-service courses per year have been organised at primary and post-primary level for *(a)* teachers of Irish, *(b)* teachers of French and *(c)* teachers of German since 1965.

Dr. Mawhinney: The following is the available information for such courses in Northern Ireland:

	Irish			*French*			*German*		
Academic year	*Primary*	*Post-primary*	*Either*	*Primary*	*Post-primary*	*Either*	*Primary*	*Post-primary*	*Either*
1978-79	3	6	4	—	5	—	—	—	—
1979-80	3	5	—	—	10	1	—	1	—
1980-81	3	7	1	1	10	—	—	1	—
1981-82	8	6	1	1	5	—	—	2	—
1982-83	9	4	—	1	8	—	—	2	—
1983-84	5	1	—	—	3	—	—	4	—
1984-85	—	5	—	—	7	—	—	5	—
1985-86	—	—	—	—	5	—	—	3	—

Orange Order Marches

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what quantity of concrete-filled barrels was supplied by the Department of the Environment to the organisers of Orange Order demonstrations in the constituency of Newry and Armagh during the past month; and what was the cost of such materials.

Mr. Needham: None.

Newry (Army Patrols)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy regarding Army units patrolling the town of Newry.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

RUC (Catering Establishments)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if Crown exemptions from the health

regulations are claimed at all Royal Ulster Constabulary catering establishments; and what representations he has received from police staff associations about removing this.

Mr. Scott: The Police Authority for Northern Ireland as the body responsible for providing a catering service for the Royal Ulster Constabulary does not claim exemption for health regulations in respect of RUC catering establishments.

Michael Tighe (Tapes)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the names of all those who have had responsibility for safeguarding the tapes recorded in the shed where Michael Tighe died in 1982 in County Armagh.

Mr. Scott: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave on 7 July 1986 at column *84*.

DEFENCE

Plessey—GEC

Mr. Neil Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assessment he has made of the effect on competition in the provision of defence electronic equipment of the proposed takeover of the Plessey Company by GEC; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what changes he envisages in his Department's procurement policy if the proposed takeover of the Plessey Company by GEC proceeds;

(3) if his Department expects to put out more contracts to foreign suppliers in order to maintain competitive tendering in the defence field if the Plessey Company is taken over by GEC.

(4) what effect the proposed takeover of the Plessey Company by GEC will have on research and development in the defence field.

Mr. Lee: My Department, as a major customer of both GEC and Plessey, has given evidence to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the proposed merger of GEC and Plessey. The commission has recently reported its findings to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who will publish the report in due course. It would be inappropriate to comment further on these matters at this stage.

Mr. Neil Thorne: asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what percentage of land tactical communications systems are currently supplied to his Department by Plessey Company and GEC;

(2) what percentage of naval communications equipment is currently supplied to his Department by Plessey Company and GEC.

Mr. Lee: It is not our practice to release information of this sort for reasons of commercial confidentiality. The Monopolies and Megers Commission has submitted its report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The commission has a duty to take into account all circumstances relevant to a merger of which market shares might be one aspect. My right hon. Friend is considering the commission's report and will be making a statement as soon as is practicable.

Community Programme Schemes

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals exist to introduce community programme schemes provided by his Department.

Mr. Lee: Following consultation with the Property Services Agency, a number of tasks have been identified on the defence estate which may be suitable for work within the community programme. Three schemes have been approved, two at Chatham and one on Salisbury Plain, and others are currently under consideration.

Nimrod Aircraft (Operational Training Flight)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average cost of a Nimrod training flight of the type used for the despatch of spares to Virgin Challenger; and at what level of command arrangements for such flights are agreed.

Mr. Freeman: The cost of Nimrod operational training flights depends upon the duration of the flight. The hourly cost, at current price is £5,820 per hour. In accordance with standing instructions such flights are first approved by group headquarters.

Chile

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence what contact there has been with representatives of the Chilean armed forces by United Kingdom defence personnel in Chile since November 1984.

Mr. Freeman: We have had formal diplomatic relations with Chile since 1980, including a defence element. UK defence personnel have regular contact with representatives of the Chilean armed forces, both in Chile and the United Kingdom.

Service Training

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence, in the last five years, how many service personnel have collapsed, or been injured, and subsequently died when undergoing training; what were the circumstances in each case; on how many occasions inquiries were held; and how frequently training officers were reprimanded.

Mr. Freeman: I shall write to the right hon. Member.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what advice has been issued to training officers regarding men taking strenuous exercise when wearing wet suits in hot weather.

Mr. Freeman: Divers in the armed services are required to undertake strenuous exercises in dry suits in order to simulate conditions and to build stamina and character. Rigorous standards of physical fitness are maintained both prior to and during training, which is conducted with first aid-trained supervisors present throughout. Article 6155 of the naval diving manual gives advice on heat illness, its prevention and first aid treatment. In addition, every Army Physical Training Corps instructor is issued with a comprehensive aide memoire which includes a section on "Heat Illness". This illustrates the two main types of heart illness, heat stroke and heat exhaustion. It also gives guidance on how to recognise the symptoms of both types and how they should be immediately treated until the casualty can receive qualified medical assistance.

Royal Ordnance plc

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any talks are taking place between his Department and Trafalgar House plc about a possible purchase of Royal Ordnance plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence earlier today.

Mr. J. Kay (Pension)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the application for life commutation of pension by Mr. J. Kay of 1 Horn Lane, Brixton, Devon CPO (OPS) (M) Kay J. D066135J.

Mr. Freeman: I shall write to the hon. Member shortly.

Dr. Kurt Waldheim

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many officials of his Department are currently engaged on the search of records relating to British prisoners of war interrogated by Dr. Kurt Waldheim and German army group E during world war II; if he will take steps to increase the resources devoted to this search to a level which will permit a statement to be made on the outcome before the House rises for the summer Adjournment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Up to 12 officials from the Ministry of Defence are involved in various aspects of the search: these resources are adequate but it is unlikely that the search will be complete before the House rises.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the manpower strength of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its reserve, as between full-time, part-time, male and female operatives on 30 June.

Mr. Freeman: Figures for 30 June are not yet available. Figures as at 31 May 1986 are as follows:

	Full time	*Part time*	*Total*
Male Officers	86	182	268
Female Officers	10	10	20
Servicemen	2,440	3,077	5,517
Servicewomen	190	546	736

Northern Ireland (Force Levels)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the manpower strength of the British Army in Northern Ireland giving details of the number of operatives for the following categories *(a)* Ulster Defence Regiment, *(b)* Regular British Army and *(c)* British Territorial Army on 30 June 1985.

Mr. Freeman: I assume the hon. Member's question meant to refer to figures for 30 June 1986. These figures are not yet available. The figures for 31 May 1986 are as follows:

	Number
Ulster Defence Regiment	6,541
Regular Army	10,161
Territorial Army	*3,550

* as at 31 March 1986.

The figures for the Ulster Defence Regiment include both full time and part-time soldiers. Soldiers of the Territorial Army are not used in support of the RUC in counter-terrorist operations.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement as to the range of military facilities available on the Falkland Islands for use by the United States of America.

Mr. Freeman: We maintain a garrison in the Falkland Islands to ensure there is no repetition of the events of 1982. The garrison has no wider purpose and there are no plans to make any military facilities on the islands available to the United States of America.

DROPS Equipment

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations his officials had with representatives of the Irish Army who had in use the DROPS equipment manufactured by T. T. Boughton Ltd. before excluding it from trials for the British armed forces contract.

Mr. Lee: None. I understand the Irish Army vehicle was used in substantially different roles to that envisaged for the British Army's DROPS requirements.

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he hopes to make a decision on the DROPS contract.

Mr. Lee: Later this year.

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Defence what approximate value he estimates is to be placed on the DROPS contract for the British armed forces.

Mr. Lee: The main DROPS production contract has not yet been placed and is still subject to competitive tendering. Overall the DROPS programme costs are expected to be of the order of £250 million.

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish correspondence between his hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey (Mr. Pattie) and T. T. Boughton Ltd. on 22 May 1984.

Mr. Lee: I have no plans to do so. It is not our practice to publish departmental correspondence of a commercially confidential nature.

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Defence what were the qualifications of the consultants who were employed to evaluate the DROPS proposals; and what was the extent of their experience in vehicle evaluation.

Mr. Lee: EASAMS Ltd. provided management consultancy support in the DROPS competition to the

Department's procurement staff, who retained responsibility throughout for the direction of the work and all decisions. EASAMS had undertaken a variety of assignments previously for the Department, including in particular ones related to the services' logistic task and vehicle requirements. They had no commercial links with the competing firms or the industry generally.

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Defence why T.T. Boughton Ltd. was excluded from the trial for the contract for DROPS equipment.

Mr. Lee: Competitive proposals for DROPS main contractorship were submitted by 11 firms: six of them were eliminated in the first stage of the competition evaluation. Messrs Boughtons succeeded in reaching the final short list. Subsequently their proposals and those of two other competing firms were judged to have less merit than those of the two contractors selected to provide equipment for the subsequent trials and evaluations.

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now set up an inquiry into the exclusion of certain companies from the trial for DROPS.

Mr. Lee: No. Defence Ministers and senior officials have undertaken a thorough examination of complaints and assertions about the DROPS competition over the last three years. On each occasion the inquiries have failed to provide any evidence that the equipments proposed were not given every consideration or that the choice of equipment to take part in the subsequent competition trials was not made fairly and competently.

Ministry of Defence Police

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is now in a position to publish the Broadbent report on the Ministry of Defence police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: 1. I welcome Sir Ewen Broadbent's report which has today been published as Cmnd. 9853.

2. Of the report's 21 recommendations, 17 are accepted, as follows:

(a) it is the Government's intention that there should be a Ministry of Defence Police Bill and that this be included in the legislative programme as soon as possible (recommendations (i), (ii), (iv) and (ix) (part)).

(b) the proposed review of the arrangements for escorting road convoys is being carried out (recommendations (iii) and (viii)).

(c) seaward protection units and dog detachments will be retained (recommendation (vi)).

(d) the number of police support units will be kept to a minimum (recommendation (vii)).

(e) an MOD police committee will be appointed on the lines and with the tasks proposed. The secretariat has been strengthened and will serve the police committee (recommendations (ix) (part) and (xvi)).

(f) there will be a single dedicated cell to carry out staff inspections throughout the whole of the force on the basis proposed and there will be periodic inspections by HMCICs (recommendations (xii) and (xiii)).

(g) the budget approach is accepted, but in working out the details it will be necessary to reconcile the chief constable's needs with those of line managers who have security responsibilities, and budgets of their own. Work is in hand. (Recommendation (xv)).

(h) the need for amplification of existing instructions and a closer definition of the roles of commanding officers, senior security officers and senior police officers is accepted (recommendation (xvii)).

(i) the police staff associations will have the right to make representations to the MOD police committee and staff facilities and arrangements for consultation have been revised on the lines recommended (recommendation (xviii)).

(j) the need for comprehensive training in Scottish practice and law is accepted. On training generally, the aim will be to make the most cost-effective use of Home Department's facilities where appropriate (recommendations (xix) and (xx)).

(k) the provision of MDP services to non-MOD bodies will be reviewed (recommendation (xxi)).

3. Of the remaining four recommendations, the thinking behind two ((x) and (xi)) in relation to close and effective communication between the service and MDP command structures is fully accepted and I believe that this can be achieved without the relocation of facilities and any major restructuring of the MDP's subordinate organisation. As regards recommendation (v) the CID element of the MDP is already considerably smaller than those of Home Office forces of similar size, and I do not think it is in the public interest that the scale of their present operations should be reduced. However, it is clearly sensible that the MDP should, to the maximum extent practicable, draw upon resources available elsewhere to support CID operations rather than attempts to duplicate these. Every effort will be made to ensure that, insofar as any problems over overlapping areas of operations may arise, these problems are anticipated and dealt with.

4. Finally, recommendation (xiv) concerning the introduction of a special constable scheme is the subject of continuing study since major issues on the practicability and effectiveness of such a force clearly arise.

5. Sir Ewen Broadbent's committee is to be congratulated on the quality of its report which the Government welcome as an important contribution to the future well-being and efficiency of the MDP. The committee clearly sees a continuing and important role for the MDP in providing policing and security services in relation to Crown property and servants. I endorse that conclusion and have full confidence in the MDP's capacity to discharge that role.

Royal Yacht Britannia

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Defence how he intends to ensure that the best value for money is obtained in the refit of the HMY Britannia.

Mr. Lee: The Government will follow the best commercial practice in oversight and management of HMY Britannia's refit.

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of the refit of HMY Britannia to be undertaken by Devonport dockyard.

Mr. Lee: An estimated cost cannot be given at this stage.

United States Air Force (Weapon Storage)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the implications for crisis management and stability of storing nuclear weapons by United States air force aircraft based in Britain in underground vaults.

Mr. Freeman: My Department is involved in continuing discussions with the United States Government on all aspects of the possible storage facilities.

United States Air Force (Weapon Deployment)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether approval has been given for an increase in the number of air bases at which United States air force nuclear weapons may be deployed in times of strategic alert.

Mr. Freeman: No recent approval has been sought or given.

Binary Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the Government have been consulted about the construction of storage facilities for the possible deployment of binary chemical weapons in time of crisis in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the Government have been consulted by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation or United States officials on the contingency operations plan for the deployment of binary chemical weapons completed in June; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what public consultation will be held before a decision is made on the construction of storage facilities for the possible deployment of binary chemical weapons in time of crisis at United States bases in Britain.

Mr. Freeman: The United States have briefed NATO's military committee on their national plan for the contingency deployment of binary chemical munitions. The military committee noted this plan: if was not required to endorse or approve it. The details of this briefing are classified, but the United States plan does not designate any specific country as a destination for receiving binary munitions. The United Kingdom has not been approached about the possible contngency deployment of United States chemical weapons specifically in this country. If such a request were ever to be received, it would be a matter for decision by the Government of the day, in the light of the circumstances prevailing at the time. Any deployment to the United Kingdom at any time would require the consent of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government have been consulted on the possibility of basing binary chemical weapons on maritime prepositioned ships off western Europe in peacetime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sugar

Mr. Rippon asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what would be the import saving value at current prices of substituting British sugar beet production for the present import of sugar from Caribbean countries boycotting the Commonwealth Games.

Mr. Gummer: On the basis of 1984-85 deliveries to the United Kingdom, the saving on imports, at current prices, of substituting British sugar for imports of sugar from the six Caribbean countries holding quotas under the sugar protocol of the Lome convention who have withdrawn from the Commonwealth Games, is about £123 million. The breakdown is:

Country	*£ million*
Barbados	17·1
Belize	10·8
Guyana	46·2
Jamaica	32·2
St. Christopher and Nevis	5·4
Trinidad	11·4
Total	123·1

Agricultural Support

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the average cost of agriculture support to United Kingdom agriculture in the forms of tariffs, levies on imports, subsidies, acreage payments etc. in the three financial years ended in 1970-71, *(b)* the amount spent by the United Kingdom Government and the EEC in such forms including intervention buying, in 1985-86 and the latest forecast for expenditure in the current financial year and *(c)* the estimated total public sector outlay on agriculture, including the overhead cost of the United Kingdom Government and the EEC Commission in the current financial year; and if he will provide a comparison in 1986 prices as well as in current prices.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Member is referred to figures available from the following published sources:

(a) the cost of agricultural support to United Kingdom agriculture in the years 1968-69 to 1970-71 is given in tables 18 and 19 to the annual review and determination of guarantees 1972 White Paper (Cmnd. 4928). Details of tariffs and levies on imports can be found in the Customs and Excise annual report 1971 (Cmnd. 4826).

(b) The provisional outturn for 1985-86 for support buying, and the estimate provision for 1986-87, are available from the Supply Estimates 1986-87 for class IV, vote 1.

(c) For estimates of public sector outlay on agriculture in 1986-87 I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 6 May at column *93*. Details of the EC Commission's overhead costs relating to agriculture are not identified separately in the Commission's section on administrative appropriations in the Community budget.

EC (Food and Wine Sales)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the exports of various foodstuffs and wine from the EEC to the Soviet Union and East Europe, respectively, in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures in each of the previous 10 comparable annual periods.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the quantities and prices, expressed in pence and pounds, of the actual sales concluded by the EEC Commission under

its recent regulations which enables it to dispose of butter at special prices to certain nations including the Soviet Union.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 30 April 1986 at column *442*. It is still not possible to say what sales have actually been completed in respect of the 110,000 tonnes for which bids have been accepted to date.

Food Surpluses

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 21 July, *Official Report*, column *1*, why provision is being made for an increase of 0·75 per cent. in the cost of storing common agricultural policy surpluses in 1986 over 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Intervention stocks of certain products have increased in 1986. As part of the price fixing settlement, however, the Council agreed to reduce the Community's contribution to the costs of storage. Taken together these factors result in an increase in overall provision.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 21 July, *Official Report*, column *1*, why the provision made in the revised European Economic Community budget for the storage and withdrawal, respectively, of food surpluses in the current year has been reduced from the provision made in the original budget for the current year as set out in his answer to the hon. Member for Southend, East on 17 February, *Official Report*, column *3;* what factors were taken into account in reducing these provisions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The principal reason for the reduction in the 1986 budget provision for intervention storage is the cut in Community reimbursement of storage costs, which was agreed by the Council after the original budget had been adopted. In addition, the forecasts of stock levels of cereals have been reduced. These changes more than offset the effects of higher estimated stocks of other products. The lower provision for withdrawals reflects a revised forecast of expenditure on fruit and vegetables, taking account of market and monetary developments.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied that the provision made in the revised European Economic Community budget for the storage and withdrawal, respectively, of food surpluses covers all contingencies which can be reasonably forecast; what contingency plans have been made for spending excesses following the decision on the revised budget for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The provision for EAGGF guarantee expenditure in the new budget corresponds closely to the Commission's latest estimate of requirements this year. If any shortfall occurs payments which would otherwise be made in December will be deferred to 1987.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any proposals for the privatisation of Dairy Crest or any parts of the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. Gummer: No.

Sugar (Mauritius)

Mr. Rippon asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the present esitmated annual value at current prices of sugar imports from Mauritius.

Mr. Gummer: On the basis of 1984-85 deliveries, the annual value at current prices of sugar imports from Mauritius is about £132 million. this compares with a value of £41 million which it could expect to obtain for that volume on the world market.

Silage and Slurry

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will increase the grants available for the installation of silage and slurry effluent disposal systems to 75 per cent. in less-favoured areas and 60 per cent. elsewhere.

Mrs. Fenner: We have no plans to increase the grants available for waste disposal systems. These are already at twice the level available for most grant-aided investments under the agriculture improvement scheme.

Wheat

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the cost of producing a hectare crop of wheat on an efficient farm excluding the cost of the land; and if he will break down into the cost of *(a)* wages and salaries, *(b)* fertilisers and sprays, *(c)* depreciation and *(d)* other costs excluding rent.

Mrs. Fenner: As explained to the hon. Member in the reply given on 28 April, at column *312*, production conditions, husbandry techniques and hence production vary throughout the country. This Department does not therefore produce figures for an efficient farm.

Sea Defences (Walton-on-the-Naze)

Sir Julian Ridsdale asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects a decision as to whether sea defence work at the Naze at Walton-on-the-Naze will proceed.

Mrs. Fenner: There have been several objections to the proposed coast protection works at the Naze and to the associated request for planning permission. It is now necessary to hold a public local inquiry and arrangements are in hand to set this up. No decision as to the acceptability of the coast protection works can be made until the results of the inquiry are known.

Sheep (Radiation)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the testing being carried out by his Department on effects of caesium on future offspring of lambs.

Mr. Jopling: Extensive tests are being carried out on sheep and lambs in the area designated for controls on the movement and slaughter of sheep so that these controls can be reduced as soon as the amounts of radiocaesium falls to acceptable levels. There is no reason to expect any adverse effects on future offspring of sheep in these areas, but as part of its general oversight my Department is assessing what scientific information is available on any possible genetic effects from exposure to radiocaesium.

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the latest position concerning controls on the movement and slaughter of sheep.

Mr. Jopling: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are making a new order today under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 which will release further areas in south-west Cumbria from restrictions. These further releases, which will free some 280 holdings, 150 with sheep, from controls, are being made in the light of results of continued monitoring.

The order will retain restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep in the remaining areas. These areas will be reduced further as soon as the results of testing reveal a fall in radio-caesium to acceptable levels.

So far as compensation is concerned, the Government recognise that farmers who were prevented by the restrictions from marketing finished lambs at the usual time may have a higher proportion than normal rejected for variable premium because they will have become over-fat by the time they are eventually able to be sold and that these animals may also attract lower than average prices in the market. Where such losses have been sustained and can be substantiated, the Government will be prepared to meet them. Details of the application procedures will be announced shortly.

The Government also recognise that some farmers could face difficulties if it is found necessary to continue the restrictions to an extent which prevents them from moving store lambs and draft and cull ewes off their holdings at the normal time. We hope that it may prove possible to devise arrangements under which such movements could be permitted, subject to suitable restrictions to ensure that the animals concerned could not enter the food chain until it was wholly safe for them to do so. The farmers' unions have also drawn our attention to the fact that some of the farmers concerned are already being faced with extra expenditure. We shall be holding urgent discussions with the unions about these problems and also about what compensation might be appropriate to cover the direct losses which the farmers concerned may thereby incur.

Parliamentary approval for compensation payments will be sought in winter Supplementary Estimates for the class IV, vote 3, class XVI, vote 1 and class XVII, vote 1. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure will be financed by repayable advances from the contigencies fund.

I am placing a map indicating the newly derestricted area in Cumbria, plus the monitoring data available since 10 July, in the Library of the House. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be making a similar announcement in respect of restrictions in Wales.

I am also placing in the Library of the House the results of monitoring of the aquatic environment in England and Wales since Chernobyl undertaken by the Ministry's Directorate of Fisheries Research, Lowestoft.

Animal Farms (Fur)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many establishments known to him in England and Wales were used for the raising of animals for the production of fur, by species, in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Fenner: The only figures available for establishments which rear animals for the production of fur in England and Wales are those for mink farms licensed for the purposes of the Destructive Imported Animals Act 1932. The licences issued in each of the financial years 1981-82 to 1985-86 were respectively 54, 50, 49, 45 and 47.

Swine Influenza

Mr. Harris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence is available to his Department about an outbreak of a new disease of pigs, known as swine influenza; what information he has about the incidence and geographical distribution of the disease; and how the disease arrived in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Fenner: This disease is not notifiable and accurate statistics are not available about numbers of outbreaks. However, this year Ministry veterinary investigation centres have identified the infection in 10 herds located in Dorset, Norfolk, Somerset, Suffolk and Yorkshire. The origin of the disease is currently under investigation.

Mr. Maclennan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department has yet identified the swine fever strain responsible for the recent outbreak of the disease in the West of England; what information he has regarding the cause of swine fever outbreaks in other member states of the European Community in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: Studies on the characterisation of the classical swine fever virus have not reached a stage which enables meaningful epidemiological conclusions to be drawn from individual isolates.

The origin of the outbreak of classical swine fever in Devon is still under investigation. Where identified, the main causes of disease outbreaks in other member states this year have been the movement of pigs and the feeding of inadequately processed waste food.

Aujeszky's Disease

Mr. Harris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what controls exist to prevent the reintroduction of Aujeszky's disease into the United Kingdom through the importation of infected pigmeat products or live pigs.

Mrs. Fenner: Imports of pigmeat products are permitted from member states of the European Community provided they conform with the relevant animal health directives. The rules applied to imports from other countries are at least as strict. They provide that the products must be produced from pigs that were examined and found to be healthy and that were slaughtered in an approved slaughterhouse.

Imports of live pigs are not permitted except from countries of comparable animal health status. The safeguards include requirements that the premises of origin shall have been clear of Aujeszky's disease for the

preceding 12 months, that during this period there shall have been no vaccination against the disease on the holding, and that the animals shall have been tested on two occasions for the disease whilst being kept in isolation for a period of 21 days prior to export.

Brewing Industry

Mr. Speed asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what current steps he is taking to encourage the brewing industry to use more English hops.

Mrs. Fenner: United Kingdom brewers' requirements for hops, including those produced by English growers, have been declining for a variety of reasons. Essentially, however, commercial considerations, including variety and price, dictate the purchasing policies of the brewers and it would not be appropriate for the Government to seek to influence their decisions.

Animals (Ear-punching)

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research into alternatives to ear-punching of fatstock has been sponsored or carried out by his Department; what representations he has received on this practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to adopt alternative methods to ear-punching on sheep, in the light of the recent report published by the Farm Animal Welfare Council on 21 May, concerning the welfare of livestock at markets.

Mrs. Fenner: Over many years, the Agriculture Departments have examined numerous possible alternatives to ear-punching, including branding, tagging, dyes and tattoos. None of these has so far proved acceptable as a means of marking which is permanent and fraud-proof, and which can be readily and humanely applied. We have received a number of representations on ear-punching. Most recently, the Farm Animal Welfare Council has submitted a report on the welfare of livestock at markets which deals with ear-punching. We are seeking comments from all interested organisations on their report and will respond in due course.

Supply Estimates

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the effects on Supply Estimates of the decisions on common agricultural prices for 1986-87.

Mr. Jopling: Since the Supply Estimates of the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce were prepared a number of changes have taken place in market prices, levels of production, exchange rates and trade volumes. Revised forecasts for 1986-87 have to take account of these changes as well as the effects of the decisions taken on the common agricultural policy prices. Most of the relevant expenditure is funded from the Community budget although expenditure on intervention purchases is not recouped until the goods are sold. Expenditure net of Community receipts is therefore forecast to change as a result of the price fixing decisions in only two sections (A and C of class IV.1). The common agricultural policy price decisions are estimated to increase the net call on Exchequer funds by about £23 million, as indicated in the table.

A winter supplementary Estimate will be submitted seeking parliamentary approval for any agreed change in provision for collection of the co-responsibility levy on cereals and for payments under the aid for small cereals producers and the milk outgoers schemes which were agreed as part of the price fixing. The supplementary Estimate will also make provision for payments and receipts on external trade following the accession of Spain and Portugal to the Community.

Class IV Vote 1

	Net expenditure before allowing for receipts from the Community	*Receipts from Community £ million*	*Exchequer Expenditure*
A. Supply Estimate 1986-87	1,490	(1,142)	348
B. Forecast before price fixing (25 April 1986)	1,682	(1,314)	368
C. Forecast after prive fixing	1,657	(1,266)	391
D. Effect of price fixing (C-B)	−25	−(−48)	= +23

Bass Fishery

Mr. Harris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement about the bass fishery in England and Wales.

Mr. Gummer: Since the interim report on the bass fishery in England and Wales was made available to the House in March 1983 my scientists have continued their work in investigating this fishery.

Their report is now complete and I am pleased to say that they have found the stock to be in a generally satisfactory condition with no evidence of a persistent decline in the adult stock and there are signs that the majority of recent year classes are strong. Provided that there is adequate recruitment of maturing fish to the adult stock there is little risk of a collapse of the stock through inadequate spawning and there is no indication that a restriction on the overall level of exploitation is necessary.

None the less, despite the current comparatively healthy state of the stock, the report indicates that the bass fishery continues to expand both in level of effort and variety of fishing techniques and that it would be prudent to consider long term management measures particularly as much of the fishing activity is concentrated on the younger fish. The report suggests that in the longer term yields could be increased and the spawning stock safeguarded by an increase in the minimum landing size, the introduction of a minimum mesh size and the closure of nursery areas.

My scientists have also recently completed a comprehensive study of gill netting in coastal fisheries in England and Wales, the way gill nets are made and how they catch fish and examines methods for managing the major gill net fisheries. The report also refers to both the current fishing practices and the possible changes

following the introduction of a 100mm minimum mesh size regulation as recommended in the bass report, and indicates that there is unlikely to be any adverse effect.

On the basis of the recommendations made in these reports my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are disposed towards the introduction of an increase in the minimum landing size for bass from 32cm to 36cm; and a minimum mesh size of 100mm for all gill and similar nets with exceptions for pelagic fisheries in those areas where water authorities might consider a smaller millimetre mesh size continued to be justified. Our officials will now set in hand arrangements for consultation with all interested parties. As to the closure of nursery areas, we think this needs further detailed consideration at local level and to be successful would need the full co-operation of the sport fishing interests and local bodies such as sea fishery committees and water authorities. We are therefore inviting all those concerned to study carefully the report of my scientists and consider whether it would be appropriate to propose local arrangements which could be effectively implemented. Our officials will be ready to assist in any way if, for example, sea fishery committees wish to consider the introduction of appropriate byelaws for this purpose.

I am arranging for a copy of both reports to be placed in the Library of the House and copies will be made available to anyone who applies to the Department.

Radioactivity

Mr. Corbyn asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if all food supplies with a higher level of radiation than 350 becquerels have now been withdrawn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1986, c. *116*]: Monitoring carried out by my Department since the Chernobyl accident has shown the position of foodstuffs on sale in this country to be entirely satisfactory. It has not been necessary to withdraw any food supplies. Special measures have been taken in parts of Cumbria and north Wales to ensure that sheep entering the food chain are below internationally acceptable levels.

Spain (Imports)

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his assessment of the effect on the competitive position of United Kingdom exporters of barley to northern Spain of the insistence by the Spanish Government that goods can be shipped only by vessels under the Spanish flag.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *2*]: It would be very difficult to estimate the effects of a measure which, as I understand it, applies to exports to Spain from all sources. The Government are pursuing the legality of the decree and officials have already raised the issue of its effects on the grain trade with the EC Commission.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 25 July 1986

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Salmon Poaching

Mr. Wilson asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what difficulty has been experienced in raising prosecutions for salmon poaching in the Solway due to doubt on demarcation of the border; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I do not know of any such difficulty having occurred in a particular case. I am, however, aware of the potential for problems in this area. I shall ask the procurator fiscal at Dumfries for a report on the situation and shall write to the hon. Member.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what instructions have been issued to entry clearance officers about the circumstances in which they require an applicant for settlement to submit to medical examination under paragraph 82 of HC 169.

Mr. Waddington: I have been asked to reply.

In Commonwealth countries and Pakistan certain categories of applicant for settlement as a dependant, other than a spouse or child under 18, of a person settled in the United Kingdom are required to have a medical examination before an entry clearance is issued. (This requirement does not apply to spouses or children under 18 who may not be refused admission on medical grounds.) Examining medical officers have not been appointed in other countries. Where there has not been a medical examination abroad the decision whether medical reasons make admission undesirable depends on the medical examination on arrival. Accordingly all persons coming for settlement are advised to have a medical examination before departure.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people were waiting for special quota vouchers to be issued in *(a)* June 1986, *(b)* December 1985 and *(c)* June 1985; when those issued with vouchers on those dates had applied; when those now applying can expect to receive vouchers; and how many applications there were for vouchers in 1985 and the first half of 1986.

Mr. Waddington: I have been asked to reply.

Following a count of applications outstanding in India, the number of persons worldwide awaiting a decision on their application for a special voucher was estimated to be 4,000 at the end of December 1985 and 3,900 at the end of March 1986, the latest quarter for which complete data are available. The corresponding estimate for June 1985 is 4,200. The waiting time to main interview for non-priority applicants interviewed in India at each of these three dates was about 8 years; priority applicants had waited in general up to 6 months. Applicants interviewed in other countries at the end of June 1985 had waited up to 3 months and, at the end of December 1985 and June 1986, up to 1½ months. It is expected that persons applying in India now will have to wait 4 to 5 years for their main interview if they do not qualify for priority, and up to 6 months if they do; current applicants in other countries will probably have to wait up to 1½ months. The number of applications newly received worldwide was 960 in 1985 and 480 in the first half of 1986.

Sub-Saharan Africa (Family Planning Aid)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of total value of British bilateral aid to sub-Saharan African countries in 1985 was used for family planning.

Mr. Eggar: In 1985, British bilateral assistance to sub-Saharan countries totalled £285 million. About £150,000 or ·05 per cent. of this was spent specifically on family planning activities as narrowly defined.

Medical Advisers

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene about the downgrading of the post of medical adviser to the Overseas Development Administration and the depletion of medical advisers in his Department; and what reply he has given.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has received two letters from the President of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. The latest express concern that the Overseas Development Administration should have access to good medical advice at senior level, and asks what steps the Minister proposes to take to fill vacant medical adviser posts in the ODA. I have replied assuring the Society that my right hon. Friend shares their concern that Britain should continue to make a major contribution to health care in developing countries, and that the Overseas Development Administration should have access to good professional advice, including medical advice, to enable it to carry out its programmes. I am confident that the arrangements which the Overseas Development Administration has made to recruit a second full-time medical adviser, and a full-time professional head of health and population division, will meet this requirement.

Rain Forests

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will increase aid to Third-world countries with the purpose of helping them to preserve their rain forests.

Mr. Eggar: The Government are conscious of the need to protect the tropical rain forest. We are very willing to consider funding appropriate forestry projects when asked to do so. British aid to forestry doubled in the period 1981-85.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to Indonesia, Brazil and Zaire concerning their tropical rain forests.

Mr. Eggar: We have made no formal representations to these governments. We have no forest projects in the countries concerned. We have reminded the World Bank of the need to ensure that environmental considerations are given appropriate weight in its programmes in the rain forest areas of Indonesia and Brazil.

Overseas Development Administration

Mr. Temple-Morris asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to publish the next annual review of the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Raison: The fourth annual review of the work of the Overseas Development Administration, entitled "British Overseas Aid in 1985", will be published on 28 July, price £6·95, and will be available from HMSO bookshops. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and will be available on request from the Vote Office.

Zambia

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonweath Affairs if he will list the principal items of capitalinvestment in infrastructure together with the sums allocated which form part of the £4 million aid to rural development in central Zambia announced on 7 July and state whether any conditions have been made in respect of this expenditure.

Mr. Eggar: The principal capital investment items have not yet been determined, as the capital aid will help to fund the annual minor works programmes of five district councils. The release of the funds will be conditional on regular reviews of the programmes by the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the breakdown in expenditure of the £3,069 million technical co-operation scheme for rural development in central Zambia announced on 7 July.

Mr. Eggar: The breakdown is as follows:

Item	*£000*
Staffing costs	2·13
Vehicles and equipment	0·47
Housing	0·20
Contingencies	0·27
Total	3·07

Commonwealth Countries (Aid)

Mr. Rippon asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the estimated cost in the current financial year of aid to be given to the following Commonwealth countries: Antigua, the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Brunei, Cyprus, Dominica, the Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mauritius, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, the Virgin Islands, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Mr. Eggar: An estimate of the cost of financial aid to particular countries arising from agreements signed up to April 1986 is in Table 3 of the Overseas Aid Vote (Supply Estimates 1986-87 Class II, 5), copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library. Further allocations may be made during the year. Countries may also benefit from regional technical co-operation.

Aid Projects

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all current and projected aid projects to Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala.

Mr. Eggar: The following is the information on British bilateral aid:—

NICARAGUA
There are no current projects and none are in prospect.

EL SALVADOR
Vehicles and equipment for social development.
No other projects are in prospect.

HONDURAS
Current Projects
National Forestry School.
Agricultural Equipment.
National Water Authority. Exploration and exploitation of Water Resources and provision of pipes, drills and pumps.
National Institute of Agriculture, vehicle maintenance and provision of Land Rovers.
Installation and maintenance of Hospital Equipment supplied under Capital Aid.
National Coffee Institute — crop diversification and pest control and provision of spraying equipment.
Prospective Projects
Forest Genetics Research Programme.
Equipment for a Soils Analysis Laboratory for the National Coffee Institute.

COSTA RICA
Current Projects
Central American School of Animal Husbandry.
Advice on establishment of an Appropriate Technology Unit.

Prospective projects
Three year survey of Mineral Resources.

GUATEMALA
There are no current Projects and none are in prospect.

Aid is also provided through the joint funding scheme to support small development projects co-financed with British voluntary agencies. So far this year agreement has been given for two projects in El Salvador, four in Honduras and three in Nicaragua.

All these countries are in receipt of aid from multilateral agencies to which Britain contributes.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk Marketing Board and Dairy Crest

Sir Adam Butler asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how long it is since he received the Touche Ross report on the Milk Marketing Board and Dairy Crest; and when he expects to give his reaction to it.

Mr. Jopling: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I received the report on 23 December

1985. Touche Ross concluded that in most respects separation between the Milk Marketing Board and Dairy Crest Foods had been achieved, as required by Community and domestic legislation. However, it considered that Dairy Crest's strategy could be constrained by the board's interests in maintaining and increasing markets for milk, and that Dairy Crest Foods' rate of return might not have been acceptable to a commercial company.

The report required careful consideration and consultation with the industry. Agreement has now been reached between the Government, the Milk Marketing Board and the Dairy Trade Federation on arrangements designed to strengthen competition in the dairy industry, to ensure fair competition between all buyers of milk, to clarify the separation of Dairy Crest Foods from the Milk Marketing Board and to reinforce the Government's supervisory role. Under the existing umbrella of the milk marketing scheme, Dairy Crest Foods will become a body legally distinct from the Milk Marketing Board and will work to clearly stated commercial objectives. In the Joint Committee, which will remain the essential vehicle for negotiations on price and supplies, the Milk Marketing Board and the Dairy Trade Federation will continue to negotiate on an equal footing and to respect the requirements of United Kingdom and Community law. The National Farmers' Union of England and Wales and the Farmers' Union of Wales have been consulted and have endorsed the proposed arrangements.

I am arranging for the text of the agreement to be placed in the Library.

Agricultural Produce (Marketing)

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further policy he has in the area of marketing of British agricultural produce following enactment of the Agricultural Marketing Act 1983.

Mr. Gummer: The Government are providing some £14 million of pump priming funds to FFB in the five years up to 1987-88 and up to £7·5 million during the following three years if funding by the industry is satisfactory. The Council of Food From Britain will be restructured shortly and I expect one of its first priorities to be the setting of new marketing objectives and strategies.

Water Pollution

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many serious water pollution incidents were caused by farm works in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and how many of these resulted in prosecutions leading to a conviction.

Mrs. Fenner: The information requested is not available on a comparable basis for a full 10-year period. However, the Water Authorities Association and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have just published a joint report on water pollution from farm waste 1985, covering England and Wales. That report includes details of pollution incidents caused by farm waste since 1979, of prosecutions brought by water authorities in respect of those incidents, and of the results of those prosecutions. I have arranged for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library of the House.

Fish Farming

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from water authorities in England and Wales about river pollution caused by fish farming.

Mr. Gummer: Two water authorities have made representations to my Department about river pollution from fish farms.

The Wessex water authority has expressed concern about the development of fish farming in its area and in 1983 called for all fish farm to be made subject to planning controls and water abstraction licensing and for controls to be introduced on the use of biologically active chemicals. In 1984 the authority sent my Department a report "An appraisal of the effect of fish farming on river quality in Wessex".

The Yorkshire water authority, in its 1985 annual report to Parliament, referred to pollution difficulties caused by the development of fish farming on one river in its area.

These concerns were also expressed to the long-term water research requirements committee, on which my Department was represented, by those water authorities and the scope for further research was reflected in its report "Water Research in the Longer Term" which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment published on 15 July.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outline the nature and extent of the review of his Department's peacetime emergency plans following the Chernobyl disaster; whether, when completed, he intends to publish it; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department is playing its full part in the Government's review of contingency arrangements following the Chernobyl accident and will make any necessary changes to its emergency plans. Any revision of the Department's emergency arrangements would be notified to those required to implement them, as well as other departments and emergency services.

Public Bodies

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a list of all the bodies in Wales to which he has sole or joint responsibility for making appointments.

Mr. Jopling: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Cattle Purchases (Cost)

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 22 July, what were the numbers of cattle purchased at Kirkby Lonsdale; at what cost; and what was the cost of the work undertaken to try to establish the cause of the cornebacterium pyogenes mastitis problem.

Mrs. Fenner: It is not the Ministry's practice to divulge details of individual transactions, which are a matter of commercial confidence. The cost of the work undertaken by the Ministry to try to establish the cause of the disease problems has been £62,000.

Radiation

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will specify the derived emergency reference levels that are currently in use in the United Kingdom for meat produce.

Mrs. Fenner: Recent action in relation to meat has not been based upon derived emergency reference levels but took account of recommendations by a group of radiological experts from within the European Community.

Food (Radioactivity)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food if he will specify the relationship between the derived emergency reference levels for meat, milk and vegetables, and the individual radiological doses they relate to.

Mrs. Fenner: Derived emergency reference levels, published by the National Radiological Protection board, require consideration to be given to the imposing of restrictions on consumption of water, milk and other foodstuffs when projected levels of effective dose equivalent are above 5 millisieverts in a year or projected dose equivalents to single organs exceed 50 millisieverts in a year.

Food (Irradiation)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he is satisfied that irradiated fresh fruit and vegetables are not being imported from other European countries and sold through normal retail outlets, contrary to the United Kingdom Food (Control of Irradiation) Regulations; and if he will make it his policy to enforce the present ban on such imports until such time as the regulations are appropriately amended;

(2) how many samples of food have been tested to detect any irradiation treatment at ports of entry into the United Kingdom since 1 January 1985; and what proportion of samples were found to have been irradiated;

(3) how many prosecutions for the importation of irradiated food contrary to the United Kingdom Food (Control of Irradiation) Regulations have been initiated since 1 January 1985; how many have resulted in successful prosecutions; and what information he has as to how many allegations of such breaches of the regulations have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration.

Mr. Whitney: I have been asked to reply.

I shall write to the hon. Member.

South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will provide details of goods procured by his Department from *(a)* South Africa and *(b)* Namibia for each year from 1980 to 1985, including the total value for each year and the value of each category of items for each year;

(2) if he will give details of all contracts involving his Department and majority-owned South African companies since June 1979.

Mr. Gummer: Records are not maintained in a form which enables this information to be provided.

Basmati Rice

Mr. Janner asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the reply of 18 July, *Official Report*, column *626*, who has asked the Commission to reconsider the proposal to reduce the levy for imports of 15,000 tonnes of basmati rice; what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the proposals; and if he will make it his policy to ensure that any change in the regulations for the import of such basmati rice does not harm trade with India or damage the European Community's domestic rice milling industry.

Mr. Gummer: During the current discussions a majority of member states, including the United Kingdom, have asked the Commission to reconsider their proposal. The Government have urged the Commission to come forward with the proposals that take proper account of the interests of the European rice milling industry and the exporting countries concerned.

Swine Fever

Mr. Hicks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the source of the imported diseased pigmeat that led to outbreaks of classical swine fever in the United Kingdom has been established; and what action he proposes taking.

Mrs. Fenner: It has not been possible to identify the exact source of the imported pigmeat products which investigations suggest caused the recent outbreaks of classical swine fever.

We have written to the Agriculture Commissioner in the European Commission to underline the need for urgent action to control the disease. In particular we have pressed for more stringent measures to stamp out disease outbreaks and for tighter control of movements and trade. Officials are following up these matters within the European Community. An urgent reappraisal of the processing needed to overcome the survival and infectivity of the virus in pigmeat products is underway.

Mr. Hicks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those EEC countries that use vaccination for the purpose of elimination of classical swine fever; if he is satisfied with this method in respect of those countries' exports of pigmeat into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: All member states except the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Luxembourg and Denmark have in recent years used vaccination as one aspect of their programme for the eradication of swine fever.

The Community's objective is the eradication of the disease and the ending of vaccination in all member states; we support this. In the meantime imports of fresh pigmeat are not permitted from areas of the Community where vaccination is practised.

European Community (Food Sales)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if he will publish a table showing the exports of various foodstuffs and wine from the EEC to

the Soviet Union and East Europe, respectively, in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures in each of the previous 10 comparable annual periods.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 24 July 1986]: The most recent annual information readily available relates to calendar year 1985 and was set out in the reply of 13 May 1986 at columns *443-44*: exports of wine in 1985 to the USSR and to the rest of Eastern Europe, not shown in that reply, were 35,000 tonnes and 28,000 tonnes respectively. Corresponding information for the years 1976 to 1984 was shown in the replies of 20 February 1986 at columns *331-34* and 25 March 1985 at columns *1-2*.

Star-Kist Tuna

Mr. David Marshall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to prevent the import into the United Kingdom of any of the 18 million tins of Star-Kist tuna fish found not fit for human consumption in Canada.

Mr. Whitney: I have been asked to reply.
I shall write to the hon. Member.

TRANSPORT

M1

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth of 11 December 1985, *Official Report*, column *658* about the M1 motorway, the review of motorway capacity has now been concluded; when he expects to make an announcement about its findings; what consultants have been engaged in the review; and whether it will be published in full and a copy placed in the Library.

Mr. Moore: The examination of motorway capacity is being undertaken by my officials and is continuing. I expect to commence a review of the trunk road construction programme later this year and hope to take account of the examination in that exercise. The results of the programme review will be published in the normal way.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the forecast traffic flows for 1994 and 2004 for the those sections of the M1 between the M25 and M6 assuming completion of the proposed M40; if he will give the design flow range for a three-lane motorway under the revised standards issued recently as departmental standard TD 20/85; and what plans his Department has for relief of the congestion on the M1 after the M40 has been constructed;

(2) if any initial examination has been made of technical requirements in widening any of the M1 between M25 and M45.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The forecast traffic flows for 1994 and 2004 on those sections of M1 between the M25 and M6 (assuming completion of M40) are as follows:

Junctions	*1994*	*2004*
6A—8	116—140,000	125—160,000
8—10	108—120,000	116—140,000
10—13	77—96,000	82—110,000
13—15	66—89,000	71—102,000
15—19	58—78,000	62—90,000

The revised departmental standards set as the starting-point in the assessment and design of road carriageways a range of 50,000—79,000 vehicles per (annual average) day for a dual 3-lane motorway.

The review of the capacity of M1 referred to by my predecessor in her replies on 14 November 1985 to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth is continuing.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the forecast percentage relief to the M1 due to construction of the M40 at high and low growth traffic levels in 2004.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The forecast is that the relief at either high or low growth will lie in the range 10-19 per cent.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list for each bus route awarded by tender by London Regional Transport to other operators in 1986 to date the amount to be paid annually by each to the other, together with a list of those bus routes advertised for tender awarded to London Buses Ltd., listing for each any amount credited to that route by London Regional Transport in respect of social needs;

(2) if he will state for each of the bus routes operated by contractors for London Regional Transport for whole or part of the year 1985-86 the amount paid to London Regional Transport or the amount paid by it to each operator, together with an estimate of the equivalent amounts expected to be paid in the current financial year.

Mr. David Mitchell: Detailed information on the amounts paid by or to London Regional Transport for the operation of particular routes by London Buses Ltd. and other operators is a matter for them. Some of the information will be commercially confidential. For 1985-86 LRT's published accounts show that the contribution to group turnover of tendered services operated by London Buses Ltd. was £1·1 million, of tendered services operated by others £2·0 million, and of contract and express carriage business £3·8 million.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the plant, property and vehicles sold, leased, or let to other undertakings by London Regional Transport relating to bus operations arising from the provisions of the London Regional Transport Act.

Mr. David Mitchell: Such transactions would be a matter for the management of LRT.

London Regional Transport Central Driving School

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what assessment he has made of the contribution to road safety and standards of driving public service and other vehicles made by the London Regional Transport central driving school at Chiswick; what is the approximate current cost per qualified public service vehicle driver; and what estimate he has of the future cost of such training;

(2) what information he has for each of the years 1975 to 1985 on the numbers of qualified public service vehicle licence holders passing through the London Regional Transport central driving school at Chiswick, together

with the approximate percentage these figures constitute of numbers in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* south-east England.

Mr. David Mitchell: The central driving school at Chiswick is the responsibility of London Buses Ltd. I suggest that the hon. Member addresses his questions to it.

River Crossing (Dartford)

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Transport why the guidelines for the four shortlisted schemes for the construction of the third River Thames crossing at Dartford have been substantially changed in the letter from his Department to the promoters dated 21 July.

Mr. Moore: In my reply to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) on 8 July, column 116, giving the four schemes from three promoters which had been shortlisted for the construction of the new crossing at Dartford, I said that I had to satisfy myself about certain technical and financial aspects of their proposals. The Department's letter of 21 July is part of that process.

The letter amplifies the guidelines by dealing with some matters which became apparent during our consideration of the promoters' bids, but had not been explicitly addressed in the guidelines. It invites promoters to revise their proposals so that we can compare them as far as possible on a standard basis to incorporate certain safety features we regard as essential, to clarify the financial basis and to take account of some relaxation in the Port of London Authority requirements for navigation clearances for bridge height and the depth of immersed tubes in the river bed. All four schemes are affected by these matters in different ways. We reserved the right in the guidelines to require changes in promoters' proposals if we thought that they were necessary.

The issue of this letter will not delay appreciably my decision on a scheme.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether properties that would be affected by the proposed east London river crossing which were previously owned by the Greater London council will be acquired by him from the London residuary body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: All the properties included in the draft compulsory purchase order will, if it is made, be acquired from whoever owns the title to them at the time.

South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will provide details of goods procured by his Department from *(a)* South Africa and *(b)* Namibia for each year from 1980 to 1985, including the total value for each year and the value of each category of items for each year;

(2) if he will give details of all contracts involving his Department and majority-owned South African companies since June 1979.

Mr. Moore: This information is not available.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide details of all agreements concerning air links between South Africa and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Scheduled air services between the United Kingdom and the Republic of South Africa operate under a bilateral air services agreement of 26 October 1945 as amended by exchanges of notes dated 15 September 1959, 1 December 1972, 25 March 1974 and 2 November 1984/24 February 1985. These have been published as Cmnd. 7858, Cmnd. 889, Cmnd. 5222, Cmnd. 5614 and Cmnd. 9582 respectively.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of passengers *(a)* entering the United Kingdom from South Africa and *(b)* departing from the United Kingdom to South Africa from each of the United Kingdom's international airports for the years 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The number of passengers entering the United Kingdom from South Africa and departing from the United Kingdom to South Africa on direct flights between the United Kingdom and South Africa are shown in the table below. All the passengers used Heathrow airport (except in a few cases where the flight was diverted at short notice for operational reasons). The figures do not include passengers travelling between the United Kingdom and South Africa who changed planes at an intermediate point.

Flights entering the United Kingdom from South Africa and departing from the United Kingdom for South Africa

	Passengers entering from South Africa	*Passengers departing from the United Kingdom for South Africa*
1980	174,249	185,261
1981	169,223	194,045
1982	178,851	203,184
1983	174,871	177,293
1984	183,825	189,434
1985	174,260	176,857

Source: CAA airport statistics.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide the total value of *(a)* exports to South Africa and *(b)* imports from South Africa via each of the United Kingdom's airports for the years 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The following figures are available from Customs and Excise. Not all the trade moved directly between the United Kingdom airports and South Africa: some transferred to or from other air services at other United Kingdom or foreign airports. In the case of imports, South Africa was the country of consignment but not necessarily the country of origin.

Trade with South Africa through United Kingdom airports

£ thousands

	*1980**	*1981**	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Heathrow						
Imports	405,365	229,338	245,952	278,247	227,212	411,770
Exports	119,777	129,274	166,863	176,964	229,641	229,945
Gatwick						
Imports	215	707	7,552	149	132	280
Exports	1,566	2,372	2,951	1,964	2,477	1,583
Manchester						
Imports	1,046	1,004	799	822	921	1,232
Exports	533	1,162	1,791	2,105	2,922	3,385
Birmingham						
Imports	74	204	243	153	133	138
Exports	633	305	72	43	11	30
Stansted						
Imports	40	29	3	—	—	—
Exports	—	4	910	3,578	910	8
Glasgow						
Imports	96	252	184	479	876	164
Exports	472	49	724	326	768	440
Others						
Imports	2,286	792	580	441	715	1,871
Exports	4,093	12,313	16,070	7,346	6,118	6,759
Total United Kingdom						
Imports	409,123	232,326	255,312	280,292	229,988	415,455
Exports	127,074	145,480	189,380	191,983	242,845	242,150

* Values include trade with Namibia in 1980, 1981—a few per cent. of imports and much less than one per cent. of exports.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the highways, sections of highways, or other land which have been transferred to the London Residuary Body under section 62 of the Local Government Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: This is a matter for the London Residuary Body.

Street Works Advisory Committee

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Street Works Advisory Committee he proposes to establish will have any executive functions; and whether it will employ any staff.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No; the Street Works Advisory Committee will be a purely advisory body and will have no executive functions. It will also not employ staff.

Motor Cycles

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will issue the findings of his review of the package of motor cycling measures introduced under the Transport Act 1981.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I propose to issue a discussion paper shortly and to invite the views of all interested organisations and individuals. Copies of the paper will be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of complaints he receives on motor cycle noise relate to unmodified standard motor cycles and motor cycles with modified or illegal replacement exhaust systems, respectively.

Mr. David Mitchell [*pursuant to the answer*, 24 July 1986]: The information is not available. People who complain about noisy motor cycles do not say whether they are modified or not. As lower noise limits for vehicles with four or more wheels begin to take effect, unmodified standard motor cycles complying with the current limits will become more prominent and more likely to give rise to complaint. That is why we need tighter limits for new machines as well as better enforcement to deter illegal modifications.

London Airports (Price Regulation)

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the Government's proposals for price regulation at the British Airport Authority's London airports.

Mr. Moore: In January 1986 the then Secretary of State for Transport appointed National Economic Research Associates (NERA) to assist in the development of a price regulation formula. I have today published its report. This endorses the approach outlined in the Airports Policy White Paper (Cmnd. 9542) that airport charges should not be allowed to increase by more than the rate of inflation less some fixed amount, x, representing a targeted increase in productivity.

This system of price regulation will support the aims for privatisation by providing real incentives for private sector management to increase efficiency. It will also provide reassurance for airport users against abuse of monopoly.

The price regulation formula will form a key condition of the initial permissions to levy charges that the Secretary of State will grant to each of the British Airports Authority's London airports under Part IV of the Airports Act 1986.

There will be an overall RPI-x formula applying across the BAA's London airport system, allowing some flexibility for adjustment of charges between the three airports. However, the Government intend to place some contraints on this rebalancing between Heathrow and Gatwick in order to provide some assurance to the users of these airports. It will not place any constraints on price rises at Stansted (other than the system-wide formula), since the BAA will need to raise charges there to a level which reflects the cost of the new development, in order that a proper return is achieved on the new investment and losses are progressively eliminated.

NERA queries the need to make Stansted subject to price regulation in the first quinquennium. But in view of the concerns which have been expressed about Stansted I consider it appropriate to designate Stansted, making it subject to mandatory conditions.

The Government recognises the case for some restraint on the levels of off-peak charges, as recommended by NERA, and will consider whether this should be included in the initial price regulation conditions.

Airport charges will be regulated by reference to an average of a number of independent forecasts of the Retail Price Index for the forthcoming year. Any inadequacies in the forecast will be corrected when out-turn figures are available. After weighing NERA's views about the application of the formula, I have concluded that the RPIx limit should apply to the average revenue yield per passenger: this flexible approach avoids creating incentives to price inefficiency which might be offered by the alternative approach of applying the formula to a basket of revenue-weighted tariff items.

The determination of the numerical value of x will take account of a wide range of factors including forecasts of traffic growth and the costs of developments to meet that growth. The Government are minded to accept NERA's recommendation that x should not vary with traffic growth during the quinquennium.

Since NERA completed its report, the BAA has suggested that the formula should be adjusted if it has to incure additional costs as a result of increased national security standards at airports. Because changes in security standards are outside the BAA's control the Government accept in principle that an adjustment is reasonable, provided the BAA has a continued incentive to implement security standards economically. The Government are therefore minded to agree that the permitted rate of change of charges should include an adjustment in respect of verified cost changes brought about by variations in the security standards imposed by Government.

Details of the first price formula, including the value of x, will be announced nearer to the time of flotation of BAA.

Copies of the NERA report have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Civil Aviation Authority

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what objectives he has set for the new chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Moore: I wrote yesterday to Mr. Christopher Tugendhat with a statement of his objectives as chairman of the authority. I have placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

Trunk Roads (Blight Notices)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many blight notices have been issued as a consequence of proposed trunk roads in London during the last five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: 106 have been accepted by the Department during the last 5 years in connection with proposed new trunk roads in London.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many London properties under *(a)* draft compulsory purchase order and *(b)* blight notice as a consequence of proposed trunk roads are already owned by his Department; and what is their net market value;

(2) what is his estimate of the net market value of London properties under *(a)* draft compulsory purchase order and *(b)* blight notice as a consequence of proposed trunk roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Three hundred and sixty nine blight notices have been accepted by the Department to date in connection with proposed new trunk roads in London; of these 28 relate to properties which were under draft compulsory purchase order. All of these properties are either owned by the Department or in the process of being acquired. We hope soon to have details from the London Residuary Body of the properties originally acquired by the GLC in connection with Rochester way relief road. Estimates of the current market value of all these properties are not available.

Trunk Roads (Compulsory Purchase Orders)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many properties in London are in receipt of draft compulsory purchase orders as a consequence of proposed trunk roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Two hundred and forty eight complete properties and part of the curtilages of a further 60 are currently included in draft compulsory purchase orders for proposed new trunk roads in London.

Property Acquisitions

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many properties have been served with *(a)* compulsory purchase orders or *(b)* blight notices as a consequence of improvements to the north circular road proposed by his Department; what estimate he has of their net market value; and how many are already owned by his Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Six hundred and ninety two properties are currently included in draft compulsory orders relating to proposed improvements or extensions to the north circular road and a further 197 are the subject of made orders. The Department owns 857 properties required for these improvements, nearly all of which were acquired on acceptance of blight notices.

Valuation figures are not readily available in the form requested. Land acquisition costs for all north circular road proposed improvements are currently estimated at £44·79 million.

Community Programme

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans exist for new community programme opportunities to be provided by his Department.

Mr. Moore: I intend to promote new community programme opportunities for carrying out environmental improvements on motorways and trunk roads.

Road Tunnel (Plumstead)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated construction cost of the proposed road tunnel in Plumstead announced on 18 July; and what was the estimated construction cost of the proposed viaduct which it supersedes.

Mr. Moore: Sixteen million two hundred thousand pounds and £8·1 million respectively at 1984 prices.

A120 (Dualling)

Sir Julian Ridsdale asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for extending the A120 dualling so as to complete the section from near Great Bromley to the ports of Parkeston and Harwich.

Mr. Moore: There are no current plans. However the future needs of the A120 form part of a study of east-west routes across the region which the county councils concerned are carrying out on our behalf. They are due to report in September.

Pilotage

Sir Julian Ridsdale asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of savings to be achieved from his Department's proposals on the reorganisation of pilotage, showing the savings to be derived from each of the main proposals.

Mr. Moore: I expect the proposed transfer of responsibility for pilotage to the harbour authorities to lead to the more efficient use of pilots, the removal of compulsory pilotage where it is not needed on safety grounds, and economies in administration and operation as a result of the integration of pilotage with other port services. The savings that are achieved will depend on decisions made by the harbour authorities in the light of local circumstances, but there is widespread agreement that very substantial reductions in the number of pilots required can be achieved, with accompanying important savings in cost.

French Ports (Investment)

Sir Julian Ridsdale asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how much the French Government have contributed to investment costs in France's six major ports over the last 10 years.

Mr. Moore: I do not have this information. We are seeking within the Community to ensure that such information should be ascertainable from the published accounts of Community ports.

Motorway Service Areas

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in the light of increased traffic flow, he intends to review the approximate 30-mile interval between motorway service areas.

Mr. David Mitchell: It remains general policy to provide motorway service areas at approximately 30-mile intervals, but to consider the provision of additional sites in between wherever traffic demand appears to justify it.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for an additional motorway service area on the M11 north of Birchanger near Stansted.

Mr. David Mitchell: None.

M3 (Maintenance)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been spent on major works of maintenance on the M3 motorway between junctions 4 and 7; and for how long maintenance work has necessitated introduction of a contra-flow system for the years 1980-81 to 1985-86.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There have been no major works of maintenance on the M3 motorway between junctions 4 and 7 in the years 1980-81 to 1985-86; and there have been no occasions on which maintenance work has necessitated introduction of a contra-flow system.

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the number of days on which the Woolwich ferry service has been disrupted by mechanical or industrial problems between 1 April and 21 July, indicating the number of days on which the service was totally suspended.

Mr. Moore: 75, including 19 with no service.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will outline the nature and extent of the review of his Department's peacetime emergency plans following the Chernobyl disaster; whether, when completed, he intends to publish it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The Department is playing its pat in the Government's examination of the impact of the Chernobyl incident for civil contingency planning.

In the light of this review, any changes to contingency plans will be notified to those involved.

Public Bodies

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a list of all the bodies in Wales to which he has the sole or joint responsibility for making appointments.

Mr. Moore: I am responsible for making appointments to the traffic area for South Wales and the Milford Haven conservancy board.

Greater Manchester PTA (Funding)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what account he is taking of the decision on the level of funding for dial-a-ride schemes in Greater London in determining the component for funding such schemes in Greater Manchester included in the 1987-88 expenditure limit for the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority; what assessment he has made of the level of expenditure of the authority for such services if funded on a similar per capita basis to that agreed for Greater London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The level of funding for dial-a-ride schemes outside Greater London is a matter for local authorities to decide, in the context of their overall priorities. In London the dial-a-ride scheme is funded by a nationalised industry, London Regional Trasnport. I am aware of Greater Manchester's proposals for special needs transport and these were carefully considered before determining the authority's expenditure level.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what account he has taken of the costs incurred by the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority in setting up the Initial Bus Company in determining that authority's expenditure level for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: In determining Greater Manchester passenger transport authority's expenditure level for 1987-88, we took account of its total expenditure requirements, including the costs which may be incurred by the authority following the establishment of the Initial Bus Company. We will, of course, consider carefully any redetermination application which may be submitted by the authority, including any representations on such costs.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in view of the time scale for decisions on the level of rail services in the area and in Cheshire and Derbyshire in 1988-89, he will make it his policy to give the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority notice by the end of the current year of the likely level of funds to be made available to it in that year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to my reply on 20 June to the hon. Member for Withington (Mr. Silvester), column 666.

Parked Coaches (Engines)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to make it an offence for coaches parked in the street to run their engines for the purpose of maintaining heating or air conditioning, when there are no passengers on board and no journey is in progress.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am not aware that this practice causes any problems, and I have no plans to review the revelant regulations which permit a vehicle to be parked with its engine running if needed to operate ancillary equipment.

Midland Link Motorways

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on current responsibilities for emergency repairs to the midland link motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The current responsibilities are as announced by the then Minister of State for Transport on 19 August 1985: Birmingham city council is the Department's agent for the surface maintenance of the midland links, including emergency repairs; and the structures below deck level remain the responsibility of the Department's consultants. Emergency repair work is being handled as normal under these arrangements.

Greater London Council

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what amounts are still outstanding for Government grants to the Greater London council from his Department.

Mr. Moore: I am aware of no outstanding amounts.

British Rail

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss improvements to rail services in the north-west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have no present plans to discuss further improvements. It is anticipated that significant transport benefits will flow from the new Windsor link in Manchester and from the planned introduction of the new fast sprinter trains between Blackpool and Manchester.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current extent, frequency, nature and mode of transport, of nuclear spent fuel transportation in the United Kingdom, including such material from sources in other countries.

Mr. Moore: The arrangements for ensuring safety in the transport of all radioactive materials including spent fuel, to, from or within the United Kingdom are based on the International Atomic Energy Agency regulations which do not depend for their effectiveness on the choice of route or mode of transport. Accordingly, my Department does not collect details of individual movements. Spent fuel is regularly transported, normally by rail, between power stations and BNFL's reprocessing plant at Sellafield. Similar consignments from overseas are brought by ship to Barrow, although other ports are occasionally used. Smaller quantities of spent fuel from various research and experimental reactors are also transported to Sellafield, mainly by road.

National Holidays Ltd.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 15 July, *Official Report*, columns *458-9*, what assurances he received when giving approval to the sale of the National Bus Company's subsidiary National Holidays Ltd. to a subsidiary of the Pleasurama Group, Smith Happiways Ltd. regarding the period of time during which all the present management and employees would be employed.

Mr. Moore: The Pleasurama Group has indicated to the National Bus Company that it is not its intention

within the foreseeable future to make any significant alteration to the number of employees within National Holidays.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the reply of 15 July, *Official Report*, columns 458-9, by what percentage the management and staff bid for the sale of the National Holidays subsidiary of the National Bus Company was below the accepted bid.

Mr. Moore: This is a matter of commercial confidence between the parties concerned.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport what were the capital assets of National Holidays Ltd., a subsidiary of the National Bus Company, on 15 July; what they were in July 1984 and 1985; and which firms bid for National Holidays Ltd.

Mr. Moore: National Holidays' audited accounts show net assets of £297,000 at 31 December 1985 and £168,000 at 31 December 1984. Audited mid-year figures are not available.

In addition to Smiths Happiways and the management team, two other parties submitted bids. Tenderers are given assurances by NBC's advisers that their identities will not be disclosed.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what date the first tender was called for regarding the sale of National Holidays Ltd.; what procedure of tender was undertaken; on what date the successful tenderer bid; and at what price the successful tender was accepted.

Mr. Moore: I understand that initial bids were invited by 18 April 1986 from parties who had expressed a firm interest in National Holidays Ltd, and that following negotiations the successful bid from Pleasurama plc was made on 25 June. The sale price was £2·3 million.

Roads

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total sum spent on the repair and maintenance of roads within the county of Avon for the years 1979-80 and 1985-86, in actual prices and in real terms.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The total sums spent on the repair and maintenance of roads within the county of Avon for the years 1979-80 and 1984-85 are given below. The figures for 1985-86 are not yet available.

	1979-80 £ million cash	*1984-85 prices**	*194-85 £ million cash*
Local Roads	9·4	15·2	15·5
Trunk Roads	1·8	2·9	†5·9
Total	11·2	18·1	21·4

* 1984-85 prices calculated using Highway Maintenance Price Index.

† Includes £3·1 million on Severn Bridge.

Nuclear Materials (Transport)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether trains transporting nuclear materials through Leeds are scheduled to be held up for any length of time within Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The timing and routeing of radioactive consignments are a matter for British Rail. I am informed that irradiated nuclar fuel from power stations would not normally travel via Leeds. Low-level radioactive materials may sometimes travel via Leeds as routine freight consignments.

Spare Wheels

Mr. Conlan asked the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he will take to ensure that owners of secondhand vehicles without manufacturers' manuals, equipped with temporary-use spare wheels, are aware of the restrictions on the use of such units.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Temporary use spare wheels/tyres can be readily recognised as they are different in size from the standard wheels/tyres. Most are marked with the 50 mph speed limitation.

Department of Transport press notices issued on 21 March 1986 and 18 July 1986 drew attention to the speed restriction.

I do not envisage further measures to deal with the rare possibility of some old second-hand vehicles being fitted with tyres not marked to show the 50 mph limitation.

National Bus Company

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the procedure adopted in asking for tenders; and what type of tendering is done for the privatisation of the various subsidiary projects involved in implementing the National Bus Company's disposal programme.

Mr. Moore: Sale of NBC subsidiaries will generally involve press and other marketing to elicit expressions of interest; the invitation of tenders from those who confirm their interest; and negotiations with those who submit firm offers which in NBC's judgment would form the basis for a successful sale.

Night Flights (London)

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to what aircraft flew over London prior to landing at Heathrow between 5.20 am and 5.40 am on Thursday 24 July; what is the minimum height above ground, as opposed to sea, level at which aircraft are allowed to fly when passing over, or south of, central London; if he will make it his policy to restrict night flights into London airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: During the period mentioned three aeroplanes flew over central London before landing at Heathrow; a Lufthansa Boeing 737 and two British Airways Boeing 747s. All aeroplanes overflying built-up areas normally have to be at a minimum height of 1,500 feet above ground level.

Night flights into and out of the London airports have been restricted for many years. Restrictions have existed in their present form since 1978. They were last reviewed in 1981 and are now under review again.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Official Report

Mr. Viggers asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will state the average hour of day at which the *Official Report* reaches those hon. Members who have home delivery.

Mr. Biffen: Nine am.

Visitors

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Lord Privy Seal if, pursuant to his answer of 22 July, he will raise with the Services Committee the possibility of reducing the extent to which visitors to the Palace of Westminster increase the costs of running the Palace by a system of voluntary contributions from visitors.

Mr. Biffen: I have no present plans to do so.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Comprehensive Education

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of secondary schoolchildren now receive their education in comprehensive schools.

Mr. Dunn: In January 1985, 91 per cent. of pupils aged 11 and over in the maintained schools sector were receiving non-selective education in middle or comprehensive secondary schools.

School Organisation

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to issue a new circular on school organisation.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend hopes to issue a draft for formal consultation with the partners in the education service shortly. The plan is to issue the final document towards the end of the year.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about preparations for the general certificate of secondary education.

Mr. Chris Patten: The first GCSE courses start in schools next term. A thorough programme of training and preparation for all teachers of the GCSE has been taking place throughout this year and will continue over the next year or so. This has enabled teachers to prepare for the first examination courses with the guidance of the GCSE syllabuses available in schools. Substantial resources have already been directed, by local authorities and the Government, to books and equipment for the GCSE, amounting on average to £14,000 per school in this financial year alone.

Higher Education

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in tabular form the proportion of total recurrent income derived by the public sector institutions of higher education from central Government, local government and private sources of finance, respectively, in each year from 1970 to the latest available date.

Mr. Walden: The information requested is not available. The majority of public sector institutions of higher education are maintained by local authorities to which the Government pay a block grant in support of expenditure on all services.

Students (Financial Support)

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science by how much in real terms the standard student grant for a home student on a first degree course has moved over the periods 1979 to 1983 and 1983 to the latest available date.

Mr. Walden: Between the academic years 1979-80 and 1983-84 the main elsewhere rate of grant fell by 8 per cent. in real terms, and by a further 4 per cent. between 1983-84 and 1985-86.

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate what proportion of student financial support is now provided by private loans and overdraft facilities.

Mr. Walden: No.

Young Children and 16-Year-Olds

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give, for England, the participation rate of three and four-year-olds and the percentage of 16-year-olds staying on at school in 1979 and 1986.

Mr. Dunn: The participation rate of three and four-year-olds in school and the percentage of 16-year-olds staying on at maintained schools in England in 1979 and 1986 are given below:

	January 1979	*January 1986**
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*
Participation rate of under 5's†	37·0	43·0
Percentage of 16-year-olds staying on at school‡	24·4	26·9

* The figures given for January 1986 are provisional.

† Percentage of under 5's in nursery schools and nursery classes and infant classes in primary schools expressed as a percentage of the estimated 3 and 4-year-old population.

‡ Percentage of 16-year-olds remaining at school expressed as a percentage of the 15-year-olds one year earlier.

University of London (UGC Grant)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the recurrent grant from the University Grants Committee to each of the university of London's postgraduate medical and dental institutes for each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The University Grants Committee makes a block grant to the university of London. The funds allocated to the university's constituent schools and institutes are determined by the university court from within the total it has available.

Nursery Teachers and Nurses

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the ratio of nursery teachers and nursery nurses to children in nursery schools and nursery classes attached to infant schools provided by local education authorities at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: In January 1985 the ratio of qualified teachers and nursery assistants (class I) to children in nursery schools and nursery classes attached to maintained primary schools in England was 1:10·8. Information for 1986 will be available shortly.

Children's Day Places

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list the number and type of children's day places provided by each local education authority and the percentage of children in the relevant age group catered for at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: Information on day nurseries provided by local authority social services departments for children under five is collected by the Department of Health and Social Security. Figures for numbers of premises and places in each LEA in England are given in "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March 1984, England" (A/F/84/6), copies of which are available in the Library.

Pre-school Provision

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list for each local education authority in England at the latest date for which figures are available the number and proportion of three and four-year-olds attending *(a)* nursery classes, *(b)* nursery schools, *(c)* play groups, and *(d)* total pre-school provision; and what are the waiting lists in each case.

Mr. Dunn: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

School Meals

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities have still failed to take up resources made available under the Education, Grants and Awards Act 1984, for the supervision of school meals.

Mr. Dunn: Out of 97 LEAs in England, only 11 have so far made no bid for education support grant resources for midday supervision. All these authorities have indicated informally that they expect to submit bids shortly. One authority has withdrawn its bid.

Student Grants

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the value of the student grant for each year since 1979, including 1987's award, at 1979 prices.

Mr. Walden: The value of the main elsewhere rate of grant, expressed at 1979 price levels and adjusted to take account of the change in travel arrangements from 1984-85, is as follows:

	£
1979-80	1,245
1980-81	1,234
1981-82	1,189
1982-83	1,152
1983-84	1,140
1984-85	1,126
1985-86	1,096
1986-87	*1,095

* Estimated

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why the extra weeks allowance for students is lower than the average amount per week of the ordinary grant.

Mr. Walden: The difference arises because the basic student grant makes provision for expenditure on certain items, namely clothing and books, which can reasonably be expected to last for the whole year. Students would receive a double subsidy from public funds if the extra weeks allowance also provided for these items.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the equipment grant for medical students in their clinical years for the forthcoming academic year; and what was the comparable figure in the last five years.

Mr. Walden: The special equipment grant for medical students is intended to cover the course as a whole and is not an annual entitlement. Students whose courses begin on or after 1 September 1986 will not be eligible for a special equipment grant. Students who commenced their courses before 1 September 1986, which should include students beginning their clinical studies in the forthcoming academic year, will be able to continue to claim the special equipment grant up to a maximum of £90.

The comparable figures for the special equipment grant over the last five years are as follows:

Academic year	£
1981-82	70
1982-83	75
1983-84	80
1984-85	85
1985-86	90

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the review of student grants includes arrangements for the reimbursement of travel costs, particularly those incurred during term time.

Mr. Walden: The review will cover all aspects of financial support for students studying at first degree or equivalent level.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any estimate of the proportion of students who do not receive their full parental portion of the grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: No. My Department does not collect information on the payments made by parents to their student children. We have seen evidence however, to suggest that non-payment is less widespread than in the mid-seventies.

Public Bodies

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of all the bodies in Wales to which he has sole or joint responsibility for making appointments.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has responsibility for only two appointments to bodies in Wales. These are one member of the council of the university of Wales institute of science and technology and one member of the council of St. David's University college, Lampeter.

Youth Service

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to the answer of 23 April to the hon. Member for Bradford North, *Official Report*, columns 150-152 how many local education authorities have still to reply to the Department of Education and Science circular 1/85 about the youth service; and what steps are being taken to ensure that they do so.

Mr. Dunn: Six local education authorities have yet to respond substantively and each is now being asked to do so as a matter of urgency.

Schools (Governing Bodies)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to *(a)* which governing bodies of schools in England and Wales allow student governors under 18 years of age to participate in the business of the governing body and to sit as part of that body and *(b)* as to which governing bodies of further education colleges in England and Wales allow student governors under 18 years to do likewise.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not collected by the Department.

Coventry Lanchester Polytechnic

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington has not received any reply to his letters of 1 May and 18 July on behalf of the Coventry Lanchester polytechnic.

Mr. Walden: I replied to my hon. Friend on 23 July.

Public Expenditure Survey

Mr. Neale asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils in relation to the public expenditure survey for 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am publishing today the advice I have received from the board. Copies are available in the Library. This advice will be considered carefully in discussions on the 1986 survey and I will inform the board of my conclusions in due course.

Examinations

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what evidence he has about the relationship between examination results and the organisation of schools in local authorities on a selective basis.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The statistical analysis carried out by the Department and published in statistical bulletin 13/84 demonstrated a strong relationship between examination results achieved by pupils at schools in each local authority and social background data for each authority. When these factors are taken into account, the analysis showed a slight positive but statistically significant correlation between some of the measures of examination results and the proportion of pupils attending grammar schools.

Social background factors accounted for nearly 70 per cent. of the relationship with examination results observed in the statistical analysis whilst the proportion of pupils attending grammar schools accounted for some 1 to 2 per cent. for three out of the six measures of examination results. After allowing for social background, the statistical analysis indicated that a local authority with 15 per cent. of its pupils in grammar schools could expect 2 per cent. more of its pupils attaining five or more higher grades at O level/CSE than a local education authority organising its schools wholly on a comprehensive basis. The analysis showed no such statistical relationship in connection with pupils with six or more lower grade O-level/CSE results or with one or more A level passes.

Interpretation of this analysis needs to be treated with caution because:—

(a) Given the dominant influence of social background factors, the analysis is dependent on the choice and accuracy of measurement of social background factors.

(b) The results of a statistical analysis should not necessarily be taken to imply a causal relationship between the two factors for which a correlation has been identified. Social background factors do not determine examination attainment and other studies have shown that this varies markedly for children from similar backgrounds attending different schools. Similarly the small positive correlation between certain examination results and the proportion of pupils attending grammar schools does not necessarily imply an advantage for schools organised on a selective basis. It might, for example, arise from other features of grammar schools which may also be present in some comprehensive schools.

(c) The analysis was conducted at local authority level because data on social background is not readily available below this level of aggregation. The analysis did not explore the variations in examination results either within or between individual schools, or factors which might bear upon such variations.

Other evidence available to me and based on similar analyses at local authority level is not inconsistent with the Department's analysis. In view of the uncertainties over interpretation, my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) announced in 1984 that he was willing to consider proposals for further research designed to examine in more detail the factors affecting performance in individual schools. Some proposals have been received and are under consideration within the Department.

Inventions

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made since his predecessor's statement of 14 May 1985, *Official Report*, columns 97-100, over the exploitation of inventions arising from work funded by research councils.

Mr. Walden: Universities were invited to make proposals for new arrangements to exploit research council funded inventions on 14 May 1985. The majority have submitted accounts of their proposed arrangements. In most cases these accounts have satisfied a scrutiny group set up to ensure that there are suitable arrangements in place. The group under the chairmanship of the secretary of the Science and Engineering Research Council includes representatives of the five research councils, my Department, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Treasury, the University Grants Committee, the National Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics.

Authorisations to operate the new arrangements have recently been issued to 33 universities and university colleges. In the first instance authorisations have been given for three years. Annual reports to research councils will be required on the working of the arrangements in each institution. Apart from the 33 recently authorised, most of the other universities are still discussing their proposals with the scrutiny group.

Similar invitations were extended early in 1986 to polytechnics in inner London, Scottish central institutions and to local education authorities in England and Wales in respect of other polytechnics and colleges in receipt of research council funding.

The research councils are also developing arrangements for exploiting their in-house research inventions, consonant with the policy announced on 14 May 1985. These proposals are part of a pattern of measures designed to give greater financial incentives and to reinforce the autonomy of individual institutions. The Government are glad to see the keen response in this case.

Ethnic Statistics

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received the report of the working group on the collection of education statistics on an ethnic basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have received the report of this working group and I accept its main recommendations. These are that the collection of ethnic statistics of school pupils would be of great benefit to schools and local education authorities as a basis for making appropriate provision and for monitoring achievement; that authorities should institute systems for the collection of information which parents and pupils provide on a voluntary basis on ethnic origin, mother tongues and religious affiliations; and that authorities should consult the local communities about arrangements for ensuring confidentiality. I cannot however accept the recommendation that the Government should provide extra funds for this purpose. The cost to local education authorities should be very small.

In addition, I propose that this information should be aggregated centrally by my Department in order to assist me to fulfil my responsibility to secure appropriate education for all pupils. The collection of these aggregate statistics will not involve the provision to my Department of data in a form which would enable any individual to be identified.

I intend shortly to issue a draft circular for consultation. I have placed copies of the working group's report in the Library.

O and A-level Results

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will initiate an inquiry into the reasons why secondary schoolchildren in England secure, on average, significantly less success in O and A-level examinations by comparison with children in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986, c. *249-50*]: Information drawn from the school leavers surveys of England and Northern Ireland is as follows:

School Leavers
England and Northern Ireland 1983-84

	England	*Per cent. Northern Ireland*
1+A-level pass	17·2	22·5
No A-level pass but:—		
5+ Higher grades [1] at O/CSE	10·7	8·7
1-4 Higher grades at O/CSE	26·9	25·0
No higher grades but:—		
1 or more other [2] grades	35·7	21·5
No graded results	9·5	22·4
Total	100	100
Total leavers (000s)	752·8	27·7

Source:
Schools Leavers Surveys, England and Northern Ireland. Data on examinations for England is subject to sampling error.

Notes
1. Higher grades defined as a O-levels grades A-C and CSE grade 1.
2. Other grades defined as O-level grades D, E and CSE grades 2-5.

These data do not include any CSE, O-level or A-levels achievements by young people after leaving school. In England many 16 to 19-year-olds study in FE colleges rather than schools: the proportion is smaller in Northern Ireland. Taking into account achievements in both schools and FE colleges, it is estimated that 20 per cent. of young people in England attain 1 or more A-level passes compared with 23 per cent. in Northern Ireland. A range of other qualifications are, of course taken by 16 to 19-year-olds.

Below A-level, the figures for schools show that about 38 per cent. of English pupils achieve one or more higher grades passes compared with about 34 per cent. in Northern Ireland.

Such comparisons between examination results, whether at CSE, O-level or A-level, are, however, invalid unless other factors are taken into account.

My right hon. Friend has no plans to initiate an inquiry. We have said that we will consider research proposals on the factors affecting pupil performance.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of secondary schoolchildren in England and Wales left school without any O or A-level passes for the most recent year for which figures are available, and what were the comparable totals in each of the previous five years.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June, c. *250*]: Information for England is give in the table. Information for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Percentage of school leavers with no graded O level/CSE or A level qualifications

	per cent.
1979-80	12·2
1980-81	11·4
1981-82	10·6
1982-83	9·6
1983-84	9·5
1984-85	9·4

Source: School Leavers Survey.
Data subject to sampling error.

THE ARTS

Newspapers (Ban)

Mr. Greenway asked the Minister for the Arts what action he proposes to take over the continued banning of News International newspapers by some local authorities from their public libraries.

Mr. Luce: My inquiries have shown that five authorities against whom complaints have been made have never imposed or have now lifted a ban, 13 are maintaining a ban and two have not yet replied. I am not satisfied. I therefore propose to take the first step in the formal exercise of my default powers under the Public Libaries and Museums Act 1964. I have instructed my officials to write on my behalf to the 15 authorities from whom I have not yet received satisfactory replies. The letter clarifies the legal position, advises all authorities which are or may be in breach of the law to reconsider their position and requests the relevant documentary evidence. I am placing the text of the letter in the Library of the House.

HOME DEPARTMENT

District and Metropolitan Borough Councils

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report*, for each county, the average number of electors per councillor in district or metropolitan borough councils.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested for each county in England and Wales is given in the table, based on the numbers of local government electors on the 1986 electoral registers as shown in "Electoral Statistics — Local Government 1986" (OPCS monitor EL86/1).

Number of electors on the 1986 electoral registers per borough/district councillor in each county of England and Wales*

County	*Number of electors per councillor*
England	
Avon	2,235
Bedfordshire	1,843
Berkshire	1,926
Buckinghamshire	1,772
Cambridgeshire	1,688
Cheshire	1,663
Cleveland	1,970
Cornwall†	1,410
Cumbria	1,336
Derbyshire	1,823
Devon	1,711
Dorset	1,692
Durham	1,303
East Sussex	1,887
Essex	1,794
Gloucestershire	1,527
Greater London‡	2,687
Greater Manchester	3,067
Hampshire	2,002
Hereford and Worcester	1,453
Hertfordshire	1,620
Humberside	1,695
Isle of Wight	1,644
Kent	1,633
Lancashire	1,501
Leicestershire	2,005
Lincolnshire	1,456
Merseyside	3,205
Norfolk	1,597
Northamptonshire	1,606
Northumberland	1,014
North Yorkshire	1,976
Nottinghamshire	1,942
Oxfordshire	1,627
Shropshire	1,255
Somerset	1,487
South Yorkshire	3,578
Staffordshire	1,736
Suffolk	1,530
Surrey	1,636
Tyne and Wear	2,647
Warwickshire	1,630
West Midlands	4,139
West Sussex	1,789
West Yorkshire	4,135
Wiltshire	1,661
Wales	
Clwyd	1,351
Dyfed	1,202
Gwent	1,568
Gwynedd	942
Mid Glamorgan	1,576
Powys	668
South Glamorgan	2,609
West Glamorgan	1,936

* Includes attainers, service voters, voluntary patients and peers.
† Excludes the Isles of Scilly.
‡ Excludes the City of London.

Sri Lankans

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Sri Lankans have arrived in the United Kingdom without visas since the mandatory visa requirement was imposed; how many of them have *(a)* applied for political asylum, *(b)* been granted asylum, *(c)* been refused asylum, *(d)* been detained, *(e)* been given temporary admission and *(f)* been returned to third countries.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that information in the form requested is not available.

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications from *(a)* husbands, *(b)* fiancés, *(c)* wives and *(d)* fiancées have been (i) decided, (ii) granted and (iii) refused at each post in the Indian sub-continent in each quarter since January 1985;

how many such applications in each category and for each quarter were refused (1) wholly and (2) partly because of the primary purpose rules; what was the refusal rate in each instance; and what percentage of those refusals was (x) wholly and (y) partly on primary purpose grounds.

Mr. Waddington: Information for the whole of the Indian subcontinent on husbands and fiancé(e)s granted or refused entry clearance to the United Kingdom is given in table 9 of the quarterly Home Office statistical bulletin "Control of Immigration:Statistics—First Quarter 1986" (issue 15/86). Corresponding information on wives in 1985 is given in table 7 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom, 1985" (Cmnd. 9863). The information available centrally indicates that no wife or fiancée applying in the subcontinent for entry clearance to the United Kingdom was refused solely or partly on primary purpose grounds in 1985 and the first quarter of 1986. With regard to the other information requested, I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many British overseas citizens from India have *(a)* arrived in the United Kingdom, *(b)* been refused entry and *(c)* been removed since June 1984.

Mr. Waddington: The available information relates to the numbers of British overseas citizens, British protected persons and British subjects under the British Nationality Act 1981 who are *(a)* admitted and *(b)* removed from the United Kingdom after having been refused leave to enter. Calendar year figures are published in the annual Command Paper "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom". Between June 1984 and December 1985, 26,100 such persons were admitted into the United Kingdom and 60 were removed after being refused entry. No information on the numbers admitted in 1986 is yet available but 19 were removed in the first quarter of 1986. A reliable breakdown by country of origin cannot be provided.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were detained *(a)* in total, *(b)* overnight excluding Queen's building and secondary examination areas, *(c)* overnight in Queen's building and *(d)* overnight in secondary examination areas in (i) 1984, (ii) 1985 and (iii) the first quarter of 1986; and if he will publish a table showing the nationality of the people so detained in each category and for each period.

Mr. Waddington: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children have been detained overnight in *(a)* Harmondsworth detention centre, *(b)* secondary examination areas and *(c)* any other authorised places of detention in (i) 1985 and (ii) the first quarter of 1986.

Mr. Waddington: The available information is as follows:

Children under 17 detained overnight in 1985

Location	*Number*
Harmondsworth	223
Secondary examination areas	Nil
Other authorised places of detention	26

Information for 1986 is not yet available.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what disciplinary action is taken against immigration officers for breaches of the code of practice in after-entry cases; what guidance is given as to the legal status, as evidence, ascribed to statements obtained from suspects by immigration officers in breach of the code; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I will reply as soon as possible.

Citizenship

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many grants of citizenship for *(a)* registration with entitlement, *(b)* adult discretionary registration, *(c)* registration of minors and *(d)* naturalisation, the nationality division expected to process during 1985-86 when the budget for that year was set.

Mr. Waddington: The information available is as follows:

Forecast of citizenship applications to be granted 1985-86

	Number
Registration	32,060
Naturalisation	19,275

Note:
Separate forecasts are not made for each type of registration.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the Government's current policy towards Sunday trading;

(2) whether the Government are prepared to support the partial deregulation of Sunday trading;

(3) what consideration the Government have given to partial deregulation of Sunday trading.

Mr. Mellor: In the light of recent events, the Government have no present plans for further legislation on this matter. We shall consider carefully any workable proposals for partial deregulation which attract widespread support.

Community Programme

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans exist for new community programme opportunities to be provided by his Department.

Mr. Hurd: In October 1985 I announced an initiative to promote community programme opportunities in local crime prevention projects. At the end of May, 161 projects providing 5,055 places had been approved under the initiative. Proposals for further projects continue to be received. To help sustain this progress my Department is preparing a booklet, giving examples of the successful crime prevention projects which have been established using the community programme.

Public Sector Corruption Index

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the function of the public sector corruption index; how it operates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The public sector corruption index was set up in 1978 in response to a recommendation of the Royal Commission on standards of conduct in public life. The index is operated by staff of the Metropolitan police within the Metropolitan and City police company fraud department. It is provided as a common police service to forces to co-ordinate and supply information nationally on matters of corruption in the public sector.

Metropolitan and City Fraud Branch

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Metropolitan and City fraud branch was established; and what has been its joint establishment size, by rank.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Metropolitan and City police company fraud department was set up in 1946 with an establishment of three officers. The present establishment (excluding the City cheque squad, which is not engaged on company fraud work) is 219. The Commissioners of the Metropolitan and the City of London police consider that to give a breakdown of the establishment by rank could impair the department's operational effectiveness.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the budget for the Metropolitan and City fraud branch for each year since 1979 under the following headings *(a)* uniformed and civilian staff, *(b)* administrative costs, *(c)* publicity and *(d)* central establishment costs and incidental costs incurred during investigations;

(2) what proportion of the total cost of the Metropolitan and City fraud branch is met by the Metropolitan and City police forces, respectively.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I will write to the hon. Member.

Fraud

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the average number of officers by rank allocated to fraud branch cases; how many staff days on average are required to deal with each case; what proportion of cases result in a successful prosecution; and if he will give these figures for each of the past seven years;

(2) what proportion of referrals for investigation by the Metropolitan and City fraud branch come from *(a)* City institutions, *(b)* members of the public, *(c)* companies registered outside the United Kingdom, *(d)* investigations into other cases, *(e)* the stock exchange and *(f)* the Bank of England.

Mr. Mellor: For the only information which is readily available, I would refer the hon. Member to the replies given to questions from the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) on 27 March at column 550. I understand from the Commissioners of the Metropolitan and City of London police that it is not possible to provide further information save at disproportionate cost.

Prisons (Drugs)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has of drug traffickers smuggling cocaine and heroin through the customs and into prisons by carrying them in plastic charges secreted in their body orifices; and if he has any plans to strengthen the powers available to the police to require body searches in such cases.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Attempts are made from time to time by prisoners returning from home leave or by domestic visitors, to smuggle drugs into prison establishments by means of concealing them within their body orifices. The prison rules enable a prisoner to be given an intimate search if there is reason to suspect that he may be concealing drugs. If a visitor is suspected of attempting to smuggle drugs into a prison establishment it is normal practice for the prison authorities to ask the police to investigate the matter. The powers in section 55 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 for the police to require body searches were recently considered by Parliament and we have no plans to change them.

Questions about the evidence and manner of drug smuggling through the customs are for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries (Reviews)

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the timetable for the next full review of parliamentary constituency boundaries.

Mr. Mellor: The Parliamentary Boundary Commissions for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are required to review all the Parliamentary constituencies in their areas and submit a report to the appropriate Secretary of State not less than 10 or more than 15 years from the date of submission of their last report. Their next general reviews will therefore have to be completed between 1993 and 1998, except for the Northern Ireland review, which has to be completed between 1992 and 1997. This means that these reviews are unlikely to begin before 1990 at the earliest, the timetable thereafter being determined by the amount of work involved and the time required to comply with the procedures prescribed by the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Acts 1949 to 1979.

Deer Poaching

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many firearms and shotgun certificates have been cancelled by courts in England and Wales under convictions for deer poaching in the last five years;

(2) what forfeitures have been ordered by courts in England and Wales under convictions for deer poaching in each of the last five years;

(3) how many persons have been charged with, and how many convicted of, offences under the Deer Act 1980; and what was the total amount of the penalties imposed in each year since enactment.

Mr. Mellor: The information readily available to me, which may be affected by variations in the completeness of recording, is given in the table. Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available. No information is collected centrally on forfeitures or on cancellation of firearms and shotgun certificates following conviction under the Deer Act 1980.

Persons proceeded against at magistrates' courts in England and Wales for offences under the Deer Act 1980

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Proceeded against	17	9	36	51	30
Found guilty	17	7	31	38	26

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Conditional discharge	—	1	—	—	—
Probation order	—	—	—	—	1
Fine	14	6	20	26	19
Community service order	—	—	—	5	5
Detention centre order	—	—	1	—	—
Fully suspended sentence	—	—	8	4	—
Unsuspended sentence	3	—	—	3	—
Otherwise dealt with	—	—	2	—	1

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the operation of the legislation relating to offences of poaching of deer in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have no plans for any changes to the present controls. Enforcement is the responsibility of the chief officers of police in the areas concerned.

Iranian Citizens (Asylum)

Mr. Portillo asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *263*, what factors led him to determine the number of years to elapse before Iranians granted exceptional leave to enter or remain could be given indefinite leave; what period is in force for other asylum applicants granted exceptional leave; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The period of seven years was in accordance with recommendation 32 of the report of the Home Affairs Committee on refugees and asylum. The considerations which the Government took into account in accepting the recommendation are set out in paragraphs 102-105 of their reply (Cmnd. 9626) to the Committee's report.

House of Commons (Mass Lobby)

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 17 July, to the hon. Member for Kingswood, if the figure for the number of police man hours involved in policing the mass lobby of the House of Commons of 8 July includes the time spent on the placing and removing of crash barriers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the crowd control barriers were set up and removed by members of the Metropolitan police civil staff and that no overtime was incurred.

Hong Kong

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which categories of people now in Hong Kong will be permitted to enter Britain for settlement on the handover of the colony to the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Waddington: Besides those with the right of abode in the United Kingdom, who are thus entitled to come here, and those meeting the requirements of the immigration rules, former service men in Hong Kong who served in the defence of Hong Kong in the second world war, together with, at the discretion of the Secretary of State, certain other very limited numbers of people who have been exposed to special factors and considerations, will be admitted both before and after 1997.

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has of the numbers of inhabitants of Hong Kong who will have the right of entry into Great Britain.

Mr. Waddington: It is estimated that there are some 15,000 people in Hong Kong who have the right of abode in the United Kingdom and thereby have the right to enter this country.

Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1986

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the final estimate of the cost to public funds of the requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act during 1986; and what has been the cost since 1 January.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I will write to my hon. Friend about such information as is available.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he expects the review following Chernobyl of emergency arrangements for peacetime disasters, and the potential rôle for civil defence in such disasters to be completed; and if this review will be published;

(2) if, in the light of the Chernobyl disaster, he intends to put resources into informing the public about the nature of radioactivity and simple precautions that they could take in the event of a future nuclear accident;

(3) if he will detail the specific ways in which the introduction of the Civil Protection in Peacetime Act has increased the capacity of local authorities to act effectively, if faced with the contingency of a peacetime Chernobyl-type nuclear disaster in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government's review of emergency arrangements in the light of Chernobyl including public information and the rôle of local authorities is in hand. It is to soon to say what conclusions will be reached or how they will be presented.

Nuclear Power Stations (Hostilities)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department has carried out any studies on the effects of British nuclear power stations being targeted in a situation of hostilities.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. I would refer the hon. Member to the guidance on the Government's planning assumptions in section 2 of the emergency planning guidance to local authorities; a copy is in the Library.

Community Radio

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has made any assessment of the implications for the incidence of pirate radio of his decision not to proceed with an experiment in community radio; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There is at this stage no evidence that the decision not to proceed with the community radio experiment has led to a significant increase in the incidence of unlicensed broadcasting, the detection and prevention of which are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The issue raised by the possible introduction of community radio are to be addressed in the Green Paper covering radio broadcasting in the round, which we intend to publish in the autumn. I hope that unlicensed broadcasting, which can have serious consequences, will not take place, and that those who want to see changes to the present arragements for radio will contribute to the discussions which the Green Paper is intended to stimulate.

Mr. Frank Skuse

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the cases in which the forensic scientist Mr. Frank Skuse gave evidence in the 10 years before his retirement.

Mr. Hurd: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Prisons

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any grades working within the prison service of his Department qualify for efficiency or performance bonuses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Civil Service performance bonus scheme has been applied throughout the prison department. The scheme applies to staff from grade 3 to grade 7 in the unified grading system and any departmental equivalents not already within the unified grading structure.

Civil Defence

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when was the most recent study carried out by his Department into evacuation in wartime and the likely efficacy of the Government's civil defence policy; and if he has any plans for future studies.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We keep this matter under continuous review.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if United States Government representatives will be involved in liaising on details of the implications of the United States-United Kingdom lines of communication agreement for the forthcoming home defence exercise in region 10, to be staged in November.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This agreement does not come within the scope of the exercise.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for future regional civil defence or home defence exercises involving local authorities and regional emergency committees.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a Question from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 30 June at columns *369-70*. There are no specific plans at present for subsequent exercises, but we intend that as planning progresses exercises will be a regular activity for these organisations.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the progress of the construction of the home defence headquarters for region 81, North Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes. A site has been chosen, although construction has not yet started.

Scientific Advisers

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to replace his Department's 1977 training manual for scientific advisers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This is under consideration.

Police (Civil Defence)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he is satisfied with the procedures for civil defence and home defence planning and training in the police forces; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he is satisfied with the role of the Association of Chief Police Officers in civil defence and home defence planning and training in the police forces; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he is satisfied with the liaison between the armed forces and the police forces over civil defence and home defence planning and training; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will make a statement on Government research into the rôle of the police in civil defence and home defence; and if he will make a statement.;

(5) if he is satisfied with the liaison arrangements as regards contingency planning, preparations and training in the United Kingdom police forces and armed forces, and the relevant North Atlantic Treaty Organisation committees responsible for civil defence and home defence planning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes, although no doubt, within the range of the hon. Member's questions, some increased satisfaction could be obtained.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to replace the 1975 document, "Police Manual of Home Defence."

Mr. Giles Shaw: The police manual of Home Defence was replaced by guidance to the police service on war emergency planning in 1985. A copy is in the Library.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he expects his information pack on the police role in civil defence to be completed; how he expects this document to be used in explaining the police rôle tc civil defence volunteers; what other functions he expects the pack to perform; and if it will be available to the general public.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Information on the role of the police in wartime will be included in the training package being prepared by a Home Office working party, and should be available in the autumn. The package will provide recommended material — in the form of instructional notes, student notes and other training aids—for use in the tuition of civil defence volunteers.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he has any plans for the police and armed forces to be involved in the training of civil defence volunteers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We are satisfied with the present contribution made by the police; the armed forces are not involved.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those civil defence publications and other materials that his Department will make available in 1986; when they will be available; and what other materials he has plans for thereafter.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No detailed decisions have yet been taken, but we expect the material to be issued this year and will include: new public information material comprising a film and a booklet; a package of volunteer training material; guidance on the preparation of plans, the planned programme for implementation of the 1983 regulations and research findings.

It is too early to say what will be published thereafter.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters have been sent out to local authorities by Mr. Eric Alley, civil defence adviser to his Department in the period from 21 November 1985 to 1 July 1986; with which authorities Mr. Alley has engaged in correspondence; and if he will publish the text of all such correspondence in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In the period from 21 November 1985 to 1 July 1986 Mr. Alley, civil defence adviser, wrote approximately 66 letters to local authorities. The authorities with whom he has engaged in correspondence are listed below:—

County Councils, FCDAs and Regional Councils

Avon CC	Norfolk CC
Bucks CC	Lincolnshire CC
Clwyd CC	West Glamorgan CC
Devon CC	Somerset CC
Dyfed CC	Grampian RC
Cornwall CC	Gloucestershire CC
Dorset CC	Tyne and Wear CC
Tayside RC	Merseyside CC
Gwynedd CC	West Yorks CC
Wiltshire CC	Oxford CC
Surrey CC	Oxfordshire CC
Northumberland CC	Hertfordshire CC
Leicestershire CC	Warwickshire CC
Borders Regional Council	Lancashire CC
Greater London Council	North Yorks CC
Northants CC	West Midlands FCDA
Lothian CC	South Yorks FCDA

District

North Cornwall DC	Carmarthen DC
Woodspring DC	Vale of Glamorgan BC
Hastings BC	Oxford City DC
North Kesteven DC	Braintree DC

Publication of the text of all such correspondence would not be appropriate.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the voluntary organisations that Mr. Eric Alley, civil defence adviser to his Department has met in the period since his appointment, with which such bodies he has engaged in correspondence; and if he will publish the text of all correspondence in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Mr. Alley has met representatives of the WRVS and the National Voluntary Civil Aid Services. A meeting with the national joint emergency executive committee of the Red Cross and St. John is currently being arranged. He has corresponded with all three. It would not be appropriate to publish the texts.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to issue local authorities with guidance on the role of voluntary organisations in civil defence; and if he intends to identify specific such organisations.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Guidance is already included in emergency planning guidance to local authorities issued in 1985.

Nuclear Blast Simulations

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those nuclear blast simulations conducted in the United States of America during the last five years with which his Department's scientific research and development branch has been associated, the specific reason for its involvement, the cost of involvement in each simulation to his Department, and arrangements for similar involvement in forthcoming such simulations.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is as follows:

Year of trial	*Cost of United Kingdom involvement* £
1981	20,000
1983	176,648
1985	421,152

The purpose was to obtain information on the effects of nuclear explosions, and in particular to test and develop ways of achieving protection. A further trial is planned for 1987 but the cost is not yet known.

Public Bodies

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a list of all the bodies in Wales to which he has the sole or joint responsibility for making appointments.

Mr. Hurd: I have sole or joint responsibility for making appointments to the following bodies in Wales:

The Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales
The Welsh Fourth Channel Authority
Boards of visitors and local review commitees at prison department establishments located in Wales.

Greater London Council

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what amounts are still outstanding for Government grants to the Greater London council from his Department.

Mr. Hurd: Some grant claims are still awaited, but we estimate that £4·1 million will eventually be due to the London residuary body.

Fire Brigade Committee

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he has refused the request from the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority to set up a fire brigade committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Further representations on this matter have been received and the outcome will be communicated to the hon. Member in due course.

James Wallace

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will institute inquiries into the allegations about security contained in a letter recently sent to him by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby about the case of James Wallace.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I will reply as soon as possible.

Entry Refusals

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if, pursuant to his answer on 11 July, *Official Report*, columns 283-86, he will publish for each month and each nationality the percentage of total passenger traffic that the figures then provided represent;

(2) how many people were refused entry to the United Kingdom in each month between April 1984 and March 1985, inclusive; if he will publish those figures by nationality of those refused; and if he will show the percentage of total passenger traffic for each country and in each month which those figures represent.

Mr. Waddington: I will write to the hon. Member.

Police (Early Retirements)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the figures for early retirement through ill-health in ratio to force numbers for the police forces in Manchester, West Yorkshire, and Humberside for the latest available three years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constables of Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and Humberside that the numbers of ill-health retirements during the last three years, in ratio to the authorised establishments on 31 December of each year, are as follows:

Ratio of ill-health retirements to the authorised establishment

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
Greater Manchester	1:124	1:61	1:53
West Yorkshire	1:126	1:87	1:95
Humberside	1:247	1:99	1:79

Strip Search

Dr. Gilbert asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the right hon. Member for Dudley, East may expect a reply to the questions which he put in his letters of 14 March, 12 May and 24 June concerning one of his constituents who was strip searched, while suffering from a medical condition known to the authorities, at one of Her Majesty's prisons on a visit to her husband on 16 February.

Mr. Mellor: I will reply as soon as possible.

Sports Grounds (Safety)

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will designate under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 sports stadia and grounds in England and Wales to implement recommendation 2 of the final report of the Popplewell inquiry.

Mr. Hurd: I have made an order which will shortly be laid before the House to designate a total of 52 sports grounds in England and Wales where there is accommodation for more than 10,000 spectators, including 26 grounds used for association football, three used for rugby league, 16 used for rugby union and seven used for cricket. The effect will be to require the responsible persons in all cases to apply for safety certificates from the appropriate local authorities if they wish to admit spectators to the grounds. The order will come into operation on 23 August. Its provisions have been drawn to the attention of the clubs concerned.

Local Radio

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the scope for reducing financial burdens on independent local radio.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that the Independent Broadcasting Authority has now identified improvements in the method of apportioning expenditure between its television and radio branches which would have the effect of significantly reducing the costs which have to be recovered through independent local radio programme contractors' rental payments to the authority. I warmly welcome this outcome. The future of the regulatory arrangements for independent local radio and their costs will be considered in the Green Paper on radio which we propose to publish in the autumn.

Football Hooliganism

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any further information about recent trends in the incidence of football hooliganism and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The Association of Chief Police Officers for England and Wales has now collected figures for attendances and arrests at Football League matches, and ejections from grounds, during the 1985-86 season. The figures for divisions 1 and 2, with comparable statistics for the 1984-85 season, are as follows:

	Division 1			*Division 2*			*Overall*
	1984-85	*1985-86*	*Percentage Change*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*Percentage Change*	*Percentage Change*
Attendances	9,810,649	9,008,673	−8	4,028,612	3,542,028	−12	−9
Arrests	3,752	1,839	−51	1,765	1,050	−41	−47
Ejections	3,299	2,206	−33	1,455	1,089	−25	−30

The reduction in arrests was in fact slightly greater than I indicated in the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) on 4 June at columns *564-65*.

Temporary Admissions

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people were temporarily admitted to the United Kingdom *(a)* after refusal of leave to enter and *(b)* pending further examination in 1984; and if he will publish a table showing the nationality of those temporarily admitted in each category;

(2) how many people absconded after a grant of temporary admission in 1984.

Mr. Waddington: I will reply as soon as possible.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Metropolitan police oficers and civilians are engaged on traffic matters within force headquarters; and if he will provide a breakdown by branch and rank and describe the functions of each branch.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *338*]: The information requested is as follows:

Metropolitan Police: Police Officers engaged full time on traffic matters at Force Headquarters as at 13 July 1986.

	Commander	*Chief Superintendent*	*Superintendent*	*Chief Inspector*	*Inspector*	*Police Sergeant*	*Police Constable*	*Total*
B2 Branch (traffic management, road safety and accident research)	—	—	1	4	17	14	—	36
B8 Branch (traffic patrols and car pounds)	—	1	—	2	1	3	4	11
Total	—	1	1	6	18	17	4	47

Metropolitan Police: Civil staff engaged full time on traffic matters at Force Headquarters as at 13 July 1986

	B1 Branch: traffic Secretariat	*B2 Branch: traffic management, road safety and accident research*	*B3 Branch: public carriage office*	*B4 Branch: traffic legislation and process*	*B7 Branch: traffic wardens administration*	*B8 Branch: traffic patrols and car pounds*	*B9 Branch: central traffic ticket office*	*Miscellaneous*	*Total*
Grade 6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Grade 7	1	—	1	1	1	—	1	—	4
SEO	1	1	1	4	1	—	3	—	11
HEO	2	3	1	8	3	—	10	—	27
EO	4	9	2	20	5	1	41	—	82
CO	3	29	14	28	3	7	149	—	235
Senior personal secretary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Personal secretary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	3
CA	2	2	7	7	2	22	94	—	136
Senior superintendent typist	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Superintendent typist	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Specialist typist	—	—	—	—	—	1	17	—	18
Typist	—	1	1	1	—	3	3	—	9
Paperkeeper	—	—	1	1	—	—	5	—	7
Telephonist	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	2
Chief inspecting officer	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Principal public carriage examiner	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Senior public carriage examiner	—	—	6	—	—	—	—	—	6
Public carriage examiner	—	—	19	—	—	—	—	—	19
London examiner I	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
London examiner II	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	4
B3 industrial	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Traffic warden controller	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
Traffic warden	—	—	—	—	3	—	5	—	8
Total	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	577

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers and civilians are engaged on traffic matters locally in the Metropolitan police district area; and if he will provide a breakdown by rank and location.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *338*]: Most police officers and civilians engaged full time on traffic enforcement matters outside force headquarters are assigned to B8 branch (traffic division) or to traffic warden centres. Details of the numbers and ranks are given below. There are some additional divisionally based staff, both police and civilian, dealing with traffic process work but no central record of their numbers is kept and details could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Metropolitan Police Traffic Warden Centres: Strength as at 13 July 1986

Centre	*Clerical Officer*	*Clerical Assistants*	*STWC*	*TWC*	*TWS*	*TW*
Cannon Row		1		1	4	21
Regency Street	1	1	1	1	8	75
Chelsea	1	3	1	2	11	72
Kensington	1	2	1	2	8	78
Bow Street	1			1	5	29
Ramillies Place	1	3	1	2	13	142
Marylebone		2	1	2	12	78
Harrow Road	1			1	5	48
Grays Inn Road	2	2	1	3	15	143
Heckfield Place		1		1	5	24
Old Street	1	1		1	5	38
Leman Street	1			1	6	27
Heathrow	1		1	3	11	82
Horns Road	1	1	1	1	7	50
Collier Row	1			1	2	20
Cavendish Road	1			1	5	32
Kennington				1	3	24
Camberwell	1			1	5	37
Trio Place	1		1	1	3	53
Camden	1	1	2	4	14	89
Catford	3			1	2	16
Bromley	1			1	3	26
Harrow	1			1	3	16
Wembley	1			1	2	21
Abbeywood	1			1	5	31
Finchley					1	13
Richmond				1	3	12
Kingston				1	4	21
Wimbledon	1			1	3	18
Hanwell	1			1	1	15
Ponders End	1	1		1	4	20
Croydon	1	2	1		8	80
Sutton	1			1	4	21
Total	29	21	12	42	190	1,472

Metropolitan Police B8 Branch: Civil Staff Assigned to Traffic Divisions as at 13 July 1986

	Clerical Officer	*Specialist Typist*	*Typist*	*Full time telephonist*	*VRO*	*DTWC*
TDB Barnes	2	—	1	—	14	—
TDE Euston	2	1	—	—	—	1
TDH Bow	3	—	1	—	17	—
TDJ Chadwell Heath	4	—	1	—	—	1
TDP Catford	3	—	1	2	49	1
TDQ Wembley	2	—		—	—	1
TDS Finchley	2	1	—	—	—	—
TDT Hampton	1	—	1	—	—	1
TDZ West Croydon	2	—	1	2	—	—
Total	21	2	6	4	80	5

Metropolitan Police B8 Branch: Officers Assigned to Traffic Divisions as at 13 July 1986

	Commander	Chief Superintendent	Superintendent	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Police Sergeant	Police Constable	Total
B8 Branch								
Special Escort Group								
92-102 Station Road								
Barnes	—	—	—	—	1	4	32	37
*TDM**								
20 Maltby Street								
SE1 3PG	—	—	—	—	—	2	12	14
*TDP**								
34 Aitken Road								
SE6	—	—	1	1	3	13(1)	75(4)	93
*TDJ**								
11 Grove Road								
Chadwell Heath								
Essex	—	—	1	1	3	14(1)	96(5)	115
tdh:								
2A Wellington Way								
E3 4LN	—	—	—	1	2	10(1)	84(3)	97
*TDQ**								
Athlon Road								
Wembley								
Middlesex HAQ 1EW	—	1	1	1	3	9(1)	56(5)	71
*TDB**								
St. Ann's Road								
Barnes SW13 9LL	—	—	—	1	3	9(1)	54(4)	67
TDE								
1-31 Drummond Crescent								
NW1 1LY	—	—	1	1	3	10	66	81
*TDS**								
931 High Road								
N12 8QR	—	—	1	1	3	12(1)	72(5)	89
*TDT**								
68 Station Road								
Hampton								
TW12 2AX	—	—	—	1	2	11(1)	68(5)	82
TDV								
Hollyfield Road								
Surbiton	—	—	—	—	1	4	23	28
*TDZ**								
Windmill Road								
West Croydon								
Surrey	—	—	—	1	3	10(1)	47(4)	61
Total	0	1	5	9	27	108	685	835

* Includes Accident Prevention Unit Officers details shown in brackets.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the strength of B Department of the Metropolitan police for each year from 1980 to 1985 broken down by officer and civilians, headquarters staff and for locally-based officers by rank and area.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 July 1986, c. *338*]: The information requested is as follows:

Metropolitan police B department total police strengths

	Cmdr	Ch Supt	Supt	Ch Insp	Insp	Sgts	Const	Total
31 December 1980	6	13	17	30	87	222	1,342	1,717
31 December 1981	5	13	14	35	87	231	1,352	1,737
31 December 1982	5	13	15	37	92	225	1,356	1,743

	Cmdr	Ch Supt	Supt	Ch Insp	Insp	Sgts	Const	Total
31 December 1983	5	11	14	42	90	199	1,289	1,650
31 December 1984	5	13	13	35	76	187	1,103	1,432
31 December 1985*	2	8	14	33	77	194	1,055	1,383

* As a result of the Commissioner's reorganisation of the force 'B' Department as such ceased to exist on 11 March 1985. Most of its functions were transferred to the new "Territorial Operations" Department, but some branches moved to other HQ branches. The figure quoted for 1985 is the total for all the branches which made up the old 'B' Department.
This table includes officers assigned to B8 Branch but based at local traffic divisions.

Metropolitan police—'B' department to civil staff strength

December of each year

	Headquarters						Local					
	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	*1985	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	*1985
Grade 6	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grade 7	5	5	5	4	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—
SEO	11	12	10	10	10	12	—	—	—	—	—	—
HEO	28	30	28	26	28	28	—	—	—	—	—	—
EO	118	112	117	87	81	94	—	—	—	—	—	—
CO	537	522	505	315	297	367	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Personal Secretary	1	—	—	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Personal Secretary	1	1	1	2	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
CA	231	194	145	115	125	132	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Superintendent Typists	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Superintendent Typists	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Specialist Typist	1	3	1	3	3	9	—	—	—	—	—	—
Word Processor Operator	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Typist	43	41	39	33	35	29	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Paperkeeper	—	—	—	—	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Paperkeeper	10	7	7	7	12	11	—	—	—	—	—	—
Network Supervisor	—	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Network Supervisor	1	2	2	2	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Telephone Supervisor	2	1	1	2	2	5	8	8	9	9	9	9
Assistant Telephone Supervisor	2	3	2	4	6	3	3	12	11	11	11	12
Telephonist	22	23	23	25	28	45	77	62	77	91	86	109
Wireless Telegraphy Officer	—	6	5	6	9	8	—	—	—	—	—	—
Specialist Teleprinter Operator	—	13	14	16	14	13	—	—	—	—	—	—
Part-time Telephonist	24	24	23	24	29	35	63	62	74	83	90	78
Chief Inspecting Officer	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Principal Public Carriage Examiner	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Public Carriage Examiner	6	6	6	4	6	6	—	—	—	—	—	—
Public Carriage Examiner	19	19	18	22	20	19	—	—	—	—	—	—
London Examiner I	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
London Examiner II	4	4	4	4	4	4	—	—	—	—	—	—
B3 Industrial	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Vehicle Removal Officer	—	—	—	—	—	—	66	78	87	80	85	81
Divisional Traffic Warden Controller	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	4	4	4	5	5
Senior Traffic Warden Controller	1	—	—	—	—	—	13	13	13	12	12	12
Traffic Warden Controller	—	—	1	1	1	1	36	36	38	39	39	39
Traffic Warden Supervisor	3	3	2	—	—	—	171	154	168	183	196	182
Traffic Warden	6	6	5	5	6	5	901	1,090	1,243	1,543	1,571	1,457
Superintending Chief Photographer	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chief Photographer	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Principal Photographer†	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Photographer	28	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Photographer	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Chief Fingerprint Officer	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chief Fingerprint Officer	—	3	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Principal Fingerprint Officer	—	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Fingerprint Officer†	—	25	25	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fingerprint Officer I	—	55	55	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

	Headquarters						Local					
	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	**1985*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	**1985*
Fingerprint Officer II	—	122	137	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fingerprint Officer III	—	124	99	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	1,151	1,308	1,303	726	737	847	1,342	1,519	1,724	2,055	2,104	1,984

* As a result of the Commissioner's reorganisation of the force 'B' Department as such ceased to exist on 11 March 1985. Most of its functions were transferred to the new 'Territorial Operations' Department but some branches moved to other HQ Departments. The figure quoted for 1985 is the total for all the branches which made up the old 'B' Department.

† Fingerprint officers and photographers moved to 'C' (now 'SO') Department in 1983 and 1981 respectively.

Records for the number of police officers assigned to B8 Branch and serving at local traffic divisions are no longer kept for the years 1980-83. The figures for 1984 and 1985 are:

Metropolitan Police—B8 Branch Officers Assigned to Traffic Divisions as at 31 December 1984

	Commander	*Chief Superintendent*	*Superintendent*	*Chief Inspector*	*Inspector*	*Police Sergeant*	*Police Constable*	*Total*
B8 Branch Special Escort Group 92-102 Station Road Barnes	—	—	—	—	1	4	28	33
*TDM** 20 Maltby Street SE1 3PG	—	1	1	1	3	16	77	99
*TDP** 34 Aitken Road SE6	—	—	—	1	3	7(1)	46(5)	57
*TDJ** 11 Grove Road Chadwell Heath Essex	—	1	—	1	3	16(1)	101(5)	122
*TDH** 2A Wellington Way Bow E3 4LN	—	—	1	1	2	8(1)	77(5)	89
*TDQ** Athlon Road Wembley Middlesex HAQ 1EW	—	1	1	1	2	9(1)	53(5)	67
*TDB** St. Ann's Road Barnes SW13 9LL	—	—	—	1	4	10(1)	66(5)	81
TDE 1-31 Drummond Crescent NW1 1LY	—	—	—	1	3	7	59	70
*TDS** 931 High Road N12 8QR	—	1	1	—	2	11(1)	73(5)	88
*TDT** 68 Station Road Hampton TW12 2AX	—	1	1	—	2	11(1)	69(5)	84
TDV Hollyfield Road Surbiton	—	—	—	—	1	4	27	32
*TDZ** Windmill Road West Croydon Surrey	—	—	—	1	2	6(1)	37(5)	46
Total	0	5	5	8	28	109	713	868

Metropolitan Police—B8 Branch Officers Assigned to Traffic Divisions as at 31 December 1985

	Commander	*Chief Superintendent*	*Superintendent*	*Chief Inspector*	*Inspector*	*Police Sergeant*	*Police Constable*	*Total*
B8 Branch Special Escort Group 92-102 Station Road Barnes	—	—	—	—	1	4	28	33
*TDM** 20 Maltby Street SE1 3PG	—	—	1	1	3	10	67	82
*TDP** 34 Aitken Road SE6	—	—	—	—	3	7(1)	35(4)	45
*TDJ** 11 Grove Road Chadwell Heath Essex	—	—	1	1	3	13(1)	104(5)	121
*TDH** 2A Wellington Way Bow E3 4LN	—	—	—	1	2	10(1)	75(4)	88
*TDQ** Athlon Road Wembley Middlesex HAQ 1EW	—	1	1	1	3	11(1)	50(5)	67
*TDB** St. Ann's Road Barnes SW13 9LL	—	—	—	1	3	10(1)	57(4)	71
TDE 1-31 Drummond Crescent NW1 1LY	—	—	1	1	3	10	61	76
*TDS** 931 High Road N12 8QR	—	—	1	1	2	11(1)	69(5)	84
*TDT** 68 Station Road Hampton TW12 2AX	—	—	—	1	2	11(1)	73(5)	87
TDV Hollyfield Road Surbiton	—	—	—	—	1	4	24	29
*TDZ** Windmill Road West Croydon Surrey	—	—	—	1	2	8(1)	38(5)	49
Total	0	1	5	9	27	109	681	832

* Includes Accident Prevention Unit Officers details shown in brackets.

ENVIRONMENT

Government Land Sales

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the sale of publicly owned land at preferential rates.

Mr. Tracey: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Woking (Council House Rents)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what losses in central Government funding Woking borough council ratepayers can expect to suffer, following that council's decision to reduce council house rents by an average of 50p per week.

Mr. Waldegrave: The result could be a loss of block grant of up to £71,000 in 1986-87, and a substantially larger amount in a full year, although this will depend on whether the council make offsetting reductions in expenditure or balances.

Queen Elizabeth II School, Woking

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received

concerning Surrey county council's application for planning consent on the site of the former Queen Elizabeth II school in Woking; and if he will now call in this application for a public inquiry.

Mr. Tracey: Representations have been received from Woking borough council. The application is being referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State as a substantial departure from the approved development plan for the area. When the application has been received he will decide whether to call it in for his own decision and hold a public inquiry.

Liverpool City Council

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been allocated to Liverpool city council through the urban aid programme in each of the past seven years.

Mr. John Patten: The urban programme allocations to Liverpool city council in the past seven years, including grant aid made available through the Liverpool inner city partnership and the special Merseyside allocation have been as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	12·520
1980-81	16·000
1981-82	15·700
1982-83	22·264
1983-84	22·248
1984-85	21·116
1985-86	20·608

Special Protection Areas

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is yet in a postion to list as special protection areas under EEC directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds *(a)* Morecambe Bay, *(b)* the Wash, *(c)* the Severn estuary, including the Taff/Ely estuary site of special scientific interest, *(d)* Chichester and Langstone harbours, *(e)* Duich Moss, *(f)* Islay, *(g)* the Solway firth and *(h)* the Mersey estuary.

Mrs. Rumbold: My officials are currently considering proposals from the Nature Conservancy Council for the listing of the Wash, Chichester and Langstone harbours, Duich Moss and the Mersey estuary sites. The listing of these sites involves a number of complex and sensitive issues which we shall try to resolve as quickly as possible.

We have as yet received no proposals from the Nature Conservancy Council concerning the listing of the remaining sites.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those areas which have been notified as sites of special scientific interest by the Nature Conservancy Council and have subsequently been forwarded to him with the recommendation that they be listed as Ramsar sites or special protection areas; and if he will state the date on which those recommendations were received from the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department is currently considering the following sites of special scientific interest for listing as Ramsar sites or special protection areas.

Site	*Date Received in DOE*
The Wash (Ramsar/SPA)	16 March 1984
Loch Eye (Ramsar/SPA)	10 September 1985
Loch of Skene (Ramsar/SPA)	10 September 1985
Mersey Estuary (Ramsar/SPA)	28 November 1985
Chichester and Langstone Harbours (Ramsar/SPA)	13 December 1985
Orwell and Stour Estuaries (Ramsar/SPA)	17 January 1986
Medway Estuary (Ramsar/SPA)	7 April 1986
Priest Island (SPA)	15 April 1986
Islay (inc. Duich Moss) (Ramsar/SPA)	16 May 1986

Homes Insulation

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the allocation to St. Helens district council under the homes insulation scheme for 1986-87; and what is the percentage change from 1985-86;

(2) what was the total amount of money allocated to local authorities in England and Wales for loft insulation grants for 1986-87; and what percentage change this represents on 1985-86;

(3) what was the total amount of money allocated to each local authority in England and Wales for loft insulation grants in 1986-87 stating the percentage change in each case over 1985-86.

Sir George Young: The allocation of resources to local authorities in England for 1986-87 under the homes insulation scheme has not been completed, as allocations from the reserve continue to be made. In Wales my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is responsible for the homes insulation scheme.

Urban Housing Renewal Unit (Leeds)

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals the urban housing renewal unit has received from Leeds city council; and with what result.

Sir George Young: In my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) on 26 March (at col. *501-2*), I announced approval in principle to a major proposal to renovate and revitalise the Gipton South estate.

Discussions are in progress with Leeds city council on proposals concerning the Belle Isle, South Seacroft and Halton Moor estates. The urban housing renewal unit has also received a proposal concerning the Granges, Chapeltown but has indicated to the council that it does not fall within the unit's remit. Discussions are also taking place with the Council concerning properties at Newhall road.

Greater Manchester PTA (Funding)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to vary the grant related expenditure assessment for public transport to spread the costs incurred by Greater Manchester passenger transport authority as a result of establishing the Initial Bus Company in Greater Manchester more evenly between the Government and the ratepayers in the area; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is currently consulting the local authority associations on options for

changes to grant related expenditure assessments for inclusion in the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement. These include changes to the passenger transport GREA in respect of some aspects of the establishment of public transport companies.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Clelland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the net effect at current prices, on the 1987-88 budgets of *(a)* Gateshead metropolitan borough council and *(b)* Newcastle city council, following his statement on rate support grant made to the House on Tuesday 22 July.

Mr. Waldegrave: As my right hon. Friend told the House on 22 July, it is not yet possible to give details about the rate support grant payable in 1987-88 to an individual authority; and it is of course open to those authorities which my right hon. Friend has selected for rate limitation for 1987-88 to apply for a retermination of their expenditure levels which he announced in his statement.

Radiation

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the derived emergency reference levels for the radioactive contamination of food that have been in use by his Department since the Chernobyl accident.

Mrs. Rumbold: The derived emergency reference levels were published by the National Radiological Protection Board and I am therefore asking it to write to the hon. Member to explain how they are calculated.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a breakdown of the comparative derived emergency reference levels currently in use in each of the EEC countries including the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Rumbold: There has been no official compilation of values for DERLs in the member states of the European Community. However, publications of the World Health Organisation and informal exchanges of information indicate a range of values from 250 bq/kg for vegetables in Greece and the Federal Republic of Germany, up to 5000 bq/kg for any foodstuffs in emergency conditions in Italy.

Food (Radioactivity)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on when the National Radiological Protection Board will recalculate its derived emergency reference levels for radioactive contamination of food in line with its own recommendation that the public dose limit should be no more than 1 mSv per annum.

Mrs. Rumbold: Dose limits for routine situations lasting for many decades do not constrain the choice of reference levels such as DERLs for application after an accident, but they can be used as comparisons. The question of DERLs is still under active consideration by a group of experts of the European Commission, on which a member of NRPB staff serves; this group will doubtless take into account the values of the dose limits.

Rates (Leicester)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of people pay rates in full *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Leicester; and if he will estimate the numbers in receipt of rent rebates.

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1985-86, one in three local electors in Great Britain were estimated to be paying rates directly and in full. In the same year two thirds (3·8m) of council tenants were estimated to be in receipt of rent rebates. The corresponding figures for Leicester were one in four electors and 24,000 tenants respectively.

Trust for London

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of the trustees of the City Parochial Foundation responsible for the setting-up of the Trust for London.

Mrs. Rumbold: The names of the trustees of the City Parochial Foundation are given in reports to the Charity Commissioners. The names of the current trustees are as attached.

Name	*Nominating body*
J N Butterwick	The Crown
Lord Henniker	
Earl of Limerick	
Lady Marre	
Dr R C Tress	
Sir David Floyd-Ewin	Corporation of London
Brigadier J J Packard	
J L Reed	
Mrs R Humphrays	
Sir Ashley Bramall	Former Greater London Council
Dr D Avery	
J Udal	
Vacancy	
J F M Smallwood	Church Commissioner
Ven. F Harvey	
Professor J P Quilliam	Senate of University of London
Professor G Manners	Council of University College
I P Shaw	Council of Kings College
P B Burke	Council of City and Guilds of London Institute
R L Payton	Governing Body Bishopgate Foundation
P E Haynes	Governing Body Criplegate Foundation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the £10 million available during the financial year 1986-87 for the Trust for London will be comprised of *(a)* revenue from property sales, *(b)* external borrowing and *(c)* other sources.

Mrs. Rumbold: The whole of the grant to the Trust for London will be made from money received from the disposal of land by the residuary body.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations have been held by his Department with voluntary organisations concerning the establishment of the Trust for London.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton, on 1 May at column 487.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have been held by his

Department with the Trustees of the City Parochial Foundation in relation to setting up the Trust for London; and by what date he expects the trust to be set up.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has held discussions with the Trustees of the City Parochial Foundation to seek their agreement to administer the Trust for London.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given him by my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) on 11 July at column 31.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the content and format of the first annual report and statement of accounts of the London residuary body has been agreed; and when the report will be presented to Parliament.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be issuing a direction to residuary bodies under section 78 of the Local Government Act 1985 as to the form of their statements of accounts. These statements in respect of the 1985-86 financial year will be laid before Parliament after they are audited.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what questions about borrowing in 1986-87 were raised by the London residuary body in its communication to his Department on 8 July; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the total amount of proposed borrowing by the London residuary body in 1986-87 for which his consent is needed.

Mrs. Rumbold: The letter raised questions about the availability of borrowing consent

(a) to enable successor authorities to redeem debt owed to the London Residuary Body; and

(b) to enable the London Residuary Body to finance certain capital payments.

The amount of borrowing required for the latter purpose in 1986-87 will depend on a number of factors, including decisions about the use of capital receipts accruing to the London residuary body, on which we are at present considering representations from interested parties.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much the London residuary body is seeking to claim from his Department in respect of outstanding Government grants to the Greater London council;

(2) what is the total amount of Government grants to the Greater London council still outstanding.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member on 16 July at Column *544*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by borough the amount each has received from the London residuary body since 1 April.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member on 11 July at column 310. My Department does not have information about any amounts which have been distributed at any particular point in time.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will call for a report from the chairman of the London residuary body on the amount of money spent on furniture, crockery expenses and ex-gratia payments to staff by the London residuary body since 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I see no need for such a report.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will make a statement about the transfer of Greater London council seaside and country homes from the London residuary body to the Anchor housing association.

Sir George Young: Negotiations for the transfer are currently taking place. I am being kept informed of progress.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what directions, advice or guidance he has given to the London residuary body since 1 April.

Mrs. Rumbold: Guidance to all residuary bodies on financial rights and liabilities was issued by the Department on 11 July. This will be consolidated into the wider guidance on property, rights and liabilities to be issued shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment at what date the level of remuneration payable to chairmen and members of the residuary bodies will be considered.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) on 5 June 1986 at column *497*. The remuneration of the members of public boards has been increased from 1 July 1986 consequential on the decisions reached on the report of the Top Salaries Review Body.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether a response has now been sent by his Department to the London residuary body concerning its request for consents to borrowing dated 8 July; and whether the requests of the London residuary body have been approved by his Department.

Mrs. Rumbold: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he can give a date by which full payment may be expected to the London residuary body of claims for Government grants from the Greater London council; and if he will list the Departments with which such claims are outstanding.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member on 16 July at column 544.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the reasons discussed with the chairman of the London residuary body for the delay in announcing the release of £18 million from the Greater London council balances in April.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 23 July at columns 338-39.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will request the London residuary body to bring forward proposals to make available ex-Greater London council light industrial properties which it controls to the London borough of Hackney and to other inner city boroughs which have a demand for rented industrial units;

(2) if he has any plans to bring forward a draft property transfer order for the London residuary body to hand over ex-Greater London council light industrial properties to the London borough of Hackney and to other inner city boroughs.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. The disposal of these properties is a matter for which the London residuary body is responsible.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there have been any discussions between his Department and officials of the London residuary body concerning the making of special payments to staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: This is one of the matters about which the London residuary body informed the Department of its decisions.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there have been any discussions between his Department and the London residuary body concerning the future of computer services in London currently provided by the London residuary body; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: This is one of the matters about which the London residuary body has kept the Department informed.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a direction to prevent the London residuary body from seeking to renegotiate prices for sales of property authorised by the Greater London council to two housing co-operatives at 3-12 Clark street and 20-26 Ford square, Tower Hamlets and 85-88 Brent Terrace, Barnet; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there have been any discussions between his Department and the London residuary body regarding the organisations and authorities to be consulted on the future of Hampstead heath; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: This is one of the matters about which the London residuary body has informed the Department of its decisions.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have taken place between his Department and the London residuary body regarding the body's budget forecast for the income during the period 1 April and 31 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are frequent discussions between this Department and the London residuary body about financial matters.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there have been any discussions between his Department and officials of the London residuary body concerning any charge to be made for the use of the County Hall by the Inner London education authority, and the financial terms for the Inner London education authority after 1 September 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: This in one of the matters about which the London residuary body has kept the Department informed.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Newham, North West can expect to receive replies to questions raised in an Adjournment debate on 23 May on the London residuary body, *Official Report*, column 648, to which a reply by correspondence was promised.

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, wrote on 6 June. The London residuary body expects to reply soon to matters for which it is responsible.

Hampstead Heath

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future of Hampstead heath.

Mrs. Rumbold: This is a matter for the London residuary body. It has invited comments by 30 September on a consultation document on the future of Hampstead heath. The LRB will make recommendations to the Secretary of State in the light of those comments.

Residuary Bodies

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the final version of the property guidelines for residuary bodies; and if a copy will be made available in the Library.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) on 11 July 1986 at column *312*.

Thamesmead

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the means of transfer of Thamesmead from the London residuary body have been decided; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is proposed that the means of transfer should be by conveyance from the London residuary body to Thamesmead town.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if there will be any ministerial involvement in the negotiations between the London residuary body and Thamesmead Town Ltd. as to the purchase price of land and property at Thamesmead; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: By virtue of paragraph 61 of schedule 2 to the Housing (Consequential Provisions) Act 1985 the consent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be required before the disposal takes place.

GLC Seaside and Country Homes

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Association of London Authorities made a formal request to his Department that Greater London council seaside and country homes should be transferred to a housing association where fair rents apply; and how the request was communicated.

Sir George Young: The proposal for transfer to a housing association was first put to me on 3 October 1985 by the inter-borough nomination scheme, with unanimous support from member boroughs. I have received other letters of support, notably one from the chairman of the housing and works committee of the London Boroughs Association and another from the GLC which referred to support expressed by the Association of London authorities.

South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of all contracts involving his Department and majority-owned South African companies since June 1979.

Sir George Young: This information is not available.

Rosehill Estate, Willenhall

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to the reply of 25 June, *Official Report*, columns *238-39*, when his Department will now be making a decision on urban housing renewal unit resources to Walsall metropolitan borough council for the modernisation of the Rosehill Estate, Willenhall.

Sir George Young: We will do so shortly.

Out-of-town Shopping Centres

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will make it his policy to call in all applications which for out-of-town shopping centres exceeding 100,000 sq.ft. within the Greater Manchester area.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend's policy is to deal with each planning case on its merits, with call-in the exception rather than the rule.

Council House Sales

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue guidelines to local authorities as to how long they should keep right-to-buy documentation, and as to the circumstances in which such documents should be destroyed; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: This would normally be a matter for local authorities' own discretion; but if the hon. Member is aware of any difficulties perhaps he would write to me.

County Hall, London

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the London residuary body has received the consultants' report on the future of county hall; if a copy will be made available in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand that the LRB expects to receive the consultants' report within the next few weeks. If the LRB decides to make the report public, I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Green Belt

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how, pursuant to his answer of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *414*, he proposes to monitor implementation of his policy for the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings in the green belt.

Sir George Young: We shall in the normal way be taking note of the general implications of cases which come to our attention. We have no plans at present for formal research into this topic.

Textiles

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has been earmarked under the European regional development fund non-quota scheme for textile areas for West Yorkshire; over what period of years; and how much has so far been committed.

Sir George Young: For infrastructure projects the information is:

West Yorkshire allocation: £9,010,000; eligible period: 1 February 1984—31 January 1989; amount committed so far £1,561,350.

Grant of £9,010,000 is also available for small firms under the Department of Trade and Industry's business improvement scheme in the same period.

Rents

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will bring up to date the information on council house rents in his answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 1 December 1982, *Official Report*, columns 208-9.

Sir George Young: Following are the figures corresponding to those for 1972 to 1982 given in my reply to the hon. Member on 1 December 1982:

	Rent component weight (out of 1,000)		*Percentage increase in year to January*	
		of which, local authority rent approximately	*in rent component*	*in Retail Prices Index*
1983	36	32	11·0	4·9
1984	35	31	4·8	5·1
1985	31	28	7·2	5·0
1986	29	26	7·4	5·5

The weights are based on information obtained from the "family expenditure survey" and represent total rent payments by the households covered by the index, net of standard housing benefits except where households are also in receipt of housing benefit supplement, averaged over all index households not only those living in rented accommodation. For consistency, other forms of housing benefit have been treated as income, as supplementary benefit was before it, and therefore have not affected the retail prices index. The current weight for rents of 29 out of 1,000, was based on an estimated average weekly expenditure of about £5·40 in January 1986.

Mudchute Farm and Park Association

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the reasons for which all applications for revenue funding made by Mudchute Farm and Park Association in the Isle of Dogs were rejected by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No application for revenue funding by the Mudchute Farm and Park Association has been rejected by the Department.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will direct the London docklands development corporation to compile a register of all the freehold and leasehold acquisitions and holdings in the area of London docklands by each member of the London Docklands development corporation board, its staff, its consultants and their families; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he has taken to ensure that all grant and funding monies distributed by the London Docklands development corporation and drawn from the J4 local community budget have been allocated solely to local community projects, and that on no occasion funds from this local community budget have been passed to commercial companies or private individuals, and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the sum of money paid *(a)* from the London Docklands development corporation J4 local community budget and *(b)* from other London Docklands development corporation local community financing resources to (i) Albatross Industries Ltd, and (ii) other private companies in the London docklands, during each of the past three years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1986]: The London Docklands Development Corporation's J4 budget includes contributions to capital works on schools, parks, museums and other community facilities and are usually paid to local authorities or charitable trusts. The Community budget as a whole, including J4, is not used to make beneficial payments to commercial companies or private individuals, but on some occasions, the corporation makes payments directly to companies (such as building contractors) who have carried out works for the benefit of the community. No payments have been made to Albatross Industries Ltd. from the community budget.

Local Plans

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what rôle he plays in the determination of the procedure, timetable for objectors' evidence, and general organisation for a local plan public inquiry.

Mr. Tracey: The local planning authority is required by section 13(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 to arrange a public local inquiry to be held for the purpose of considering objections to a local plan which are made in accordance with the relevant Regulations, (The Town and Country Planning (Structure and Local Plans) Regulations 1982 (as amended) (SI 1982 No. 555 and SI 1984 No. 6 and SI 1986 No. 443); and the Town and Country Planning (Local Plans for Greater London) Regulations 1983 (as amended) (SI 1983 No. 1190 and SI 1986 No. 443), unless all objectors indicate in writing that they do not wish to appear. The Inquiry is held by an independent inspector. Procedures which local planning authorities are required to follow are set out in the Regulations. Advice on the procedures is contained in "Local plans: Public local inquiries — a guide to procedure 1984", published by this Department and the Welsh Office.

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he uses in deciding whether to call in a local plan.

Mr. Tracey: The Government's policy on calling in local plans is set out in the memorandum on structure and local plans accompanying DOE circular 22/84. This says that the call-in power will be used in only a limited range of circumstances where central Government intervention is clearly justified. The Secretary of State would not normally consider calling in a local plan until the authority had given notice of their intention to adopt the plan. Particular circumstances in which the exercise of call-in powers might be appropriate are where the plan raises issues of national or regional importance; or where the plan gives rise to substantial controversy, for example, extending beyond the area of the plan-making authority.

Greater London (Planning Appeals)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning appeals were considered by his Department in each of the Greater London boroughs for each of the years 1983, 1984 and 1985; and what percentage were upheld in each of those years.

Sir George Young: The number of planning appeals considered by my Department in each of the Greater London boroughs for each of the years 1984 and 1985 are as follows. Comparable figures for 1983 are not readily available. Also shown are percentages of appeals allowed.

S36 Planning appeals

	1984			*1985*		
	Number decided	*Number allowed*	*Percentage allowed*	*Number decided*	*Number allowed*	*Percentage allowed*
City of London	7	2	29	2	0	0
Barking and Dagenham	6	2	33	12	4	33
Barnet	54	16	30	67	28	42
Bexley	43	14	33	35	13	37
Brent	26	15	58	44	19	43
Bromley	124	39	31	198	78	39
Camden	85	44	52	84	49	58
Croydon	57	18	32	85	34	40
Ealing	44	16	36	59	29	49
Enfield	75	28	37	72	27	38
Greenwich	26	14	54	64	43	67

	1984			1985		
	Number decided	*Number allowed*	*Percentage allowed*	*Number decided*	*Number allowed*	*Percentage allowed*
Hackney	17	9	53	26	8	31
Hammersmith and Fulham	38	24	63	62	32	52
Haringey	24	7	29	42	16	38
Harrow	41	20	49	49	22	45
Havering	42	17	40	50	17	34
Hillingdon	40	15	38	63	28	44
Hounslow	34	12	35	96	44	46
Islington	28	15	54	36	13	36
Kensington and Chelsea	42	12	29	59	21	36
Kingston upon Thames	52	29	56	66	30	45
Lambeth	20	9	45	25	14	56
Lewisham	6	4	67	16	6	38
Merton	22	6	27	38	16	42
Newham	15	7	47	42	21	50
Redbridge	77	38	49	56	32	57
Richmond upon Thames	43	17	40	69	26	38
Southwark	31	15	48	39	26	67
Sutton	28	12	43	42	23	55
Tower Hamlets	11	7	64	13	7	54
Waltham Forest	18	8	44	29	10	34
Wandsworth	24	10	42	40	18	45
City of Westminster	53	19	36	92	44	48

Yorkshire (Atmospheric Monitoring)

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to investigate the lack of monitoring facilities in the Yorkshire region for airborne dust caused by atmospheric nuclear tests.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am satisfied that the environmental radioactivity surveillance programme carried out by the National Radiological Protection Board and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority is perfectly adequate to monitor fall out in Yorkshire and elsewhere in the United Kingdom arising from atmospheric nuclear tests.

Northern Ireland Flag

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 22 July, *Official Report*, column *111*, why the flag of Northern Ireland is not flown alongside those of Scotland, Wales and England on public buildings in Whitehall on suitable state occasions.

Mr. Tracey: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Flag of St. Patrick

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 22 July, *Official Report*, column 111, why the flag of St. Patrick for Ireland is flown on public buildings in Whitehall during state visits to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tracey: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 22 July, *Official Report*, column *111*; if St. Patrick's flag for Ireland has been adopted by Her Majesty's Government as the flag for Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I have been asked to reply.

No. The flag of Northern Ireland is the Union flag.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future of the Crown Suppliers.

Sir George Young: The Crown Suppliers have had another successful year's trading. Despite the fact that over 65 per cent. of their business is now untied and optional, they have more than met their financial objective for 1985-86. They have achieved this by raising their level of service, speeding up deliveries, reducing resource costs and offering still better value for money for the products and services they provide to an increasing number of public sector customers. This process will continue. They operate of course under the constraint that, as Departments are increasingly free to purchase goods and services elsewhere, the Crown Suppliers are expected to compete for work within the public sector, yet they cannot, generally speaking, seek business outside it as they would if they were a private concern.

The team of officials which last year reviewed the future of the Crown Suppliers concluded on the information available to them that whilst privatisation would be possible, it would not, in their view, be in the public interest. They recommended that the Crown Suppliers should be retained as a central purchasing agency in the public sector with rather greater autonomy in accounting and staffing matters, but that further consideration should be given to contracting out certain of their non-procurement activities. The central unit on purchasing has come to a similar conclusion about the central procurement function, but has made rather more radical suggestions about the Crown Suppliers' other activities.

Despite these recommendations, my right hon. Friend and I believe that, taking into account the wider commercial benefits, privatisation may yet prove to be a valid option. When he announced the original review last year, the then Secretary of State the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford made it clear that advice would be sought from a merchant bank as and when necessary. Our final decision about privatisation must take account of the costs and benefits to Government, including the

marketable value of the organisation and the effects on other Government Departments. I have therefore decided, without commitment, that it would be timely to seek the advice of an outside financial institution about the feasibility of privatising all or part of the Crown Suppliers, including the possibility of some form of management/staff financial participation in the business. I have also instituted a further detailed examination of the various recommendations for change proposed by the original review team and by the central unit on purchasing with the aim of implementing those recommendations which could be advantageous in terms of cost and efficiency. Meanwhile, the Crown Suppliers will continue to offer their present comprehensive service.

Homeless Families

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 12 June, *Official Report*, column 307, what steps he is now taking to determine the effect of the Pulhoffer judgment on the housing of homeless families by local authorities.

Sir George Young: This aspect will be covered along with others in our forthcoming postal survey of all housing authorities of their policies and practice under Part III of the Act, including the circumstances in which they accept people as homeless and the use of different kinds of accommodation for homeless people; in detailed case studies of selected authorities; and in my officials regular discussions with authorities. We shall also be monitoring the regular quarterly statistics returned by authorities on homelessness and pursuing with them the reasons for any substantial changes in, for instance, the proportion of applicants found not to be homeless. In addition we will be taking account of any further relevant court judgments and any evidence which the voluntary bodies choose to submit to us from their experience in advising homeless people.

Countryside (Changes)

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish the report he has received from Huntings Technical Services Ltd. following its research project on changes in the countryside.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. I have now received the report from Huntings Technical Services for their work carried out under contract to this Department and the Countryside Commission. They examined how the main features of the landscape of England and Wales have changed since the late 1940s. Copies are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

This report makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of changes that have taken place in the countryside. It has produced a whole range of statistical information which will be of value to the researchers, will enable further monitoring and analysis to take place, and provide a better factual base on which to build our plans for the future.

The main findings of the report demonstrate the significant expansion of the area of built-up land, and the growth in the area of farmland under crops. It also demonstrates the growth in the total area of forestry, mainly caused by the expansion of coniferous forests, together with a substantial fall in the area of semi natural vegetation. The study also indicates that the total length of hedgerows in England and Wales has fallen dramatically. The detailed figures in the survey are subject to considerable margins of statistical error, but the broad conclusions are believed to be reliable. Further detailed studies are being undertaken.

Sport in Schools

Mr. Haselhurst asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking in the light of recent representations about standards of sport in schools.

Mr. Tracey: Over the past seven months I have met representatives from a number of organisations in the sport and education fields. These meetings have proved useful in identifying particular issues of importance to both interests. There is a need for further discussion, and for this purpose I have agreed with my hon. Friend the Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science that senior officials in our Department will jointly host a seminar in the autumn on the subject of sport in schools. Interested organisations will shortly be invited to send representatives.

Our common aim is to ensure that children receive the full range of benefits that sport can contribute to children's education, and that our schools and governing bodies should work together to that end.

Homelessness

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish estimates prepared by his Department comparing the public expenditure implications of maintaining homeless households in receipt of supplementary benefit in commercial board and lodging accommodation, with providing such households with local authority rented accommodation by building new dwellings for them; and if he will publish separate estimates assuming the household concerned is *(a)* a single person, *(b)* a couple without children, *(c)* a single parent with one dependent child and *(d)* a couple with two dependent children accepted as homeless and in priority need of accommodation by (i) a London borough and (ii) a non-metropolitan local authority.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986, c. *658*]: I shall write to the hon. Member.

UK 2000 (Mr. Branson)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of Mr. Richard Branson's statement on 20 June, that he had not yet accepted the chairmanship of UK 2000, he has anything to add to his answer of 17 July, *Official Report*, column *628*, on this subject.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Great Lines, Brompton, Gillingham

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the sale of the Great Lines, Brompton, Gillingham, Kent, by the Property Services Agency on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.

Sir George Young: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Departmental Offices, Coatbridge

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the letter dated 22 July from the parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) to the hon. Member for Monklands, West regarding the proposed office at Coatbridge to house staff of the Departments of Health and Social Security and Employment.

Sir George Young: Yes. The text is as follows:

DE and DHSS Offices: Coatbridge

Michael Ancram has written to me about the comments you recently expressed to him over the proposed office at Coatbridge to house DHSS and DE staff.

As you know, during the Adjournment Debate on 25 March 1986, I undertook that I would examine with colleagues ways in which improved working conditions could be provided. In particular, we have investigated various options for phasing the developers' costs over the next few years. Unfortunately, two of the options proposed would result in an unacceptably high increase in the total cost of the project, and all rely upon funds not yet known to be available in future years.

The Coatbridge scheme is indeed of high priority, but I am dependent as to the outcome of this current PES round. You will be aware of the timetable for setting expenditure programmes, and I doubt if we will be able to give a further statement about the project until the PES round is completed in late September.

It was because I could not allow a contractual commitment to be entered into without funds being earmarked that I have had to hold the project up. There was no question of using savings on the project to finance a development in a New Town. It was simply that the project priorities had to be decided in conjuction with client Departments and, where funds are limited, some projects will go ahead and others will not.

I also understand that you have asked to see a copy of Mr. Gosling's reply to a letter from Males and McDonald, the developers involved in this project. I have pleasure in enclosing a copy.

I know that our continued inability to go ahead must be a disappointment; I will write again as soon as PSA's funding position for future years has been determined.

Canary Wharf (Exhibition)

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Canary Wharf development corporation project in London docklands to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Sir George Young: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Tree Preservation Orders

Mr. Crouch asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the use of tree preservation orders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The purpose of tree preservation orders is to ensure the protection of trees in the interests of amenity. I hope that local planning authorities, who make such orders, will continue to do so in appropriate cases. However, I am aware that recent compensation claims have caused some concern, and that an appeal against a decision of the Lands Tribunal is currently before the Court of Appeal. Once the outcome of that appeal is known we shall be considering the position as necessary.

EMPLOYMENT

Action for Jobs Campaign

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General what is the budget for the action for jobs campaign.

Mr. Lang: The Action for Jobs campaign is designed to raise awareness of the opportunities provided by the Government's employment, training and enterprise measures on which we shall be spending some £3,000 million this year. An initial £3·5 million was set aside for the first stages of the campaign and we shall shortly be announcing a television advertising campaign costing some £1·9 million. This represents less than one fifth of one per cent. of expenditure on the opportunities which are available.

Wages Councils

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General what is the number of (i) women and (ii) men who are presently covered by wages councils and who are employed in work places presently covered by section 1, part I of schedule 1 to the Hours of Employment (Conventions) Act 1936, sections 125, 126, 128 and 131 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954, sections 86, 88, 91, 92, 93 and 94 of the Factories Act 1961 and the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954.

Mr. Trippier: Approximately 400,000 workers covered by wages councils are employed in work places of a kind defined in article 1*(b)* of part I of the schedule to the Hours of Employment (Conventions) Act 1936. Most of those work places are also of a kind likely to be covered by the Factories Act 1961. About three quarters of the workers concerned are women.

Workers in mines and quarries are not covered by wages councils. Some male workers in Scotland who are engaged in both baking and retail work are covered both by the Retail Food Wages Council and by the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954.

Enterprise Boards (Labour Market Initiative)

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General what steps he intends to take to expand and promote work such as that undertaken and sponsored by local authority enterprise boards as part of the EEC labour market initiative; and what steps he intends to take to ensure that such boards will continue to be allowed access to appropriate EEC funds for training and industrial development.

Mr. Lang: The labour market initiative put forward by the United Kingdom, Italy and the Republic of Ireland at the 5 June meeting of the European Community Labour and Social Affairs Council contains a number of proposals designed to promote the creation of jobs. To the extent that this is also an aim of local authority enterprise boards the initiative and the work of the boards are complementary. In relation to EC funds, decisions on training programmes for which enterprise boards may make application for support under the European social fund are a matter for the European Commission. In respect of grants for industrial development purposes made from the European regional development fund, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the

Environment will consider the most appropriate means of dealing with applications from local authority enterprise boards from that fund in the light of his Department's current review of the local authority capital control system.

Bristol, East

Mr. Sayeed asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently participating in each of the Government-funded training and enterprise programmes in Bristol, East; and what were the comparable figures in 1979 and 1983.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that the information is not available in the precise form requested. However, the table below shows the number of people engaged on training and enterprise programmes at the end of June 1986, together with comparable figures for June 1983 where these are available. Comparative information is not available for June 1979.

Programme	*Number in Training* *June 1986*	*June 1983*
Youth Training		
YTS*	5,980	240
Adult Training		
Training opportunities scheme	n/a	60
Wider opportunities training programme/job training programme	1,403	n/a
(of which training for enterprise)	(88)	(n/a)
Enterprise		
Enterprise allowance scheme†	1,184	n/a
Total	8,567	300

* TOPS ceased in 1984-85, and was replaced by wider opportunities training programme and job training programme of which training for enterprise is part.

† The enterprise allowance scheme figures is as at 1 July 1986.

n/a not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to his answer of 2 July, *Official Report*, columns *553-4*, he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the seasonal, temporary or casual jobs, by age, further divided into standard categories of ethnic origin.

Mr. Lang: Estimates of the number of persons in seasonal, temporary or casual jobs are available from the labour force survey since 1981 and are presented in the following table which shows separately the numbers of non-white ethnic origin. More detailed information about the ethnic origin of seasonal, temporary and casual workers is not available because of the small sample numbers involved.

Persons[1] in seasonal, temporary or casual jobs: Great Britain

Thousands

Year *Ethnic origin*	*Age* *16-19*	*20-24*	*25+*
1981[2]			
All ethnic origins[3]	161	51	409
of which: white	155	48	397
of which: non-white	[5]	[5]	[5]
1983			
All ethnic origins[3]	280	110	538
of which: white	266	101	518
of which: non-white	10	[5]	14
1984			
All ethnic origins[3]	290	105	576
of which: white	277	96	555
of which: non-white	[5]	[5]	13
1985[4]			
All ethnic origins[3]	244	126	606
of which: white	233	119	579
of which: non-white	[5]	[5]	19

[1] Estimates relate to the spring of each year. Figures for 1985 exclude those on Government schemes, whereas earlier years include those on schemes if reported as in employment.

[2] In 1981 the relevant question identified occasional or casual (including seasonal) jobs. Figures refer to all persons whereas earlier answers gave estimates of employees only as the self employed were not asked if they worked full or part-time.

[3] Includes those who did not state their ethnic origin.

[4] Preliminary estimates.

[5] Less than ten thousand.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of full-time and part-time employees in the labour force in 1979, 1981, 1983, 1984 and 1985 aged 16 to 19 years, 20 to 24 years and 25 years, showing separately males and females by the standard Department of Employment categories of ethnic origin.

Mr. Lang: The regular quarterly employees in employment series does not identify age or ethnic origin.

The labour force survey provides information on a different basis but allows the above analyses. The available information for the years requested is given in the table below. The amount of ethnic detail that can be given is limited by considerations of sample size.

Labour force survey data on employees[1] in Great Britain

Thousands

Year/Ethnic origin	*Aged 16-19* *Male* *Full-time[2]*	*Part-time[2]*	*Female* *Full-time[2]*	*Part-time[2]*
1979				
White	966	39	811	72
Non-White	32	[2]	23	[3]
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	12	[2]	10	[3]
Indian	[2]	[2]	[2]	—
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	[2]	[2]	[2]	[3]
Other	[2]	[2]	[2]	[3]
All ethnic origins	1,002	41	838	75

Year/Ethnic origin	Aged 16-19 Male Full-time[2]	Male Part-time[2]	Female Full-time[2]	Female Part-time[2]
1981				
White	816	117	703	176
Non-White	22	[2]	22	[3]
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	[2]	[2]	[3]	[3]
Indian	[2]	[2]	[3]	[3]
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	[2]	—	[3]	—
Other	[2]	[2]	[3]	[3]
All ethnic origins‖	840	122	727	181
1983				
White	714	108	591	189
Non-White	21	[3]	14	[3]
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	10	[3]	[3]	[3]
Indian	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	[3]	—	—	[3]
Other	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]
All ethnic origins‖	742	114	616	200
1984				
White	740	157	619	224
Non-White	15	[3]	19	[3]
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]
Indian	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]
Other	[3]	—	[3]	[3]
All ethnic origins‖	768	163	652	236
1985¶				
White	627	150	552	238
Non-White	15	[3]	14	[3]
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]
Indian	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]
Other	[3]	[3]	[3]	[3]
All ethnic origins‖	651	157	574	250

Labour force survey data on employees in Great Britain*

Thousands

Year/Ethnic origin	Aged 20-24 Male Full-time[2]	Male Part-time[2]	Female Full-time[2]	Female Part-time[2]
1979				
White	1,513	10	1,013	112
Non-White	58	[3]	38	[3]
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	14	[3]	13	[3]
Indian	17	—	13	[3]
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	12	[3]	[3]	—
Other	15	[3]	11	[3]
All ethnic origins‖	1,578	12	1,056	117
1981				
White	1,357	16	1,014	115
Non-White	52	[3]	41	[3]
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	12	[3]	15	[3]
Indian	21	—	13	[3]
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	[3]	—	[3]	—
Other	13	[3]	11	[3]
All ethnic origins‖	1,417	18	1,058	121
1983				
White	1,338	24	1,049	119
Non-White	51	[3]	49	[3]
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	12	[3]	18	[3]
Indian	20	[3]	16	[3]
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	[3]	—	[3]	[3]
Other	12	[3]	14	[3]

Aged 20-24

Year/Ethnic origin	Male Full-time[2]	Male Part-time[2]	Female Full-time[2]	Female Part-time[2]
All ethnic origins[1]	1,416	26	1,112	128
1984				
White	1,367	39	1,048	159
Non-White	52	[3]	38	[3]
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	15	[3]	15	[3]
Indian	18	[3]	13	[3]
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	[3]	—	[3]	—
Other	11	[3]		[3]
All ethnic origins[4]	1,445	42	1,104	168
1985[5]				
White	1,442	38	1,083	172
Non-White	50	[3]	33	[3]
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	17	[3]	14	[3]
Indian	13	[3]	11	[3]
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	[3]	—	[3]	—
Other	14	[3]	[3]	[3]
All ethnic origins[4]	1,504	44	1,136	179

Labour force survey data on employees[6] in Great Britain

Thousands

Aged 25+

Year/Ethnic origin	Male Full-time[2]	Male Part-time[2]	Female Full-time[2]	Female Part-time[2]
1979				
White	9,927	221	3,289	3,445
Non-White	352	[3]	137	53
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	81	[3]	48	20
Indian	118	[3]	48	13
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	52	[3]	[3]	[3]
Other	101	[3]	38	19
All ethnic origins[4]	10,327	224	3,441	3,514
1981				
White	9,037	261	3,163	3,413
Non-White	321	[3]	146	50
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	86	[3]	56	23
Indian	114	[3]	51	13
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	42	—	[3]	[3]
Other	78	24	33	14
All ethnic origins[4]	9,381	268	3,323	3,473
1983				
White	8,694	215	3,049	3,181
Non-White	326	[3]	150	54
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	73	[3]	55	21
Indian	126	[3]	50	14
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	45	—	[4]	[4]
Other	82	[4]	42	18
All ethnic origins[1]	9,125	225	3,242	3,271
1984				
White	8,578	240	3,073	3,452
Non-White	313	[3]	164	63
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	68	[3]	66	21
Indian	122	[3]	58	20
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	43	[3]	[3]	[3]
Other	80	[3]	37	18
All ethnic origins[4]	8,998	250	3,279	3,551
1985[5]				
White	8,552	221	3,092	3,497
Non-White	314	[3]	154	68
of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	76	[3]	61	25
Indian	96	[3]	48	17

Year/Ethnic origin	Aged 25+ Male Full-time[2]	Male Part-time[2]	Female Full-time[2]	Female Part-time[2]
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	55	[3]	[3]	[3]
Other	87	[3]	43	24
All ethnic origins[4]	8,949	234	3,292	3,601

[1] Estimates relate to the Spring of each year. Figures for 1985 exclude those on Government schemes, whereas earlier years include those on schemes if reported as in employment.
[2] An employee is shown as full-time or part-time according to whether he considers his job to be a full or part-time job.
[3] Less than ten thousand.
[4] Includes those who did not state their ethnic origin.
[5] Preliminary estimates.

Mr. Deakins asked the Paymaster General what provision exists in the unemployment figures for counting in the total of unemployed claimants, the number of self-employed persons who cease to be self-employed and do not take up other employment.

Mr. Lang: The monthly unemployment count includes some previously self-employed people since many claim supplementary benefit or national insurance contributions. According to the labour force survey in Great Britain, in the spring of 1984 there were about 130,000 previously self-employed people without jobs and actively seeking work and 150,000 people claiming benefits who had been or were still self-employed.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General what are the unemployment figures for the Sheffield, Central and Faversham constituencies by wards.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the numbers of unemployed claimants on 12 June 1986 in each ward in the Sheffield Central and Faverham parliamentary constituencies.

	Figure
Sheffield	
Burngreave	1,973
Castle	2,417
Manor	1,681
Neverthorpe	2,062
Sharrow	1,952
Faversham	
Abbey	175
Borden	60
Davington Priory	227
East Downs	100
Eastern	335
Grove	284
Iwade and Lower Halstow	74
Kemsley	58
Milton Regis	351
Minster Cliffs	231
Murston	340
Newington	112
Queenborough and Halfway	394
Roman	400
St. Ann's	180
Sheerness East	524
Sheerness West	529
Sheppey Central	232
Teynham and Lynsted	224
Watling	120
West Downs	72
Woodstock	179

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General how many of the factory inspectors with responsibility for the Hays Chemical Co. plant in St. Helens have degrees in chemistry or chemical engineering; and if he will make a statment.

Mr. Trippier: Of the three factory inspectors based in the chemicals group of the Health and Safety Executive's Merseyside area office responsible for the inspection of this plant, one has a degree in chemistry. The area office can draw on the technical advice and support of the field consultant group based in Manchester which included four fully qualified chemical inspectors as well as specialists in other disciplines.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the number of specialist inspectors of factories with special reference to the work load of the Health and Safety Executive's area offices.

Mr. Trippier: On 1 July 1986, 194 specialist inspectors were employed by HSE in giving technical advice and support to other parts of the organisation. Of these 100 were stationed in the seven field consultant groups each providing support to between two and four Health and Safety Executive areas. A recruitment campaign is at present under way.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to review the technical qualifications and background of those factory inspectors called upon to inspect the non-nuclear areas of the United Kingdom's nuclear power complexes; when the decision was made to appoint the inspectorate to perform this function; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: No. The decision to transfer responsibility to the factory inspectorate was made shortly before implementation on 1 April 1986.

Small Firms

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Paymaster General if he has any further plans to help alleviate the hardship caused by cash flow problems encountered by small businesses due to the late payment of bills.

Mr. Trippier: The "Payment on Time" booklet is a worthwhile step in encouraging a change of attitude towards good payment practice. I shall keep in mind the possibility of further initiatives in this area.

Community Programme

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General what were the mean and average overhead costs during 1985 for each community programme entrant, broken down by type of expenditure to include administration, supervision and materials.

Mr. Lang: During 1985-86 there were 241,200 entrants to the community programme, including managers or supervisors. Average wage-related costs per entrant were £2,405. Other cost elements per entrant were as follows:

	£
Operating Costs	275
Agency Fees	62
MSC administration and marketing	76
Other expenditure	17

These Manpower Services Commission expenditure categories do not directly correspond with administration, supervision and materials, the categories requested.

Administration consists both of direct MSC expenditure and fees claimed by agents, each of whom operate a number of community programme projects. In addition agencies may either set up a project under community programme rules to handle administration of the agency centrally or use up to 20 per cent. of the total operating costs made available by the MSC to fund central services.

Supervision expenditure consists of a proportion of both agency fees and wage-related costs (approximately 20 per cent. of wage-related costs related to managers and supervisors).

Materials expenditure is included in operating costs (this element also includes some expenditure on capital items and training).

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General what information he has about the comparative average amount in benefits claimed by *(a)* entrants to community programmes immediately prior to their entry and *(b)* people who are eligible for a place on a community programme but who decline to take it up; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: According to the fourth community programme participants' survey, the average amount in benefits claimed by participants interviewed in the survey, immediately prior to entry to the programme, was £30·41. The average includes those participants who were not claiming any benefit.

There are no figures available on average benefit levels received by those people eligible for a place on the programme who did not enter the scheme.

Workplace Creches

Mr. Freud asked the Paymaster General what information is available to his Department on the availability of workplace creches and the average charges made for such facilities; what steps he is taking to encourage such provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My Department does not collect information about the availability and cost of workplace creches. We certainly encourage employers to introduce measures to improve equal opportunities in employment as appropriate to their circumstances. The Equal Opportunities Commission code of practice, which was approved by Parliament and came into force last year, mention workplace creches as one of a number of arrangements which can assist both employer and employee by helping to provide continuity of employment to working parents.

Public Bodies

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a list of all bodies in Wales to which he has sole or joint responsibility for making appointments.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My right hon. and noble Friend has sole responsibility for the appointment, nationally, of chairmen of the committees for the employment of disabled people, eight of which operate in Wales.

Mining Industry (New Technology)

Mr. Dormand asked the Paymaster General what assessment he has made of the implications for employment policy of the introduction of new technology to pits in the north-east.

Mr. Lang: The introduction of new technology may lead to job losses in the short term, but in the longer term the improvement in productivity and hence competitiveness is good for jobs.

Miss Juliett Kent

Mr. Rooker asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to his reply of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *529*, he will give the reasons why the proceedings to recover wages owed to Miss Juliett Kent of Birmingham have not yet started.

Mr. Trippier: Proceedings have been issued in the county court. Progress of the case is now in the hands of the legal representatives of both parties and the officials of the court. I am not in a position to say when the hearing will take place.

YTS (Leavers' Survey)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General, for each survey of leavers (ad hoc, 15 per cent. and 100 per cent.) conducted since the YTS began, if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number and percentage of leavers in each who were *(a)* in full-time work with the same employer, *(b)* in full-time work with a different employer, *(c)* in part-time work, *(d)* on a full-time course at a college or training centre, *(e)* back at school, *(f)* on another YTS, *(g)* doing something else and *(h)* unemployed, showing for each survey the total number of usable questionnaires returned, the percentage response rate and the number of those who responded who were early leavers.

Mr. Trippier: The precise information requested is not available. The table gives the result of the Manpower Services Commission surveys conducted on YTS leavers and represents the response to the question "What are you doing now?"

Young people who left YTS

Per cent. and bracketed Nos. of respondents	*Ad Hoc surveys leavers between*			*15 per cent. survey Between June 1984 and March 1985*	*100 per cent. survey Between April 1985 and January 1986*
	April 1983 and November 1983	*April 1983 and March 1984*	*April 1984 and July 1984*		
In full-time work with same employer	4	12	22	24	28 (56,663)
In full-time work with different employer	34	37	34	31	24 (48,776)
In part-time work	n/a	n/a	2	1	4 (7,211)
On full-time course at college/ training centre	4	1	2	3	3 (6,407)
Back at school	2	*	*	*	n/a
In another YTS scheme	29	13	4	6	6 (12,864)
Doing something else	3	3	2	2	4 (8,906)
Unemployed	24	34	34	32	27 (54,939)
Sample Details					
Usable response per cent.	53	55	69	63	58 (195,766)
Sample size	1,962	2,715	3,637	63,737	338,973
Per cent. respondents who were early leavers	100	90	64	54	43

n/a = Information not available.
* Means less than 0·5 per cent.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will publish for each month of the 100 per cent. YTS leavers' survey, the destinations of leavers in each of the Manpower Services Commission regions.

Mr. Trippier: The tables give the destinations of YTS leavers for each Manpower Services Commission region monthly between April 1985 and January 1986. Response is to the question "What are you doing now?" The data for each month is taken from the 100 per. cent. YTS leavers survey and represents the position of leavers surveyed 3 months after leaving YTS.

	All	*In a full-time job*		*In a part-time job*	*Unemployed*	*On another YTS scheme*	*On a full-time course*	*Doing something else*	*Not answered*
		Same employer	*Different employer*						
Northern									
Month	6,392	3,205	3,187	670	6,327	1,160	402	632	326
Percentage	40·2	20·1	20·0	4·2	39·8	7·3	2·5	4·0	2·0
April 1985	312	106	206	38	299	16	3	26	7
Percentage	44·5	15·1	29·4	5·4	42·7	2·3	0·4	3·7	1·0
May 1985	634	301	333	70	621	30	6	49	19
Percentage	44·4	21·1	23·3	4·9	43·5	2·1	0·4	3·4	1·3
June 1985	870	464	406	112	835	85	47	78	52
Percentage	41·8	22·3	19·5	5·4	40·2	4·1	2·3	3·8	2·5
July 1985	693	347	351	93	733	113	44	72	34
Percentage	39·1	19·4	19·6	5·2	41·0	6·3	2·5	4·0	1·9
August 1985	1,560	888	672	157	1,416	182	137	173	83
Percentage	42·1	23·9	18·1	4·2	38·2	4·9	3·7	4·7	2·2
September 1985	1,047	590	457	62	903	251	124	104	62
Percentage	41·0	23·1	17·9	2·4	35·4	9·8	4·9	4·1	2·4
October 1985	377	151	226	46	520	185	19	50	40
Percentage	30·5	12·2	18·3	3·7	42·0	15·0	1·5	4·0	3·2
November 1985	393	165	228	45	468	151	16	45	20
Percentage	34·5	14·5	20·0	4·0	41·1	13·3	1·4	4·0	1·8
December 1985	152	62	90	13	204	56	3	18	7
Percentage	33·6	13·7	19·9	2·9	45·0	12·4	0·7	4·0	1·5
January 1986	349	131	218	34	328	91	3	17	2
Percentage	42·4	15·9	26·5	4·1	39·8	11·0	0·4	2·1	0·2
Yorkshire and Humberside									
Month	11,303	6,226	5,077	996	7,358	1,408	550	953	490

	All	In a full-time job: Same employer	In a full-time job: Different employer	In a part-time job	Unemployed	On another YTS scheme	On a full-time course	Doing something else	Not answered
Percentage	49·0	27·0	22·0	4·3	31·9	6·1	2·4	4·1	2·1
April 1985	552	182	370	58	388	39	3	32	16
Percentage	50·7	16·7	34·0	5·3	35·7	3·6	0·3	2·9	1·5
May 1985	1,025	516	509	94	713	42	11	52	23
Percentage	52·3	26·3	26·0	4·8	36·4	2·1	0·6	2·7	1·2
June 1985	1,712	1,048	664	130	742	76	51	109	74
Percentage	59·2	36·2	22·9	4·5	25·6	2·6	1·8	3·8	2·6
July 1985	1,346	798	548	129	782	143	62	118	55
Percentage	51·1	30·3	20·8	4·9	29·7	5·4	2·4	4·5	2·1
August 1985	2,647	1,646	1,001	229	1,430	231	209	258	112
Percentage	51·7	32·2	19·6	4·5	28·0	4·5	4·1	5·0	2·2
September 1985	1,803	1,143	660	119	1,113	285	153	152	96
Percentage	48·5	30·7	17·7	3·2	29·9	7·7	4·1	4·1	2·6
October 1985	801	373	428	87	746	227	27	79	52
Percentage	39·7	18·5	21·2	4·3	36·9	11·2	1·3	3·9	2·6
November 1985	655	239	416	70	705	198	21	77	41
Percentage	37·1	13·5	23·5	4·0	39·9	11·2	1·2	4·1	2·3
December 1985	303	127	176	31	337	74	4	46	11
Percentage	37·6	15·8	21·8	3·8	41·8	9·2	0·5	5·7	1·4
January 1986	459	154	305	49	402	93	9	30	10
Percentage	43·6	14·6	29·0	4·7	38·2	8·8	0·9	2·9	1·0
North West									
Month	15,043	7,596	7,447	1,078	8,524	2,377	1,122	1,358	757
Percentage	49·7	25·1	24·6	3·6	28·2	7·9	3·7	4·5	2·5
April 1985	757	206	551	65	416	46	7	48	35
Percentage	55·1	15·0	40·1	4·7	30·3	3·3	0·5	3·5	2·5
May 1985	1,595	763	832	121	997	69	25	105	100
Percentage	53·0	25·3	27·6	4·0	33·1	2·5	0·8	3·5	3·3
June 1985	2,304	1,359	945	175	1,109	214	137	183	119
Percentage	54·3	32·0	22·3	4·1	26·1	5·0	3·2	4·3	2·8
July 1985	2,077	1,187	890	152	962	313	118	177	82
Percentage	53·5	30·6	22·9	3·9	24·8	8·1	3·0	4·6	2·1
August 1985	3,181	1,852	1,329	223	1,526	465	347	321	151
Percentage	51·2	29·8	21·4	3·6	24·6	7·5	5·6	5·2	2·4
September 1985	2,078	1,147	931	116	1,176	485	389	231	139
Percentage	45·0	24·9	20·2	2·5	25·5	10·5	8·4	5·0	3·0
October 1985	915	308	607	63	679	337	42	108	52
Percentage	41·7	14·0	27·6	2·9	30·9	15·3	1·9	4·9	2·4
November 1985	996	390	606	74	707	263	36	100	45
Percentage	44·8	17·6	27·3	3·3	31·8	11·8	1·6	4·5	2·0
December 1985	445	173	272	32	395	73	10	58	23
Percentage	43·0	16·7	26·3	3·1	38·1	7·0	1·0	5·6	2·2
January 1986	695	211	484	57	557	112	11	27	11
Percentage	47·3	14·4	32·9	3·9	37·9	7·6	0·7	1·8	0·7
Midlands									
Month	22,901	12,145	10,756	1,569	10,947	3,335	1,475	2,112	956
Percentage	52·9	28·1	24·8	3·6	25·3	7·7	3·4	4·9	2·2
April 1985	999	390	609	80	54·0	64	10	72	32
Percentage	55·6	21·7	33·9	4·5	30·1	3·6	0·6	4·0	1·8
May 1985	2,167	1,156	1,011	155	1,049	104	23	131	34

	All	In a full-time job		In a part-time job	Unemployed	On another YTS scheme	On a full-time course	Doing something else	Not answered
		Same employer	Different employer						
Percentage	59·2	31·6	27·6	4·2	28·6	2·8	0·6	3·6	0·9
June 1985	4,202	2,538	1,664	297	1,443	229	221	357	171
Percentage	60·7	36·7	24·0	4·3	20·9	3·3	3·2	5·2	2·5
July 1985	3,270	1,878	1,392	217	1,294	384	185	298	141
Percentage	56·5	32·4	24·0	3·7	22·4	6·6	3·2	5·1	2·4
August 1985	5,140	3,070	2,070	344	2,011	699	424	504	222
Percentage	55·0	32·9	22·2	3·7	21·5	7·5	4·5	5·4	2·4
September 1985	2,773	1,447	1,326	181	1,566	650	451	340	166
Percentage	45·3	23·6	21 6	3·0	25·6	10·6	7·4	5·5	2·7
October 1985	1,473	580	893	99	1,015	475	88	172	91
Percentage	43·2	17·0	26·2	2·9	29·7	13·9	2·6	5·0	2·7
November 1985	1,340	524	816	95	930	412	41	130	64
Percentage	44·5	17·4	27·1	3·2	30·9	13·7	1·4	4·3	2·1
December 1985	517	211	306	44	422	153	19	61	27
Percentage	41·6	17·0	24·6	3·5	34·0	12·3	1·5	4·9	2·2
January 1986	1,020	351	669	57	677	165	13	47	8
Percentage	51·3	17·7	33·7	2·9	34·1	8·3	0·7	2·4	0·4
South West									
Month	9,175	5,332	3,843	535	2,921	765	550	735	291
Percentage	61·3	35·6	25·7	3·6	19·5	5·1	3·7	4·9	1·9
April 1985	376	121	255	33	144	13	4	21	7
Percentage	62·9	20·2	42·6	5·5	24·1	2·2	0·7	3·5	1·2
May 1985	884	515	369	71	270	31	4	53	16
Percentage	66·5	38·8	27·8	5·3	20·3	2·3	0·3	4·0	1·2
June 1985	1,431	943	488	69	349	54	70	85	48
Percentage	67·9	44·8	23·2	3·3	16·6	2·6	3·3	4·0	2·3
July 1985	1,296	786	510	66	326	83	100	93	32
Percentage	64·9	39·4	25·6	3·3	16·3	4·2	5·0	4·7	1·6
August 1985	2,112	1,350	762	117	554	156	163	206	70
Percentage	62·5	40·0	22·6	3·5	16 4	4·6	4·8	6·1	2·1
September 1985	1,479	916	563	70	425	156	165	140	63
Percentage	59·2	36·7	22·5	2·8	17·0	6·2	6·6	5·6	2·5
October 1985	551	277	274	20	270	107	19	51	23
Percentage	52·9	26·6	26·3	1·9	25·9	10·3	1·8	4·9	2·2
November 1985	501	206	295	47	279	94	17	50	16
Percentage	49·9	20·5	29·4	4·7	27·8	9·4	1·7	5·0	1·6
December 1985	191	89	102	20	132	26	4	24	11
Percentage	46·8	21·8	25·0	4·9	32·4	6·4	1·0	5·9	2·7
January 1986	354	129	225	22	172	45	4	12	5
Percentage	57·7	21·0	36·6	3·6	8·0	7·3	0·7	2·0	0·8
London									
Month	5,534	2,983	2,551	230	1,952	400	381	394	241
Percentage	60·6	32·7	27·9	2·5	21·4	4·4	4·2	4·3	2·6
April 1985	312	119	193	8	155	12	7	10	2
Percentage	61·7	23·5	38·1	1·6	30·6	2·4	1·4	2·0	0·4
May 1985	485	241	244	23	200	15	9	8	1
Percentage	65·5	32·5	32·9	3·1	27·0	2·0	1·2	1·1	0·1
June 1985	549	311	238	28	149	17	36	50	22
Percentage	64·5	36·5	28·0	3·3	17·5	2·0	4·2	5·9	2·6
July 1985	587	333	254	22	173	33	50	43	43

	All	In a full-time job: Same employer	In a full-time job: Different employer	In a part-time job	Unemployed	On another YTS scheme	On a full-time course	Doing something else	Not answered
Percentage	61·7	35·0	26·7	2·3	18·2	3·5	5·3	4·5	4·5
August 1985	1,197	775	422	45	268	72	98	80	55
Percentage	66·0	42·7	23·3	2·5	14·8	4·0	5·4	4·4	3·0
September 1985	913	565	348	22	278	84	123	66	58
Percentage	59·1	36·6	22·5	1·4	18·0	5·4	8·0	4·3	3·8
October 1985	512	249	263	20	216	55	31	48	26
Percentage	56·4	27·4	29·0	2·2	23·8	6·1	3·4	5·3	2·9
November 1985	398	144	254	26	245	54	9	48	21
Percentage	49·7	18·0	31·7	3·2	30·6	6·7	1·1	6·0	2·6
December 1985	324	166	158	16	125	26	12	28	9
Percentage	60·0	30·7	29·3	3·0	23·1	4·8	2·2	5·2	1·7
January 1986	257	80	177	20	143	32	6	13	4
Percentage	54·1	16·8	37·3	4·2	30·1	6·7	1·3	2·7	0·8
South East									
Month	19,267	10,665	8,602	932	4,961	1,208	926	1,237	591
Percentage	66·2	36·6	29·5	3·2	17·0	4·1	3·2	4·2	2·0
April 1985	862	259	603	52	278	20	7	31	7
Percentage	68·6	20·6	48·0	4·1	22·1	1·6	0·6	2·5	0·6
May 1985	1,827	997	830	123	450	45	15	39	17
Percentage	72·6	39·6	33·0	4·9	17·9	1·8	0·6	1·6	0·7
June 1985	2,959	1,762	1,197	135	534	72	136	188	83
Percentage	72·0	42·9	29·1	3·3	13·0	1·8	3·3	4·6	2·0
July 1985	2,375	1,395	980	121	470	144	117	145	88
Percentage	68·6	40·3	28·3	3·5	13·6	4·2	3·4	4·2	2·5
August 1985	4,731	3,086	1,645	204	889	244	285	317	135
Percentage	69·5	45·3	24·2	3·0	13·1	3·6	4·2	4·7	2·0
September 1985	2,659	1,596	1,063	92	686	245	239	213	95
Percentage	62·9	37·7	25·1	2·2	16·2	5·8	5·7	5·0	2·2
October 1985	1,181	526	655	64	552	165	58	92	68
Percentage	54·2	24·1	30·0	2·9	25·3	7·6	2·7	4·2	3·1
November 1985	1,307	527	780	74	556	132	33	138	65
Percentage	56·7	22·9	33·8	3·2	24·1	5·7	1·4	6·0	2·8
December 1985	611	245	366	20	246	66	18	52	26
Percentage	58·8	23·6	35·2	1·9	23·7	6·4	1·7	5·0	2·5
January 1986	755	272	483	47	300	75	18	22	7
Percentage	61·7	22·2	39·5	3·8	24·5	6·1	1·5	1·8	0·6
Wales									
Month	5,336	2,788	2,548	511	4,158	808	365	632	273
Percentage	44·2	23·1	21·1	4·2	34·4	6·7	3·0	5·2	2·3
April 1985	247	76	171	30	207	35	1	28	8
Percentage	44·4	13·7	30·8	5·4	37·2	6·3	0·2	5·0	1·4
May 1985	376	128	248	49	361	39	6	41	15
Percentage	42·4	14·4	28·0	5·5	40·7	4·4	0·7	4·6	1·7
June 1985	532	279	253	51	451	44	27	64	49
Percentage	43·7	22·9	20·8	4·2	37·0	3·6	2·2	5·3	4·0
July 1985	560	309	251	52	377	68	40	59	30
Percentage	47·2	26·1	21·2	4·4	31·8	5·7	3·4	5·0	2·5
August 1985	1,533	916	617	143	929	121	153	179	61
Percentage	49·2	29·4	19·8	4·6	29·8	3·9	4·9	5·7	2·0
September 1985	978	624	354	76	683	158	93	121	58

	All	In a full-time job: Same employer	In a full-time job: Different employer	In a part-time job	Unemployed	On another YTS scheme	On a full-time course	Doing something else	Not answered
Percentage	45·1	28·8	16·3	3·5	31·5	7·3	4·3	5·6	2·7
October 1985	406	177	229	36	445	133	17	62	27
Percentage	36·1	15·7	20·3	3·2	39·5	11·8	1·5	5·5	2·4
November 1985	356	153	203	36	346	107	21	42	17
Percentage	38·5	16·5	21·9	3·9	37·4	11·6	2·3	4·5	1·8
December 1985	124	51	73	16	169	46	4	19	5
Percentage	32·4	13·3	19·1	4·2	44·1	12·0	1·0	5·0	1·3
January 1986	224	75	149	22	190	57	3	17	3
Percentage	43·4	14·5	28·9	4·3	36·8	11·0	0·6	3·3	0·6
Scotland									
Month	10,488	5,723	4,765	690	7,791	1,403	636	853	363
Percentage	47·2	25·8	21·4	3·1	35·1	6·3	2·9	3·8	1·6
April 1985	403	123	280	33	376	52	6	19	6
Percentage	45·0	13·7	31·3	3·7	42·0	5·8	0·7	2·1	0·7
May 1985	746	379	367	45	508	55	17	59	18
Percentage	51·5	26·2	25·3	3·1	35·1	3·8	1·2	4·1	1·2
June 1985	841	454	387	75	673	75	58	77	39
Percentage	45·8	24·7	21·1	4·1	36·6	4·1	3·2	4·2	2·1
July 1985	1,382	818	564	79	724	150	96	112	38
Percentage	53·5	31·7	21·9	3·1	28·1	5·8	3·7	4·3	1·5
August 1985	2,458	1,536	992	132	1,333	273	276	209	48
Percentage	51·4	32·1	19·3	2·8	27·9	5·7	5·8	4·4	2·1
September 1985	1,192	672	520	75	1,001	206	92	123	66
Percentage	43·3	24·4	18·9	2·7	36·3	7·5	3·3	4·5	2·4
October 1985	694	311	383	67	785	175	33	60	32
Percentage	37·6	16·8	20·7	3·6	42·5	9·5	1·8	3·3	1·7
November 1985	790	336	454	63	759	183	20	63	47
Percentage	41·0	17·5	23·6	3·3	39·4	9·5	1·0	3·3	2·4
December 1985	919	586	333	52	645	93	15	69	12
Percentage	50·9	32·5	18·4	2·9	35·7	5·2	0·8	3·8	0·7
January 1986	1,063	508	555	69	987	141	23	62	7
Percentage	45·2	21·6	23·6	2·9	42·0	6·0	1·0	2·6	0·3
Great Britain									
Month	105,439	56,663	48,776	7,211	54,939	12,864	6,407	8,906	4,288
Percentage	52·7	28·3	24·4	3·6	27·5	6·4	3·2	4·5	2·1
April 1985	4,820	1,582	3,238	397	2,803	297	48	287	120
Percentage	54·9	18·0	36·9	4·5	32·0	3·4	0·5	3·3	1·4
May 1985	9,739	4,996	4,743	751	5,169	430	116	537	243
Percentage	57·3	29·4	27·9	4·4	30·4	2·5	0·7	3·2	1·4
June 1985	15,400	9,158	6,242	1,072	6,285	866	783	1,191	657
Percentage	58·7	34·9	23·8	4·1	23·9	3·3	3·0	4·5	2·5
July 1985	13,591	7,851	5,740	931	5,841	1,431	812	1,117	543
Percentage	56·0	32·4	23·7	3·8	24·1	5·9	3·3	4·6	2·2
August 1985	24,559	15,119	9,440	1,594	10,356	2,443	2,092	2,247	987
Percentage	55·5	34·1	21·3	3·6	23·4	5·5	4·7	5·1	2·2
September 1985	14,992	8,700	6,222	813	7,831	1,829	1,490	803	
Percentage	49·4	28·8	20·6	2·7	25·9	8·3	6·1	4·9	2·7
October 1985	6,910	2,952	3,958	502	5,228	1,859	334	722	411
Percentage	43·3	18·5	24·8	3·1	32·7	11·6	2·1	4·5	2·6
November 1985	6,736	2,684	4,052	530	4,995	1,594	214	693	336
Percentage	44·6	17·8	26·8	3·5	33·1	10·6	1·4	4·6	2·2

	All	In a full-time job: Same employer	In a full-time job: Different employer	In a part-time job	Unemployed	On another YTS scheme	On a full-time course	Doing something else	Not answered
December 1985	3,586	1,710	1,876	244	2,673	613	89	375	131
Percentage	46·5	22·2	24·3	3·2	34·7	7·9	1·2	4·9	1·7
January 1986	5,176	1,911	3,265	377	3,756	811	90	247	57
Percentage	49·2	18·2	31·1	3·6	35·7	7·7	0·9	2·3	0·5

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information available from the 100 per cent. YTS leavers' surveys about *(a)* the range and average wages earned, *(b)* the hours worked and *(c)* the types of jobs done by those leavers (i) in full-time work with the same employer (ii) in full-time work with a different employer and (iii) in part-time work.

Mr. Trippier: The latest summary information for leavers between April 1985 and September 1985 is given in the tables following. There is no information collected in YTS leavers survey on hours worked. Leavers earnings are given by the leavers and may be subject to reporting error.

Weekly take home pay of YTS leavers April to September 1985

Percentage of leavers earning	Full-time jobs with same employer	Full-time jobs with different employer	Part-time job
	Less than 1 per cent.	Less than 1 per cent.	
Less than £20			5
£20-£39·99	27	23	65
£40-£59·99	56	56	23
£60-£79·99	15	16	6
£80-£99·99	2	3	2
£100 or more	1	1	1
Average weekly take-home pay	£50	£50	£39

Source: YTS follow-up questionnaires addressed to a 10 per cent. sample of leavers between April and September 1985.

Percentage occupation of jobs of YTS leavers April to September 1985

Occupational training family	Full-time job with same employer	Full-time job with different employer	Part-time job
Administrative/Clerical	22	24	6
Agriculture	3	2	3
Craft/Design	8	5	1
Maintenance/Repair	15	9	2
Technical/Scientific	3	3	—
Manufacturing	10	18	4
Processing	1	2	1
Food Preparation	4	6	15
Sales/Personal Service	15	12	35
Community/Health	2	3	8
Transport	1	1	1
Other occupation	9	9	12
No answer given	7	7	11

Source: YTS follow-up questionnaires addressed to 100 per cent. of leavers between April and September 1985.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will place in the Library the full result of all the 100 per cent. YTS leavers' surveys which have been conducted.

Mr. Trippier: As the hon. Member will know, key monthly statistics from the 100 per cent. survey of YTS leavers are regularly placed in the Library.

The Manpower Services Commission is currently preparing a full report covering the survey results and I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library in due course. It will be the first of a regular series.

The survey produces a wealth of information about young people who enter YTS and it is impossible to predict all the facts and figures which individual Members will wish to know. For that reason I will continue to respond to specific requests for information as they arise.

Earnings and Unit Labour Costs

Mr. Gould asked the Paymaster General whether he will bring up to date the figures for the increase in average hourly earnings and unit labour costs given in the reply on 21 November 1978, *Official Report*, column *550*; and if he will include a table showing the increase between the first half of 1979 and the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: The figures for the periods to 1985 are set out in the following tables:

	Average hourly earnings	*Unit labour costs
Percentage increases between 1975 and 1985 for manufacturing		
Great Britain	†226	145
United States	‡98	52
Japan	‖86	9
Federal Republic of Germany	¶65	24
Italy	457	24
Percentage increases between first half of 1979 and 1985 for manufacturing		
Great Britain	†99	62
United States	‡45	26
Japan	‖37	10
Federal Republic of Germany	¶31	15
Italy	176	15

* Wages and salaries per unit of output.
† Weekly earnings.
‡ All production workers.
‖ Monthly earnings.
¶ Also includes mining.
Hourly wage rates: from 1983 covers all industries.
Source: OECD Main Economic Indicators, 1964-83 and July 1986.

Construction Sites (Inspection)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General if he will consider transferring responsibility for the inspection of construction sites from the factory inspectorate to another body with specialist technical expertise of the construction industry.

Mr. Trippier: No. Each area office of the Health and Safety Executive has a group of inspectors responsible for the construction industry. All have the necessary technical expertise, knowledge and experience to carry out their inspection activities.

Construction Industry Training Board

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General if he has received representations on the extent to which the

composition and terms of reference of the construction industry training board adequately reflect the effect of new technologies on the industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: No recent representations of this kind have been received. The functions and powers of the construction industry training board, as of other industry training boards, are laid down in the Industrial Training Act 1982. The board is due for reconstitution in 1988, and Ministers will review its composition to ensure that, so far as possible, the board continues to be fully representative of the industry.

United Kingdom-Based Companies

Mr. Adley asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about the criteria he uses when deciding whether to allow work permits to foreign citizens involved in the management of United Kingdom-based companies.

Mr. Lang: For approval under the work permit scheme the employer must demonstrate that an overseas worker is suitably qualified for a specific management post and that there is a genuine need for his or her services.

Small Businesses

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to amend the current definitions of small businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The principal definition of a small firm in the manufacturing sector is one employing 200 or fewer people. I have no plans to amend this definition.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

UNESCO

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for an exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation in November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No.

South Africa

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which of the measures taken by the United Kingdom affecting trade with South Africa required the prior approval of the EEC Commission and Council.

Mrs. Chalker: The 12 member states of the European Community agreed at Luxembourg in September 1985 on a package which included certain restrictive measures against South Africa to be implemented by national action. Neither these nor the other measures taken by the United Kingdom against South Africa have required the prior approval of the EEC Commission and Council.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of any NATO meetings, conferences or seminars or such events organised by NATO to which South Africa was invited in either a full or observer capacity.

Mr. Renton: As far as I am aware, representatives of South Africa have not been invited to NATO meetings, conferences or seminars or such events since 1982.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his latest discussions on attempting to end apartheid in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary is currently in Southern Africa on the second stage of his presidency mission. On 23 July he met the South African State President P. W. Botha and Foreign Minister R. F. Botha. The discussions were candid, courteous and substantive. He will have a further meeting with President Botha on 29 July.

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which African countries have indicated to Her Majesty's Government either privately or by any other means that they would be unable or unwilling to implement economic sanctions against South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Communications between Governments are confidential. However, there have been indications from a few African countries of their concern at the implications for them of the imposition of general economic sanctions against South Africa.

Mr. Alec Archibald

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about Alec Archibald, the Scot held by the Thai authorities.

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Archibald was sentenced under Thai law to a cumulative total of three years and nine months for a number of offences. He has since been sentenced to serve an additional nine months and is now expected to be discharged from prison on the 17 of September 1988.

We are in touch with his family.

Council of Foreign Ministers

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will publish the minutes of the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers which contains the text of the 1984 intergovernmental agreement both in English and in French.

Mrs. Chalker: The text of the 1984 intergovernmental agreement was published as Command 9395. Council minutes themselves are confidential.

Hong Kong

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs where the official lease to the colony of Hong Kong is now lodged.

Mr. Renton: The convention between the United Kingdom and China regarding an extension of the Hong Kong territory, signed at Peking on 9 June 1898, contains the terms on which the New Territories were leased to the United Kingdom. A copy is in the Public Record Office.

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in the detailed negotiations with the People's

Republic of China over Hong Kong particularly over *(a)* religious freedom, *(b)* the safeguarding of religious trusts and *(c)* free passage abroad.

Mr. Renton: The agenda and proceedings of the Sino-British Joint Liason Group meetings are confidential. But section XIII of annex I to the Joint Declaration of the Governments of the United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China states that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government shall maintain the rights and freedoms as provided for by the laws previously in force in Hong Kong, including among others, freedom of the person, of travel and of belief. It also provides for schools, hospitals and welfare institutions run by religious organisations to be continued.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Chinese Government have made any recent objections to the development of democracy in Hong Kong at official meetings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The contents of our official exchanges with other governments are confidential. As I told the hon. Member in my reply to his question on 10 February, there will be a review of the further development of representative government in Hong Kong in 1987. Decisions on any further developments must await the outcome of that review.

Hong Kong (Nuclear Accidents)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Hong Kong Government have any contingency plans for evacuating the territory in the event of any nuclear accident.

Mr. Renton: The Hong Kong Government are drawing up plans to ensure the greatest possible degree of safety for the people of Hong Kong in the unlikely event of a nuclear accident. To this end, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority has been retained as consultant to the Hong Kong Government.

Nuclear Power Plant, Guangdong Province (China)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultation has taken place between the Chinese Government and the Hong Kong Government concerning the building of a nuclear power plant in Guangdong Province; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We have been in touch with the Chinese authorities for several years both on our own behalf and on behalf of Hong Kong, for which we are responsible, over various aspects of the planned nuclear power plant in Guangdong Province in China. I have no doubt that these contacts will continue and that they will provide the means for a useful and important exchange of views.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will make representations to the Chinese Government concerning the siting of the proposed nuclear power plant in Guangdong Province, in view of its close proximity to the colony; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: As I said in my reply of 15 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), at col. *440*, we have been following very closely the expressions of concern in Hong Kong about the proposed nuclear power plant project. We remain in close touch with the Chinese authorities on various aspects of the project.

Dr. Francis Bertrand

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Zimbabwe on behalf of Dr. Francis Bertrand; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Dr. Bertrand was tried by a Zimbabwean court in 1982. He was convicted and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. An appeal against conviction and sentence was dismissed. Dr. Bertrand renounced his Zimbabwean citizenship in May 1985. Since that time we have given him full consular protection normally afforded to a British national.

Public Bodies

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a list of all the bodies in Wales to which he has the sole or joint responsibility for making appointments.

Mr. Eggar: The only such body is the University college of Wales, Aberystwyth, where my right hon. and learned Friend is solely responsible for nominating a member of the advisory board to the Wilson chair of international politics.

English Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much Her Majesty's Government have spent on the promoting of the English language and English language teaching in foreign countries during each year since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: Since 1983 we, through the agency of the British Council, have spent the following sums on the promoting of the English language and English language teaching in foreign countries:

	£ million
1983-84	55
1984-85	63
1985-86	*68

*Estimated outturn.

Expenditure by subject was not recorded before 1983.

Economic Summit

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which country the 1987 economic summit will be held.

Mrs. Chalker: Italy.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which month the 1987 economic summit will be held.

Mrs. Chalker: It has yet to be decided.

Nicaragua

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings Her Majesty's

ambassador to Nicaragua has had with *(a)* trade unions, *(b)* human rights groups, *(c)* aid agencies, *(d)* churches and *(e)* political parties in the last year.

Mr. Eggar: As part of their normal duties, our diplomatic staff accredited to Nicaragua maintain regular and frequent contacts with political parties, human rights groups and the Roman Catholic Church. They also meet representatives of aid agencies and trade unions.

El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings Her Majesty's diplomatic representatives in El Salvador have had with *(a)* trade unions, *(b)* human rights groups, *(c)* aid agencies, *(d)* churches and *(e)* political parties in the past year.

Mr. Eggar: As part of their normal duties our diplomatic staff accredited to El Salvador maintain regular and frequent contacts with political parties, human rights groups and the Roman Catholic Church. They also meet representatives of aid agencies and trade unions.

Chile

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings Her Majesty's ambassador to Chile has had with human rights groups in Chile in the last three months.

Mr. Eggar: Whilst Her Majesty's ambassador to Chile has himself been on leave for part of the period in question, Her Majesty's embassy has been in regular and frequent contact with Chile's human rights group.

Entry Certificates

Mr. Corbyn: asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the entry clearance officer in the British high commission in Calcutta required Pranab Kumar Saha and Mr. Indrani Saha to cancel valid visas to visit the republic of France and the republic of Italy before granting a short visit entry certificate (X 7742279 and X 774380); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible with the information requested.

Single European Act

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the recent impact on the United Kingdom of the provisions of the Single European Act.

Mrs. Chalker: The Single European Act will not come into force until it has been ratified by all EC member states.

When it does come into force it will represent an important practical step towards enabling this country to realise more fully the benefits of our membership of the European Community.

Daniel Anderson

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has relating to the disappearance of Daniel Anderson, a Scot employed by the Circo Italiano Magico company in Mexico.

Mr. Eggar: The disappearance of Mr. Anderson in Mexico in late May has been reported to the Mexican police. Information supplied by Mr. Anderson's family in Edinburgh as to his possible whereabouts is being followed up.

Drug Liaison Officer

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of India concerning their refusal to admit drug liaison officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) on 22 July, at column *142*, and to the answer I gave to the private notice question by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) on 24 July, at column *591*.

ENERGY

Home Insulation

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will consult further with voluntary organisations with a view to extending their participation in home insulation projects.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend is giving his full backing to the continuing expansion of the voluntary sector insulation projects, of which there are now 272 compared with five when my Department started to sponsor them in 1981; another 200 are at the planning stage. The Energy Efficiency Office has frequent contacts with Neighbourhood Energy Action, whose grant from my Department was increased this year by over 50 per cent.

Sizewell Inquiry

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has yet received the report of the inspector in relation to the Sizewell inquiry.

Mr. Goodlad: No.

Depleted Uranium

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on *(a)* the annual quantities of depleted uranium that the Central Electricity Generating Board has sold, both within and outside the United Kingdom, for use in industrial and other processes not related to nuclear power and *(b)* the annual revenue obtained by the Central Electricity Generating Board from the sale of depleted uranium for industrial purposes.

Mr. Goodland: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins), on 23 July 1985, at column *474*, on this subject. This has been the only sale of CEGB-owned depleted uranium for non-nuclear purposes. The value of the sale is a commercial matter for the CEGB.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on *(a)* the industrial uses of depleted uranium in the United Kingdom, *(b)* which United Kingdom companies are currently utilising, or have in the past utilised, depleted uranium for these processes and *(c)* what are the future industrial uses of depleted uranium envisaged.

Mr. Goodlad: This information is only available at disproportionate cost.

Coal Consumption

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, further to his answer of 21 July on coal consumption, he can provide a more detailed breakdown, by sector, of coal consumption by the cement and other mineral products industry.

Mr. David Hunt: Provisional figures for disposals by the NCB of indigenous coal to the cement and other mineral products industries are:

	1985 *000 tonnes*
Cement	1,810
Other Mineral Products	185
Total	1,995

These figures exclude coal imports, deliveries to small industrial consumers and deliveries in Northern Ireland, whose allocation between industry sectors is not known.

British Gas Corporation

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will state his latest planned timetable for the privatisation of the British Gas Corporation.

Mr. Peter Walker: Now that the Gas Act 1986 has received Royal Assent, I intend that the Office for Gas Supply should be set up on 18 August and that the new regulatory arrangements for the gas industry set out in the Act (including those for the new Gas Consumers' Council) should come into force on 23 August. A copy of the authorisation which will be granted under section 7 of the Act permitting British Gas to operate as a public gas supplier will be placed in the Library of the House shortly. I intend that the transfer date when the property, rights and liabilities of the British Gas Corporation will be vested in British Gas plc will be 24 August.

Subject to market conditions I expect that the sale of British Gas shares should take place during the second half of November this year.

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on the 14 May, *Official Report*, column *469*, on British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.'s information campaign in 1986, he will state whether British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.'s operations to which he makes specific reference include the military responsibilities discharged by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

Mr. Goodlad: The scope of BNFL's programme of public information is a matter for the company. The company will ensure that national security is not compromised.

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his answers of 23 June, *Official Report*, column 47 and 14 July, *Official Report*, column 388, he will specify the reactors of origin of each of the three amounts of nuclear material permanently withdrawn from safeguards.

Mr. Goodlad: The three permanent withdrawals from safeguards involved plutonium which originated in Calder Hall/Chapel Cross reactors.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will outline the nature and extent of the review of his Department's peacetime emergency plans following the Chernobyl disaster; whether, when completed, he will publish it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Department's plans and procedures for civil nuclear emergencies are kept under constant review, and are regularly tested. They are being examined in the light of the Chernobyl accident.

Information and advice on the response to a nuclear incident is contained in a booklet published by the Health and Safety Executive entitled "Emergency Plans for Civil Nuclear Installations". More detailed plans and procedures are formulated and held by site operators, and these are updated as necessary.

Plutonium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish the full details of *(a)* plutonium produced, *(b)* plutonium in spent fuel dispatched and *(c)* plutonium reprocessed for each week since 1 June and 1 December, at each of the civil magnox reactors operated by the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Goodlad: No.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether all official statements made by board members of the Central Electricity Generating Board on the production and use of plutonium created in Central Electricity Generating Board reactors have to be approved by his Department in advance.

Mr. Goodlad: No.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will state the total weight of plutonium exported for civil use since May 1979, and give the amount, by weight, exported to each country involved.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to the reply*, 24 June 1986, c. *93*]: In the period May 1979 to March 1986 a total of 2,115 kg of plutonium—in both separated form, and when present in irradiated fuel—has been exported for civil purposes. The countries to which plutonium has been exported in consignments larger than gram quantities are as follows:

Austria
Belgium
Canada

France
Federal Republic of Germany
Japan
Netherlands
Sweden
Switzerland
USA

Each country listed has a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Information relating to individual country figures is commercially sensitive. I regret that Austria, Netherlands and Sweden were omitted in error from the list in my answer of 5 July 1985 at column *308*. Total exports to these countries represented significantly less than 1 per cent. of the total.

Public Bodies

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish a list of all the bodies in Wales to which he has the sole or joint responsibility for making appointments.

Mr. Peter Walker: I appoint members to the South Wales Electricity Board and also the Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Board.

Mining Redundancies

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the monthly redundancy figures for each pit in the northern region since March 1985, and as to the *(a)* total and *(b)* average cost of redundancy payments over this period.

Mr. David Hunt: Redundancy figures for individual pits and for the north-east area for individual months prior to the current year are not available within the Department. The number of men on colliery books who took redundancy in the north-east area of the National Coal Board during the board's 1985-86 financial year and in each month of the current year was as follows:

	Number
1985-86	3,616
April 1986	62
May 1986	292
June 1986	482

Information on redundancy payments under the redundant mineworkers payments scheme is available only on a national basis. During the period April 1985 to June 1986 total lump sum payments under the scheme were some £461 millions in respect of about 40,400 individuals, giving an average payment of some £11,400. In addition continuing weekly payments are normally available under the scheme to beneficiaries aged 50 or over on redundancy, up to a maximum of £109 per week. These benefits are additional to any redundancy lump sums payable by the employer under the terms of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978.

Coal

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the changes in the pattern of demand for north-east coal over the past 10 years, and as to the major customers therefor.

Mr. David Hunt: The disposal arrangements for coal from the north-east are a matter for British Coal and other coal producers and their customers.

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to future marketing plans for coal *(a)* inside and *(b)* outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Hunt: Future marketing plans for coal are a matter for the coal industry.

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to allocate funds to NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. on an area rather than a central basis.

Mr. David Hunt: No. This is a management matter for the NCB, which is responsible for funding NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

Fluidised Bed Combustion

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much money has been expended by his Department on the fluidised bed combustion system technology in each of the last five years; what are the projected figures for the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Departmental expenditure for British Coal's participation in the pressurised fluidised bed combustion work at Grimethorpe under International Energy Agency auspices averaged £3·3 million in each of the three years from 1981-82 to 1983-84. In 1984-85 ownership of that facility transferred to British Coal which will, until 1988, be engaged in a £28 million programme of work with the CEGB to provide engineering data needed before the technology can move to full scale demonstration. Alongside this study the Department, jointly with British Coal and the CEGB, is engaged in design studies of advanced power stations employing fluidised bed combustion technologies. The level of future funding will depend on the outcome of these studies.

South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide details of goods procured by his Department from *(a)* South Africa and *(b)* Namibia for each year from 1980 to 1985, including the total value for each year and the value of each category of items for each year.

Mr. Peter Walker: As far as I am aware there have been no purchases by my Department from either country during this period.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give details of all contracts involving his Department and majority-owned South African companies since June 1979.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am not aware of any such contracts but information on the shareholdings of the companies concerned is not separately recorded and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

British Gas

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about his Department's expenditure in connection with the intended sale of shares in British Gas.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith [*pursuant to the reply*, 24 April 1986, c. 222]: Following the announcement today of the

Government's intention to vest the property, rights and liabilities of the British Gas Corporation in British Gas plc on 24 August, we shall be subscribing for equity in the company to enable it to obtain a certificate to commence business and to assume from the corporation the benefits, obligations and responsibilities for work done directly related to the flotation of the company. In accordance with my answer of 24 April, this will be financed by a repayable advance from the contingency fund, pending parliamentary approval of the Estimates.

PRIME MINISTER

Royal Wedding

Mr. John Fraser asked the Prime Minister what is the cost to public funds of the royal wedding on 23 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave yesterday to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton).

United Kingdom (International Standing)

Mr. Sayeed asked the Prime Minister what measures Her Majesty's Government have taken since 1979 to increase the international standing of the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: Since 1979 we have been determined to increase the international standing of the United Kingdom as a country which plays its full part in shaping world events.

We have shown that Britain is a strong and reliable NATO ally. We have reinforced Britain's commitment to national defence and the NATO Alliance while working for improved East/West relations. We have worked for balanced and verifiable reductions of nuclear and conventional weapons as well as a global ban on chemical weapons.

Britain is playing a full and influential part within the European Community. We negotiated a settlement of the longstanding budgetary dispute. We have also put forward proposals for developing the Community, to reform the Common Agricultural Policy, to complete the internal market in goods and services, to develop the Community's technological competitiveness and to create employment.

We brought 15 years of illegality and civil war to an end and established the independent Republic of Zimbabwe.

We have maintained our commitments to our dependent territories. We recovered the Falkland Islands following an unprovoked Argentine invasion. We have reached agreement with China about the future of Hong Kong and as a result of agreements reached with Spain the Gibraltar border has been reopened.

We have reached an agreement with the Republic of Ireland to establish a new framework for co-operation aimed at promoting peace and stability in Northern Ireland.

The Government have made valuable contributions to aid, disaster relief and international peacekeeping and have used Britain's permanent membership of the Security Council to pursue constructive policies at the United Nations. Britain also participates actively in the Commonwealth and many other international organisations and fully supports the institution of the international financial system.

Finally, we have supported the international rule of law and respect for human rights. We have condemned Soviet aggression in Afghanistan and Vietnamese aggression in Cambodia. With our Commonwealth friends and European partners we are working to end apartheid by peaceful means. We have played a leading part in combating the menaces of international terrorism and international drug-trafficking.

Government Policies

Mr. Sayeed asked the Prime Minister what are the longer-term objectives of Government policies; and what policy initiatives she proposes to take to ensure that these objectives are fulfilled.

The Prime Minister: At home, the Government will maintain sound financial policies designed to bring about the defeat of inflation and to maintain the conditions for a sustained expansion of output and living standards. We will continue to pursue policies aimed at improving the prospects for employment, through a more flexible and competitive economy. We will encourage the spread of wealth and ownership and the return of state owned industries to the private sector. We will further increase incentives and remove barriers to initiative and enterprise. We will maintain firm control of public expenditure in order to leave room for further reductions in the burden of direct taxation.

We shall continue to improve training arrangements so that young people get a better preparation for work and adults obtain the skill needed in a changing work environment. The structure of vocational qualifications will be reformed. The Government will continue to pursue higher standards throughout all sectors of education. The lessons of the successful technical and vocational education i. iative will be extended to secondary schools across the country. In the Bill currently before Parliament, we are planning more effective arrangements for in-service training so as to improve the quality of teaching, and we are giving parents more say in what happens in their schools locally.

We shall continue to give high priority to encouraging the spread of individual home ownership. We also intend to give tenants a wider range of choice through measures to revive the private rented housing market and by promoting new more locally based types of ownership and management for public sector stock.

Our objectives in social security are to ensure soundly-based provision for people in retirement; to improve help for less-well-off families with children, including in particular those in low-paid jobs, and for the long-term sick and disabled; and to create a simpler, more up-to-date benefit system which is also more effective in meeting genuine special needs. We shall meet these objectives by continuing to protect the pension against price increases, and by extending rights to occupational and personal pensions; by carrying through the proposals of the Social Security Bill for an improved benefit structure including our new Family Credit; and by applying new technology throughout social security administration. We will encourage health authorities to make cost effective use of the increased resources we are making available to the health service so as to continue to improve the quality of service provided to patients. We are making a drive to reduce hospital waiting lists and waiting times. We shall

bring to a conclusion our review of primary health care —the first since the Health Service was established 40 years ago. We shall continue to promote community care policies as the best means of improving the quality of life for those whose needs can most appropriately be met in this way.

We will continue to ensure that the trade union movement is more responsible and accountable to its members and that abuses are corrected. We will be developing our plans for a new system of local government finance to increase local accountability and, in the meanwhile, will be using our rate-capping legislation to protect households and businesses from excessive rate demands. We will seek improved efficiency and strengthened standards of conduct in local government. We will continue our policy of freeing publicly owned land for development and will take further action to secure this. We will also take further measures to simplify the planning system and improve its efficiency.

We shall vigorously uphold the rule of law and fight crime, especially drug abuse and crimes of violence. We will complete our revision of public order legislation.

Our policies on pollution will improve the environment, and our conservation policies will protect the best of our heritage. In the energy sector our policies will promote the best use of our rich endowment of natural resources and scientific and innovative talent, in a responsive, market-orientated environment.

The Government will continue to promote consumer choice and efficiency through competition in the provision of transport services, and will seek to ensure the provision of roads and other transport infrastructure that will bring benefits to users, having full regard to safety and the environment.

We will continue to contribute to peace with freedom and justice in Europe by maintaining effective defences in co-operation with our NATO allies. We will continue to discharge our defence responsibilities and protect British interests outside the NATO area. We will maintain our drive to secure better value for money from the defence budget, particularly through increased competition and international collaboration in the procurement of equipment.

Abroad, our basic objectives are to enhance the security and prosperity of the United Kingdom and the dependent terrorities; to promote and protect British interests overseas; and to keep Britain's international reputation high. We also want, and work for, greater co-operation and trust between East and West : I am looking forward to visiting Moscow in due course to meet Secretary-General Gorbachev again. We want to see progress in arms control negotiations and remain actively involved in efforts to bring this about.

The economic well-being of the United Kingdom, its allies and the developing countries depends on a smoothly-running international economic system. We are working with others to carry out the agreement reached at the Tokyo economic summit on close and continuous co-ordination of economic policies to promote non-inflationary economic growth and to improve exchange rate stability. We will promote freer and fairer trade between nations and will participate to this end in the proposed new round of trade negotiations in GATT.

We wish to see Europe playing its full part in international affairs. Within the European Community, we are working to improve Europe's competitive position in world trade; to create a single market for goods and services in the interests of prosperity and jobs; to adapt Community policies to current needs; and to achieve closer co-operation in foreign policy to strengthen Western democracy. The Government will seek the changes needed in the CAP, and through wider international co-operation, to enable agricultural production to be better adapted to the market situation, while ensuring that our industry remains competitive and is further encouraged to conserve and protect the rural environment.

We want to see human rights and the rule of law upheld internationally. We wish to see Soviet aggression in Afghanistan and Vietnamese aggression in Cambodia ended, so that both countries can regain their independence. We wish to see the apartheid system in South Africa removed by peaceful means and dialogue, rather than violence; we are pursuing this actively with our partners in the European Community and the Commonwealth, and with other industrialised nations. We wish to see the scope for international terrorism and drug-trafficking effectively reduced and are taking various initiatives to this end. We will continue to play a full part in international aid, disaster relief and peacekeeping, as well as in the United Nations, the Commonwealth and many other international bodies.

Government Departments (Computers)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Prime Minister what steps have been taken to ensure that the common plans to computerise records in the Department of Health and Social Security, Department of Employment, Inland Revenue and other Government Departments adequately protect individual privacy and freedom.

The Prime Minister: Normal safeguards will operate to ensure that information held by Government agencies is used only by authorised personnel for authorised purposes. All uses of personal data will be registered under the Data Protection Act 1984. When the Act comes fully into force in November 1987, individuals will have the right of access, within the terms of the Act, to data about themselves which is held by Government agencies.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Prime Minister if she will make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government to increase the current block grant to Scottish local authorities to take account of any additional funding necessary to implement any increases recommended by the report of the committee of inquiry into teachers' pay; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The question will fall to be considered when the recommendations of the committee of inquiry and the reaction of other parties to it are known.

Cabinet Office (Manpower)

Dr. McDonald asked the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers of staff employed in the Cabinet Office, excluding Central Statistical Office and Management and Personnel Office staff for each year since 1979, but including the numbers of specialist and political advisers for each year since 1979, giving in each case, the costs based on the above figures.

The Prime Minister: The numbers of staff and specialist advisers employed in the Cabinet Office, excluding the Central Statistical Office and the Management and Personnel Office, each year since 1979 were:

	Staff	*Specialist/ Advisers*
31 March 1980	350	*6
31 March 1981	357	*8
31 March 1982	324	*11
31 March 1983	327	*10
31 March 1984	294	†3
31 March 1985	304	†3
31 March 1986	303	†3

*Includes two specialist advisers who were employed on an occasional fee-paid basis. The remainder were secondees to the Central Policy Review Staff.

†All employed on an occasional fee-paid basis.

No political advisers were employed by the Cabinet Office during the period.

The related running costs for the Cabinet Office were:

	£'000
1983-84	10,886
1984-85	9,710
1985-86	10,918

Financial information in any greater detail or prior to the 1983-84 financial year is not available except at disproportionate cost.

Pollution

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Prime Minister when the outcome of the efficiency scrutiny of the environmental pollution inspection functions carried out by the Health and Safety Executive in England and Wales will be published.

The Prime Minister: I am considering the recommendations and expect to announce a decision soon.

Clean Air Acts

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Prime Minister when the consultation document following the review of the Clean Air Acts will be published.

The Prime Minister: The Government expect to publish a consultation paper in the Autumn.

Armed Forces (Medical and Dental Officers)

Sir Antony Buck asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement about the pay of medical and dental officers in the armed forces.

The Prime Minister: The Armed Forces Pay Review Body has submitted to me a supplementary report on the pay of medical and dental officers in the armed forces. It recommends increases of between 3·4 per cent. and 7·1 per cent. according to rank with effect from 1 July 1986. This reflects the awards to civilian doctors and dentists that I announced in the House on 22 May 1986 at columns 239-40.

The Government have decided to accept in full the recommendations in the supplementary report on the pay of medical and dental officers. The report has been published as Cmnd. 9866 and copies are available in the Vote Office.

Search and Rescue Operations

Mr. Viggers asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the arrangements which exist between the Ministry of Defence and other Departments over recovering the cost of search and rescue operations.

The Prime Minister: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Party Conferences (Security)

Sir Ian Percival asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government will make funds available to assist with the provision of anti-terrorist security at party conferences; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes. I am aware that since the bomb at the Grand Hotel, Brighton, in 1984, a number of heavy security costs, especially to do with searching, are now incurred by political parties in connection with their conferences. In the view of the Government, the continuation of party conferences is essential to the public interest and the costs of these exceptional precautions, which will not be necessary in every case, should not be borne entirely by the parties themselves. Following discussions through the usual channels, therefore, the Government propose that a contribution towards these expenses should be made from public funds.

Under the Government's proposals the parties that would qualify for assistance would be those eligible under the scheme for financial assistance to Opposition parties in their parliamentary work (the "short money" scheme) together with the Government parties, but the scheme would not apply to conferences in Northern Ireland, where the arrangements for security are somewhat different.

It is proposed that payments from public funds should be made retrospectively against expenses incurred on specific measures, on the basis of certification provided by the chief officer of police whose force had been responsible for assessing the level of threat and the security measures required in consequence.

Discussion on detailed arrangements is now in hand. Parliamentary approval for expenditure will be sought in Supplementary Estimates. Pending that approval, any urgent expenditure will be financed initially by an advance from the contingencies fund. The working of the scheme will be kept under review.

I regret the necessity for this scheme. Party conferences have a special place in our democracy, however, and I am confident that in present circumstances these proposals to assist in safeguarding them will command general support.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will put in hand a fresh analysis on the number of jobs likely to be lost in the clothing and textile industries of the European Economic Community and of the United Kingdom if the multi-fibre arrangement is renewed on the terms proposed by the European Economic Community, to supersede the analysis produced by Professor Silberston in 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Community's mandate provides for the continuation of effective MFA protection and I see no advantage in any fresh analysis of the effects of the arrangement.

Companies (Annual Returns)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many firms are in arrears with their annual returns to Companies House, categorised by the length of time of arrears of over three years, over two years and over one year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave on 24 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire West. The detailed figures requested by the hon. Gentleman are:

	Number of Companies	*Per cent. of register of active companies*
Active	786,000	100·0
Up to date with the filing of returns	693,000	88·2
Not up to date with the filing of annual returns (ie in default)	93,000	11·8
In default for one year or less	73,000	9·3
In default for between one and two years	9,500	1·2
In default for between two and three years	3,600	0·5
In default for more than three years	6,600	0·8

Internal Market Council

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Internal Market Council held on 24 July.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Council, which I chaired, adopted four measures in the Presidency action programme on completing the internal market. These were directives on training standards for general medical practitioners; procedures for the mutual recognition of type approval for telecommunications terminal equipment, the harmonisation of member states' requirements on the controls and indicators of agricultural and forestry tractors; and proposals for co-operation between higher education and industry for advanced training relating to new technologies (COMETT). The Council also adopted revised origin rules for trade between Spain and Portugal and made useful progress on other Internal Market Council proposals, notably on a package of five measures on the marketing and testing of pharmaceutical products and on labelling of noise emitted by domestic appliances. The Council welcomed a report by the Commission on progress towards the implementation of the single administration document on 1 January 1988.

Funeral Business

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and industry what information he has regarding the average profitability of *(a)* firms in the funeral business and *(b)* comparable firms of similar size.

Mr. Howard: None.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if, in view of evidence of overcharging and lack of choice, he will refer the competitive position in the funeral industry to the Office of Fair Trading;

(2) if he will require all funeral directors to display their charges in the window of their premises.

Mr. Howard: I understand that the Office of Fair Trading is to carry out a review of consumer experience of the funeral industry including an assessment of the effectiveness of the code of practice of the National Association of Funeral Directors. This review is likely to begin later this year, but in the meantime, I understand that the office would be prepared to receive any relevant evidence of consumer problems in this area.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what evidence he has of variations in prices for funerals, and of regional differences; and how many complaints have been received by his Department in the last five years.

Mr. Howard: My Department has received around 55 representations concerning funeral prices in the last five years. I understand that the price can vary according to the type of service requested but I have no evidence of regional differences.

Civil Defence

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects his Department's study on the role of industry in civil defence to be completed; and when it will be published.

Mr. Peter Morrison: It is hoped that substantial progress will be made with this work over the next year. By its nature such work will remain subject to updating and review. The exercise is necessarily confidential, and its results will not be published.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will describe the terms of reference of his forthcoming study on the role of industry in civil defence; and if he will name those individuals and organisations which have been consulted.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The study involves an assessment of the essential requirements which industry would be called upon to supply for civil defence purposes in a period of crisis or war, and industry's capacity to meet them. As well as consultation with other Government Departments, confidential discussions with parts of industry are planned.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will outline the nature and extent of the review of his Department's peacetime emergency plans following the Chernobyl disaster; whether, when completed, he intends to publish it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Department is playing its part in the Government's examination of the impact of the Chernobyl incident for civil emergency planning. In the light of this review any changes to contingency plans will of course be notified to all those who would be involved in implementing them should the need arise in the future.

Public Bodies

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a list of all the bodies in Wales to which he has the sole or joint responsibility for making appointments.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend makes appointments to many bodies, some of whose activities take place in Wales, and, in consultation with the Welsh Office, to some specifically Welsh bodies such as the Welsh Consumer Council and the transport users consultative committee for Wales. A full list of the bodies to which the Secretary of State has the responsibility for making appointments is contained in the 1985 Edition of "Public Bodies" a copy of which is available in the Library.

Allied-Lyons

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has yet received the report from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the proposed bid for Allied-Lyons by Elders IXL; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: No. It was announced on 29 May that my right hon. Friend had decided, following representations from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, that the reporting period should be extended to 4 September 1986.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing imports and exports, respectively, as a percentage of gross domestic product in the United Kingdom; and how this compares with each of the other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Allan Clark: The information is in the following table:

Ratios of trade in Goods and Services to GDP 1984 Per cent.

	Exports	*Imports*
Belgium/Luxembourg	79·9	78·3
Denmark	36·9	35·8
France	25·4	25·2
Federal Republic of Germany	31·1	28·6
Greece	21·0	29·3
Ireland	59·8	60·1
Italy	26·8	27·2
Netherlands	63·1	58·0
Portugal	38·8	45·9
Spain	23·3	20·4
United Kingdom	29·1	29·0

Source:
OECD National Accounts Vol. 1

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year from 1956 the United Kingdom share of world trade in manufactures in terms of volume and value, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

EC (Manufactures and Consumer Prices)

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the United Kingdom and for each of the European Economic Community countries the change in the ratio of export unit values for manufactures to the wholesale price of *(a)* manufactures and *(b)* consumer prices between 1956 and 1985, 1966 and 1985 and 1976 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Romanian Minibus Chassis

Mr. Stott asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many Romanian minibus chassis have been imported into the United Kingdom during the last three months.

Mr. Howard: In the three months February to April 1986, the last for which figures are available, there were no imports of Romanian minibus chassis.

South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give details of all contracts involving his Department and majority-owned South African companies since June 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: Details of departmental contracts since 1979 differentiated on the basis of company ownership could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will provide details of goods procured by his Department from *(a)* South Africa and *(b)* Namibia for each year from 1980 to 1985, including the total value for each year and the value of each category of items for each year.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information required could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will provide details of all assistance provided by his Department for *(a)* trade to South Africa and *(b)* investment in South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: BOTB and ECGD assistance continues to be available in principle to United Kingdom exporters and investors in South Africa, with the exception of financial assistance for trade missions to South Africa and for participation in trade fairs there.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will provide an estimate of *(a)* new investment and *(b)* loans from the United Kingdom to South Africa for the years 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Pattie: The available information on new investment relates to the acquisition net of disposals of the share and loan capital of affiliated companies in South Africa by United Kingdom companies and is:

	£ million
1980	− 0·6
1981	−46·2
1982	− 6·9
1983	−80·2
1984	−35·9

Note: Oil companies are included only in 1984.

The available information on loans relates to claims on South Africa of British owned and foreign banks in the United Kingdom. It is published in the Bank of England's *Quarterly Bulletin* and is:

At 31 December	*£ million*
1979	0·9
1980	1·1

At 31 December	£ million
1981	2·6
1982	4·2
1983	5·5
1984	6·9
1985	5·5

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place copies in the Library of all correspondence he has had with companies following the EEC Foreign Ministers' meeting on the code of conduct of firms operating in South Africa up until and including the publication of the recent White Paper on the code.

Mr. Alan Clark: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Export Prices

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring up to date the information on relative export prices and other matters given in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 22 October 1979, *Official Report*, columns *56-60*.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table. Index numbers are now based on 1980 = 100.

Indices of Competitiveness

	OTS basis (A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1977	79·7	83·9	79·0	67·6	106·4	89	126
1978	84·5	86·0	81·7	72·8	106·5	92	112
1979	90·4	93·0	89·4	83·7	102·5	96	98
1980	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100	100
1981	98·0	100·5	100·8	104·3	100·5	102	96
1982	92·2	98·5	97·7	100·6	101·8	102	89
1983	89·2	94·3	91·0	95·4	105·0	100	79
1984	87·7	92·0	87·7	94·6	107·8	100	78
1985	*89·8	91·5	90·0	99·6	109·7	101	79
1983 Q1	85·1	94·5	87·4	90·5	104·4	100	79
Q2	90·3	93·6	92·4	96·1	105·0	100	79
Q3	91·8	94·7	92·8	97·7	105·5	101	80
Q4	89·6	94·5	91·3	97·2	105·3	101	76
1984 Q1	89·0	93·8	90·1	96·4	106·0	100	78
Q2	88·5	93·1	89·2	94·8	106·6	100	76
Q3	87·7	91·3	87·2	94·9	108·7	101	76
Q4	85·5	89·9	84·4	92·4	109·8	100	81
1985 Q1	*83·1	88·4	81·6	90·5	110·5	99	79
Q2	*90·9	90·2	90·5	100·0	110·3	101	80
Q3	*93·9	93·1	95·0	105·2	109·4	103	78
Q4	*91·5	94·3	92·7	102·6	108·7	104	78
1986 Q1	n/a	92·7	n/a	n/a	109·8	103	76

* Estimate
n/a not available
Source:
Department of Trade and Industry
(A) Relative Export Prices
(B) Import Price Competitiveness
(C) Relative Producer Prices
(D) Relative Normal Unit Labour Costs
(E) Relative Profitability of Exports
(F) Terms of Trade in Manufactures
(G) Relative Volume of Trade in Manufactures.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring up to date the information given on the United Kingdom share of imports of manufactured goods in European Economic Community and European Free Trade Association markets as given in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 14 July 1980, *Official Report*, column *385*.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest year for which consistent data for all these countries are readily available is 1984. The shares are in the following table.

United Kingdom Share of Imports of Manufactures 1984*

	Per cent.
Austria	3
Finland	8½
Iceland	10
Norway	8
Sweden	9
Switzerland	8½
Belgium/Luxembourg	9½
Denmark	8
France	6
Federal Republic of Germany	7
Ireland	37
Italy	7

	Per cent.
Netherlands	8½
Portugal	9½
Spain	7½

* Standard International Trade Classification Sections 5 to 8.
Source: OECD.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring up to date the information on imports of manufactures as a percentage of exports given in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 15 July 1980, *Official Report*, column *463*.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is given in the table, together with revised figures for divisions 66 and 79 for 1974 and 1979 which result from changes in coverage introduced in 1981.

1985* SITC (Rev 2) division†	Imports as a percentage of exports	1985* SITC (Rev 2) division†	Imports as a percentage of exports
51	69	71	65
52	92	72	76
53	45	73	101
54	41	74	89
55	58	75	120
56	291	76	164
57	44	77	127
58	133	78	174
59	57	79	63
61	85	81	132
62	95	82	185
63	752	83	595
64	330	84	179
65	178	85	422
66	104	87	82
67	92	88	144
68	138	89	108
69	93	—	—

* Figures for 1985 are provisional.
† Due to changes in coverage of the Overseas Trade Statistics in 1981, figures for 1974 and 1979 (given previously) have been revised for Divisions 66 and 79. Revised figures are:

1974† Division	Percentage	1979† Division	Percentage
66	117	66	110
79	65	79	67

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring up to date the information on the volume of imports and exports of semi and finished manufactures given in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) dated 19 May 1980, *Official Report*, column *18*, to include figures for 1985 on the same basis.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom Trade Volume Indices
1980 = 100 OTS basis

	Imports Manufactures Semi*	Finished†	Exports Manufactures Semi*	Finished†
1949	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1959	24	9	39	42
1969	54	31	66	69
1979	102	100	101	97
1985	122	155	107	114

n/a = Not available.
* SITC (R2) Sections 5 and 6.
† SITC (R2) Sections 7 and 8.

Imports and Exports

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether he will bring up to date the figures showing the value and volume of imports and exports of consumer goods given in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 20 May 1980, *Official Report*, column *108*, to include figures for 1985; and if he will provide similar figures for intermediate goods and capital goods;

(2) whether he will bring up to date the information on the value and volume of United Kingdom imports and exports of consumer goods given in the reply dated 20 May 1980, *Official Report*, column *108*; if he will add figures for intermediate goods, intermediate less oil and gas, and capital goods; and if he will add the figures for United Kingdom output of consumer goods, intermediate goods and capital goods;

(3) whether he will bring up to date the information on the value and volume of United Kingdom imports and exports of consumer goods given in his answer dated 20 May 1980, *Official Report*, column *108*, adding figures for intermediate goods, intermediate less oil and gas, capital goods, together with United Kingdom output of consumer goods, intermediate goods and capital goods.

Mr. Pattie: The information is as follows:

	Value (£ million) Imports	Exports	Volume Index (1980 = 100) Imports	Exports	Output (1980 = 100)
Consumer goods					
1970	74	103	20·7	77·2	92·0
1979	794	404	103·2	106·7	108·3
1985	1,655	441	179·7	78·1	103·7
Intermediate goods					
1970	577	988	41·5	61·9	83·8
1979	3,207	4,611	95·1	90·7	107·9
1985	8,415	10,103	172·5	130·8	112·6
Capital goods					
1970	541	1,145	41·5	79·5	102·0
1979	3,426	4,786	98·8	96·9	104·7
1985	8,305	7,494	194·3	107·0	103·2

Notes:
1. The figures for imports and exports cover SITC(R2) Divisions 71 to 77, and are based on the United Nations broad economic categories analysis.
2. The output figures are based on the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification. They measure the output for all production industries, and are therefore not directly comparable with the trade figures given.
Source:
Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics, 1986 annual supplement.

Engineering Goods

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring up to date the figures showing particulars of production and trade in engineering goods in certain countries given in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 26 November 1979, *Official Report*, column *489*.

Mr. Alan Clark: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Wool Manufactures

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring up to date the information on production and exports of wool manufactures given in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 5 December 1979, *Official Report*, column *224*.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

Table 1
*Production of wool, hair and man-made fibre tops**

'000 tonnes

	1978	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
United Kingdom†	92	79	66	70	67	70	76	82
Federal Republic of Germany	54	58	57	50	40	39	47	51
France	127	137	136	136	121	123	127	126
Italy‡	264	287	263	281	271	274	300	313
United States of America	44	39	49	49	47	49	45	38
Japan‖	80	87	76	71	75	64	70	75

Notes:
*Figures include production of carded silver and man-made fibre tow converted to top without combing.
†Includes also production outside the wool industry for use by the wool industry.
‡Including some tops of other non-wool fibres.
‖Excludes man-made fibre tops.
Source: Annual report on Wool Statistics by the Commonwealth Secretariat, International Wool Study Group and International Wool Textile Organisation.

Table 2
*Total production of yarns by the wool textile industry**

'000 tonnes

	1978	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
United Kingdom†	183	174	141	131	115	121	127	134
Federal Republic of Germany†	147	144	147	125	110	114	124	72
Italy	504	549	536	521	488	495	536	552
France	136	138	134	125	113	108	107	106
United States of America‡	502	525	470	520	519	514	506	n.a.
Japan‖	298	313	303	282	294	282	308	306

Notes:
*Includes woollen and worsted yarns and yarns of other fibres and mixtures.
†Revised series.
‡Series covers total production of yarns by wool textile industry; series given on 5 December 1979, *Official Report*, column 224 covered only yarns which were predominantly of wool.
Source: Annual report on Wool Statistics by the Commonwealth Secretariat, International Wool Study Group and International Wool Textile Organisation.

Table 3
Production of finished woven fabrics (apparel and non-apparel) including blankets, by the wool textile industry (of wool or other fibres)

'000 tonnes

	1978	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
United Kingdom*	57	53	46	37	38	35	33	34
Federal Republic of Germany	38	40	42	36	30	29	31	28
Italy	188	213	212	206	191	199	204	207
France	63	65	57	52	49	48	48	50
United States of America†	58	52	48	45	32	38	42	38
Japan‡	112	115	105	102	101	107	116	110

Notes
* Deliveries.
† Comprises only fabrics containing by weight 50 per cent or more of virgin or reprocessed wool.
‡ Weight of yarns consumed in wearing inclusive of usage of wool yarns outside the industry.
Sources Annual report on Wool Statistics by the Commonwealth Secretariat, International Wool Study Group and International Wool Textile Organisation.

Table 4
Exports of wool and hair tops (including carded wool)

'000 tonnes

	1978	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
United Kingdom	16·3	15·6	15·5	16·2	17·0	18·9	19·5	18·3
Federal Republic of Germany	7·6	10·9	9·6	10·4	8·6	8·4	14·1	13·4
France	39·7	49·1	47·4	51·7	46·6	48·1	51·9	55·0
Italy	1·1	1·0	1·5	2·0	1·9	2·5	3·6	3·1
United States of America[1]	0·6	1·5	1·9	1·2	1·9	1·7	1·1	3·9
Japan	0·5	0·5	0·9	0·6	0·3	1·0	0·8	0·7

Notes
[1] Excluding small quantities of hair tops.
Source Annual report on Wool Statistics by the Commonwealth Secretariat, International Wool Study Group and International Wool Textile Organisation.

Table 5
Exports of woollen and worsted yarns

'000 tonnes

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
United Kingdom*	16·2	16·5	16·8	15·4	14·3	15·0	16·7	17·4
Federal Republic of Germany	7·3	7·9	9·8	11·4	10·9	12·3	14·3	15·7
France	19·4	18·2	19·8	18·5	14·5	15·2	14·9	13·9
Italy	8·7	8·3	7·3	9·4	10·7	13·3	15·5	15·4
United States of America	0·6	0·4	0·3	0·5	0·3	0·1	0·2	0·2
Japan	9·2	6·7	17·4	15·2	9·1	13·1	11·5	8·8

Notes:
* Includes small quantities of yarn classified as neither woollen or worsted.
Source: Annual report on Wool Statistics by the Commonwealth Secretariat, International Wool Study Group and International Wool Textile Organisation.

Table 6
Exports of woven wool fabrics (apparel and non-apparel including blankets)

'000 tonnes

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
United Kingdom	17·2	15·8	15·3	14·5	13·0	12·2	13·8	14·7
Federal Republic of Germany	14·1	14·7	15·5	14·8	12·2	13·0	14·2	18·5
France	6·4	6·8	7·1	6·5	5·9	5·5	6·1	6·8
Italy	57·3	61·4	56·1	59·6	57·1	64·7	63·7	*61·8
United States of America	0·6	0·7	0·7	0·9	0·7	0·6	0·8	n/a
Japan†	2·9	2·4	2·9	3·1	3·4	2·6	2·9	2·9

Notes:
*Partly estimated.
† Includes wool/silk mixture fabrics.
Source: Annual report on Wool Statistics by the Commonwealth Secretariat, International Wool Study Group and International Wool Textile Organisation.

Man-made Fibres

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring up to date the information on production and exports of cullulosics and other man-made fibres given in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 5 December 1979, *Official Report*, column *227*.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

Table 1
Production of Man-made fibres: Cellulosics

'000 tonnes

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
United Kingdom	200·9	215·4	162·1	147·6	130·9	163·2	127·2	99·4
German Federal Republic	135·0	145·7	140·8	148·8	141·6	150·0	163·2	156·4
Italy	88·7	78·6	65·2	60·1	43·8	29·6	30·1	n/a
France	74·2	78·4	69·1	55·9	46·4	38·3	26·3	n/a
Japan	424·0	440·0	432·2	428·9	405·0	424·1	418·6	388·0
United States of America*	410·3	421·7	365·5	349·3	249·6	273·2	266·4	n/a

n/a = Not available.
* Includes only rayon fibres and acetate filaments; figures comparable to other countries incorporating all rayon and acetate filaments and fibres are only available for 1978 when 560,300 tonnes was produced.
Source: United Nations Monthly Bulletin of Statistics.

Table 2
Production of Man-made fibres: Non-Cellulosics

'000 tonnes

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
United Kingdom	406·8	381·6	288·0	247·2	202·8	225·6	234·0	231·6
German Federal Republic	746·4	784·8	721·2	768·0	702·0	758·4	770·4	796·8
Italy	405·6	406·8	399·6	482·4	489·6	540·0	597·6	n/a
France	258·0	235·2	224·4	232·8	205·2	207·6	213·6	*61·2
Japan	1,418·4	1,410·0	1,400·4	1,368·0	1,294·8	1,438·8	1,414·8	1,446·0
United States of America	3,531·6	3,826·8	3,571·2	3,546·0	2,922·0	3,416·4	3,388·8	n/a

n/a = Not available.
* Production of continuous filaments only.
Source: United Nations Monthly Bulletin of Statistics.

Table 3
Exports of Man-made fibres: Cellulosics

'000 tonnes

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
United Kingdom	120·0	125·5	126·5	109·7	93·1	127·1	105·7
German Federal Republic	53·1	52·7	64·5	70·7	75·0	*394·2	*409·3
Italy	31·7	18·0	12·5	18·3	18·7	17·9	17·5
France	51·3	49·0	51·2	44·6	37·7	33·0	27·2
Japan	170·3	151·3	176·0	191·4	173·9	183·4	164·3
United States of America	76·8	91·7	51·9	40·0	40·7	21·2	29·2

* Includes some synthetics previously counted under non-cellulosics.
Source: CIRFS (International Rayon and Synthetic Fibres Committee).

Table 4
Exports of Man-made fibres: Non-Cellulosics

'000 tonnes

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
United Kingdom	183·1	196·0	192·6	150·2	135·2	150·8	159·2
German Federal Republic	532·1	533·3	528·1	592·1	488·4	*227·9	*253·1
Italy	205·4	177·1	213·9	286·9	282·0	352·6	379·6
France	158·3	120·2	128·4	134·2	127·7	139·3	137·6
Japan	390·3	295·7	329·5	362·1	318·4	339·0	336·8
United States of America	252·1	411·2	479·3	562·6	338·0	238·1	297·8

* Excluding some synthetics now counted under cellulosics.
Source: CIRFS (International Rayon and Synthetic Fibres Committee).

Cotton Manufactures

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring up to date the information on production of cotton manufactures given in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 5 December 1979, *Official Report*, column *229;* and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The latest available figures are as follows:

Table 1
Production of Cotton Yarn

000 Tonnes

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	Q1 1985	Q1 1986
United Kingdom	91·3	90·8	‡71·8	51·0	51·0	49·9	47·3	48·1	13·1	12·7
Federal Republic of Germany*	163·6	160·9	169·9	148·2	168·3	181·4	193·9	203·1	57·3	na
France	160·9	159·3	160·4	138·3	138·8	137·7	137·2	124·8	37·5	31·6
Italy	159·9	171·6	170·2	160·5	159·2	150·0	na	na	na	na
United States of America†	1071·0	1112·1	‡1119·3	986·9	900·9	na	na	na	na	na
Japan*	447·9	507·7	503·8	455·5	470·2	437·7	436·7	437·0	106·8	na

Table 2
Production of Woven Cotton Cloth

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	Q1 1985	Q1 1986
United Kingom million metres	380·0	364·7	‡313·8	277·9	260·8	254·6	264·8	273·8	76·8	70·9
Federal Republic of Germany thousand tonnes	145·7	145·0	150·0	129·5	145·0	154·3	164·0	176·6	49·1	na
France thousand tonnes	130·1	129·6	129·1	120·6	126·6	120·8	119·7	112·9	32·5	na
Italy thousand tonnes	115·4	129·8	138·4	145·7	150·2	148·9	na	na	na	na
United States of America million metres	3,644·2	3,535·2	3,726·0	3,271·7	3,172·6	3,505·2	3,342·9	3,218·7	848·0	na
Japan million square metres	2,315·3	2,338·8	2,202·0	2,066·5	2,029·8	2,078·6	2,089·8	2,060·9	514·1	488·2

Notes:
na figure not available.
* includes production in other than the cotton and allied textile industries.

† figures estimated from raw cotton consumption.
‡ 53 weeks.
Source: Textile Statistics Bureau.

United States of America

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring up to date the figures showing particulars of United Kingdom trade with the United States of America, exchange rates, and so on, given in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 19 December 1979, *Official Report*, column *258*.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

*I United Kingdom trade with the United States of America in manufactures**

Year	Indices of Value 1970 = 100 Imports (cif)	Exports (fob)	Crude Balance (£ thousand) (Exports valued fob minus imports cif)
1977	312	328	−251
1978	350	383	−194
1979	416	415	−535
1980	547	456	−1,346
1981	536	474	−1,107
1982	586	510	−1,262
1983	690	679	−950
1984	892	875	−1,213
1985	969	1,084	−305

II. Sterling exchange rate against the United States dollar expressed as a percentage of the 1963 rate†

Year	Percentage	Year	Percentage
1977	62·4	1982	62·5
1978	68·6	1983	54·1
1979	75·8	1984	47·7
1980	83·1	1985	46·4
1981	72·3		

III. Export volume index (fob) for United Kingdom trade in manufactures with all countries as a percentage of the import volume (cif) using 1963 = 100‡

Year	Percentage	Year	Percentage
1977	61	1982	43
1978	54	1983	38
1979	47	1984	38
1980	48	1985	38
1981	46		

Sources:
* United Kingdom overseas trade statistics (SITC (R2) Divisions 5 to 8)
† Bank of England
‡ Monthly review of external trade statistics.
Notes: In table I, the data given for 1985 is provisional.

Imports

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring up to date the figures for imports in relation to exports and home demand as shown in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) dated 2 July, *Official Report*, column *565*.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table:

SIC class		Per cent. Imports/Exports 1979	1985	Imports as a proportion of production* less exports 1979	Year ended 30 June 1985
21	Metalliferous ores extraction and preparation	833	2,493	†	5,894
22	Metal manufacturing	115	105	46	64
23	Extraction of minerals nes	140	127	†	75
24	Non-metallic mineral products	67	78	11	14
25	Chemicals	76	75	40	65
26	Man-made fibres	73	88	83	226
31	Metal goods	80	113	11	18
32	Mechanical engineering	58	74	42	58
33	Office machinery and data processing equipment	125	119	1,077	†
34	Electrical and electronic engineering	91	119	46	84
35	Motor vehicles and parts	123	171	71	106
36	Other transport equipment	75	73	80	112
37	Instrument engineering	101	117	112	162
41-42	Food, drink and tobacco	198	178	25	23
43	Textile industry	130	172	50	78
44	Leather and leather goods	163	156	67	86
45	Clothing and footwear	170	214	44	58
46	Timber and wooden furniture	522	534	41	47
47	Paper, printing and publishing	209	218	24	28
48	Plastics and plastics processing	90	124	22	35
49	Other manufacturing industries	115	124	†	69

*Sales by United Kingdom manufacturers.
†In these cases exports exceed manufacturers' sales and the resulting figure is meaningless.

Manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1956 the value of *(a)* imports and *(b)* exports of manufactures as a percentage to one place of decimals of (i) gross domestic product and (ii) manufacturing output.

Mr. Pattie: Available information is given in the following tables:

*(a)—By value expressed as a percentage of GDP**

	Imports†	*Exports†*
1963	5·2	11·7
1964	6·0	11·4
1965	5·9	11·5
1966	6·1	11·6
1967	6·8	10·9
1968	8·2	12·4
1969	8·3	13·2
1970	8·4	13·4
1971	8·1	13·3
1972	9·1	12·4
1973	11·4	13·5
1974	13·6	16·0
1975	11·4	14·9
1976	12·4	16·3
1977	13·5	17·6
1978	13·5	16·5
1979	14·4	15·8
1980	12·8	15·2
1981	12·0	13·8
1982	12·7	13·5
1983	14·1	13·4
1974	15·9	14·6
1985	15·9	15·0

* GDP(E) market prices.

† Balance of payments basis, standard international trade classification 5-8.

No consistent trade series is available for the period prior to 1963.

*(b)—By value expressed as a per. ntage of manufacturing output**

	Imports†	*Exports†*
1978	26·0	26·1
1979	27·5	25·1
1980	26·1	26·5
1981	28·0	27·4
1982	29·8	27·3
1983	33·1	26·6
1984	35·9	28·4

* Principal product sales of manufacturing industries in the United Kingdom.

† Standard industrial classification 2-4.

No data is available before 1978. Due to the different classification of the manufacturing sector the two tables are not directly comparable.

Profits (Manufacturing and Financial Sectors)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing at current and at 1986 prices the profits of *(a)* manufacturing and *(b)* the financial sector in the latest year for which figures are available and in (i) 1956, (ii) 1966 and (iii) 1976; and if he will include figures for each year since 1956 of the rate of return in each case on an historic cost basis.

Mr. Pattie: It is not possible to make a meaningful comparison of profits and rates of return between manufacturing companies and financial companies from the available statistics.

Banking

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the top 50 United Kingdom private sector employers, excluding companies engaged in banking, finance or insurance, showing in each case the number of employees employed in the United Kingdom and giving available information about part-time workers.

Mr. Howard: Following the Companies Act 1981, companies are required to report their total employment whether in the United Kingdom or abroad. For the last available information on United Kingdom employment I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) on 29 March 1984 at columns 257-60.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list the top 20 United Kingdom employers among companies engaged in banking, insurance, and finance showing in each case the number of employees employed in the United Kingdom and giving available information about part-time workers;

(2) if he will list the top 20 foreign company employers in the United Kingdom, including companies engaged in banking, insurance and finance showing in each case the number of employees employed in the United Kingdom and giving available information about part-time workers.

Mr. Howard: The information is not available.

Rover Group

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards financial assurances to any parts of the Rover Group that may be disposed of.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Previous Ministerial statements that the Government will ensure that the obligations of the (then) BL Group are met are unaffected by BL's change in name to the Rover Group. However, in each case after the completion of the sale of Leyland Bus Ltd and of the majority of the Rover Group's shareholding in Unipart Group Ltd, and notwithstanding the Rover Group's continuing minority shareholding in Unipart Group Ltd, the Government will accept no further responsibility for ensuring that the obligations of either company are met.

Companies Acts (Fraud)

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many prosecutions have taken place for alleged breaches of the Companies Act 1985 and associated Acts concerned with fraud for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985 and which were initiated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Details of prosecutions under the Companies Act for 1983 and 1984 are given in the Annual

Reports laid before both Houses of Parliament which are available in the Library of the House. The annual report for 1985 will be published shortly.

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many investigations concerning alleged breaches of the Companies Act 1985 and associated Acts concerned with fraud have been undertaken by his Department for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Details of investigations under the Companies Act for 1983 and 1984 are given in the annual reports laid before both Houses of Parliament which are available in the Library of the House. The annual report for 1985 will be published shortly.

International Tin Council

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if the International Tin Council has taken on any new heads of expenditure in 1986-87; and what proportion of the United Kingdom's contribution is taken up thereby;

(2) pursuant to the answers on 22 July, why the United Kingdom's contribution to the administrative budget for the International Tin Council has risen to £76,117 in 1986-87; why the number of staff employed has fallen from 39 to 19; if he will specify the amount of the United Kingdom contribution devoted to staff pay; and if he will itemise what the £76,117 is to be spent on.

Mr. Alan Clark: Details of the administrative budget of the International Tin Council are confidential. However, the Council expects to have to incur increased expenses in 1986-87 in dealing with the legal actions brought by its creditors. The fall in the number of staff employed in 1986-87 reflects the reduced role of the Council following the cessation of buffer stock operations. There are termination payments associated with staff reductions.

SCOTLAND

Matrimonial Homes Act

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied with the working of the Matrimonial Homes Act.

Mr. John MacKay: The Government are continuing to monitor the operation of the 1981 Act. Research commissioned by the Scottish Home and Health Department into the working of the Act has almost been completed and we shall be studying the findings of this research with a view to deciding whether further guidance or action on the part of Government is desirable.

Community Programme

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans exist for new community programme opportunities to be provided by his Department.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The further expansion of the community programme announced in the March 1986 Budget has given Scotland an additional 2,250 places. The new target is 31,400 filled places to be achieved by the end of November 1986.

The additional places in Scotland all represent opportunities for individuals and sponsors. For example a community programme national initiative on crime prevention was launched in Scotland on 21 July 1986, which will involve several hundred new opportunities in 1986-87 alone.

Consultants

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1985, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Rifkind: The following contracts which were let in the financial year 1985-86 are relevant:

Contract and Subject	*Consultant*
Redesign of central module of Financial Management Initiative Training for the Scottish Office	Inbucon Management Consultants Ltd.
Survey of costs incurred by practising Solicitors in Scotland	Ernst & Whinney
Design and Specification of a Management Control and Information System for the Royal Botanic Garden	Price Waterhouse
Design and Specification of a Management Control and Information System for National Galleries (Scotland)	Inbucon Management Consultants Ltd.

Since the Scottish Office does not maintain central records of all the contracts that might be relevant it is not possible without disproportionate cost to be sure that the above list is comprehensive. If my hon. Friend will let me know of any particular point he wishes to pursue I will be glad to look into it.

House Condition Survey

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from Scottish local authorities about a house condition survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: In the last three months, representations have been received directly from one local authority about a national house condition survey. In addition, representations have been made from time to time by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities as part of its current campaign for such a survey.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 6 May at column 13.

To assist local authorities which may be contemplating a local house condition survey in their area, the Scottish Development Department is undertaking a research

project on the conduct of local surveys, the results of which will be published as part of the "Scottish Housing Handbook".

Sports Clubs (Rates)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from amateur sport clubs about rates; and if he will make a statememt.

Mr. Ancram: Over 100 representations about rates have been received this year from or on behalf of amateur sports clubs. The Government are concerned that rates bills are a present source of anxiety, but we consider that in the longer term sports clubs will benefit from the proposals for rates reform outlined in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714), including harmonisation of Scottish and English valuation practice. For the shorter term, as my right hon. and learned Friend reminded the House on 23 July 1986 following his statement about rate support grant at column *358*, rating authorities have discretion to reduce up to 100 per cent. of the rates payable by sports clubs. The total contribution from the national taxpayer to local authorities in the rate support grant settlement for 1987-88 leaves authorities plenty of scope to exercise that discretion.

Colleges of Education

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the future of Scottish colleges of education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 27 March at column *591-93* and to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 11 July at column *300*. Since his oral statement on 17 July at column 1187-88, my right hon. and learned Friend has received two further representations from my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton).

Educational Bursaries

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he makes for the purpose of his policy on educational bursaries of the extent of the difference in the position of parents living in the rural regions of Scotland compared with those living in towns with colleges.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In response to representation about the position of parents whose children must leave home to undertake courses of further education, I am taking steps to enable education authorities to exercise more discretion in determining the parental contribution relating to individual bursaries. The Education Authority Bursaries (Scotland) Regulations 1986, which are being laid before Parliament today, will bring this change into effect from 18 August 1986.

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to which local authorities in Scotland classify all educational bursaries under category B.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Education Authority Bursaries (Scotland) Regulations 1985 provide that full-time further education bursaries granted to persons until they have attained the age of 18 are classed as category A bursaries, and those granted to persons who have reached that age as category B. In the latest academic session for which information is available (1984-85) all education authorities in Scotland paid both category A and category B bursaries to further education students; all authorities also paid higher school bursaries, which are not subject to classification according to age.

Central Scotland (Crime Statistics)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for 1985 the numbers of *(a)* reported crimes and *(b)* solved crimes in the central Scotland police authority area for each of the following categories and, in each case, the percentage increase or decrease since 1978 (i) violence against the person, (ii) burglary, (iii) theft/handling of stolen goods, (iv) fraud/forgery, (v) criminal damage and (vi) other; and if he will give the total figures for both years.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is set out in the table:

Crimes recorded and cleared up in the central Scotland police force area

Crime	*Crimes recorded*			*Crimes cleared up*		
	1978	*1985*	*Percentage change*	*1978*	*1985*	*Percentage change*
Violence against the person	273	522	+91	249	482	+94
Burglary	2,711	4,048	+49	801	1,275	+59
Theft/handling of stolen goods	6,657	8,773	+32	2,735	3,692	+35
Fraud/forgery	501	1,445	+188	433	1,151	+166
Criminal damage	2,745	4,288	+56	706	1,326	+88
Other crimes	574	1,025	+79	476	938	+97
Total crimes	13,461	20,101	+49	5,400	8,864	+64

Notes:

The categories listed above have been derived from the categories of the Scottish crime classification as follows:

"Violence against the person": all non-sexual crimes of violence (group 1 of the standard classification) apart from robbery, those crimes of indecency (group 2) which contain a violent element, and certain crimes involving malicious and reckless conduct.

"Burglary": housebreaking.

"Theft/handling of stolen goods": opening lockfast places and clandestine removal in addition of theft per se, plus reset.

"Fraud and forgery": fraud, forgery and uttering, bankruptcy and currency offences.
"Criminal damage": fire-raising, vandalism and other crimes of malicious and reckless conduct not involving violence against the person.
"Other crimes": all crimes other than those included above.

Primary Schools (Rural Areas)

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards small primary schools in rural areas; and whether his Department gives regional authorities guidelines on appropriate criteria for closures.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The special circumstances of primary schools in remote areas are recognised in the requirement that authorities must seek the consent of my right hon. and learned Friend to any proposals for closure where the intended receiving school is five or more miles distant from that to be closed. No guidelines have been issued by the Scottish Education Department on criteria for school closures; each case must be considered on its merits and in the light of its special circumstances. But at a time of declining pupil numbers and limited resources it is essential that education authorities keep under review the pattern of school provision in their areas.

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he gives to regional authorities on the position of one-teacher primary schools in rural areas.

Mr. Allan Stewart: No guidance is given by my right hon. and learned Friend which specifically relates to one-teacher schools.

Plutonium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the full details of *(a)* plutonium produced, *(b)* plutonium in spent fuel despatched and *(c)* plutonium reprocessed for each week since 1 June and 1 December at each of the civil magnox reactors operated by the South of Scotland Electricity Board.

Mr. Allan Stewart: No.

Agricultural Advisory Services

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will introduce a concessionary rate of charges for agricultural advisory services sought by registered crofters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The Scottish agricultural colleges are currently giving consideration to the full range of agricultural advisory services for which charges are to be made, and the prices at which these services will be offered, taking account of the wide variety of circumstances within the Scottish agricultural community. No final decisions have yet been made.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will exempt from the expenditure guidelines issued to local authorities the spending which they incur in supplying places under the YTS and other special measures concerned with the relief of unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In Scotland, Government expenditure on the new two-year YTS alone is expected to be over £90 million in 1986-87. Since, like any other employer, local authorities stand to benefit from a better trained work force as a result of participation in the new YTS, I see no case for exempting their contribution from comparison with the guidelines which cover local authority expenditure as a whole. Such exemptions or disregards are only made in very exceptional circumstances. I wrote to the hon. Member about this on 22 July.

Some local authorities choose voluntarily to add to the Government funds available for employment measures such as the community programme, particularly for participants' wages. Such decisions are for local authorities to make in the light of their own priorities.

The participation of local authorities in YTS and employment measures is greatly appreciated and I hope it will continue.

NHS (General Managers)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to supplement from central funds the enhanced salaries of Health Service unit general managers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Consultation on the extension of general management function to units in the NHS in Scotland concluded on 18 July. I am now considering the comments received and I hope to be able to issue final guidance on the implementation of unit general management in the very near future.

Implementation of general management at board and unit levels will be contained within existing management cost limits. I expect the development of general management to lead to greater efficiency in the use of resources.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much Health Service expenditure as an absolute figure and as a percentage of total National Health Service expenditure in Scotland for each of the past 10 years was spent on *(a)* elderly and geriatric services, *(b)* community services, *(c)* the mentally handicapped, *(d)* the mentally ill, *(e)* obstetric services and *(f)* acute services.

Mr. John MacKay: I regret that information is not readily available in the form requested. I shall write to the hon. Member and arrange for a copy of my letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Scottish Certificate of Education Higher Music Examinations

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes have been notified to him regarding the arrangements for the 1987 Scottish certificate of education higher music examinations.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish Examination Board wrote on 30 June 1986 to education authorities and schools setting out the changes to be introduced in the SCE higher grade music examination in 1987. I am sending the hon. Member a copy of the letter and placing a further copy in the House of Commons Library.

Hepatitis B Immunisation

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation recommendations on hepatitis B immunisation will be put into effect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Mackay: The joint committee on vaccination and immunisation has not yet made any recommendations on this question, and I am therefore unable to comment on the matter.

Commonwealth Games

Mr. Fletcher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will assess the damage done to the financial arrangements for the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh by the number of countries now boycotting these games; and if he will make a statement of his intentions regarding Government financial assistance in these unforseen circumstances.

Mr. Rippon asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will arrange for Her Majesty's Government to make a contribution to the expenses of the Commonwealth games deducting the cost from aid currently earmarked for Commonwealth countries who have boycotted the games.

Mr. Allan Stewart: It is for the organisers to assess the financial implications of the last-minute withdrawals from the Commonwealth Games. The organisers have not asked for Government financial assistance. My right hon. and learned Friend and I congratulate them on their determination to make the games a financial success.

Legal Aid

Mr. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the rate of refusal of legal aid applications in Scottish courts, categorised by *(a)* the area and *(b)* the level of the courts concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) on 16 June at column *420*.

Derelict Land

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much derelict land has been reclaimed by regional area in Scotland for each year from 1975 to 1985; how much funding was available for each year; and if any year was underspent.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 May 1986, c. *294*]: Following is the information requested:

(a)—Acreage of land reclaimed

Region	*1975-76 to 1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*Total*
Strathclyde	491·1	457·1	1,402·1	988·0	3,050·2	991·7	432·1	1,008·7	8,821·0
Dumfries and Galloway	35·1	18·9	43·3	114·4	10·9	—	8·2	27·1	257·9
Borders	0·3	66·9	18·4	10·1	78·2	17·1	2·4	0·4	193·8
Lothian	81·4	124·9	390·2	184·6	1,166·8	194·7	250·5	53·6	2,446·7
Central	140·2	65·0	455·3	60·0	649·0	42·6	28·6	146·7	1,587·4
Fife	95·8	56·6	841·9	155·4	571·2	84·6	40·4	83·3	1,929·2
Tayside	263·6	232·0	144·5	34·8	168·4	51·7	13·3	26·4	934·7
Grampian	55·4	19·1	17·7	3·3	101·5	46·7	7·7	89·5	340·9
Highland	4·4	102·4	7·4	49·1	221·2	18·8	10·0	17·3	494·6
Western Isles	—	—	1·3	—	23·7	—	—	—	25·0
Orkney	—	—	—	4·9	11·1	—	—	—	16·0
Shetland	—	—	—	12·4	7·1	—	—	—	19·5
Unallocated to Region	7·8	1·1	—	2·5	3·3	—	—	—	14·7
TOTAL	1,175·1	1,144·0	3,386·1	1,619·5	6,062·6	1,447·9	793·2	1,453·0	17,081·4

Information prior to 1979-80 is not available on an annual basis.

(b)—Financial provision for derelict land clearance and environmental improvement

£ million

1976-77	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
10·0	15·0	20·3	24·3	30·3	18·9	27·6	23·9	33·6	34·4

Funding was underspent in years 1976-77 and 1977-78. In each subsequent year the initial provision was fully spent and additional resources were allocated.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what total acreage of reclaimed derelict land in Scotland in 1975, and for each subsequent year to 1985, has been attributable to coal mining activities.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 May 1986, c. *294*]: Following is the information requested. Information prior to 1979-80 is not available on an annual basis.

Year	Acreage
1975 to 1978-79	*719
1979-80	815
1980-81	395
1981-82	920
1982-83	696
1983-84	415
1984-85	358
1985-86†	312

* Aggregate for the period.
† To date.

National Health Service

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the *(a)* gross and *(b)* net of charges expenditure, current and capital, on the National Health Service and personal social services for each year from 1971 to 1986-87 for Scotland for *(a)* hospital and community health services, *(b)* family practitioner committees and their predecessors, *(c)* centrally funded National Health Service services, and *(d)* personal social services, with the percentage increase deflated by (i) gross domestic product, (ii) retail price index and (iii) pay and prices.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *30-31*]: The information requested is set out in the following tables.

Hospital and Community Health Services
Gross Current and Capital Expenditure

	£ million cash	Percentage increase in real terms (GDP deflator)	Percentage increase deflated by the Retail Price Index	Percentage increase deflated by NHS pay and prices
1971-72	180			
1972-73	208	+7·1	+7·9	+6·2
1973-74	238	+6·7	+3·5	+3·5
1974-75	348	+22·5	+24·1	+8·4
1975-76	453	+3·6	+4·5	+1·1
1976-77	508	−1·0	−2·8	−1·5
1977-78	579	+0·1	+0·1	+4·6
1978-79	667	+4·1	+6·3	+5·0
1979-80	794	+1·9	+2·8	−1·2
1980-81	1,009	+7·0	+9·3	−0·6
1981-82	1,147	+3·3	+2·0	+5·4
1982-83	1,229	+0·2	*	+0·9
1983-84	1,304	+1·6	+1·3	+1·3
1984-85	1,391	+2·4	+1·6	+1·0
1985-86†	1,478	+0·2	+0·4	+1·0
1986-87‡	1,567	+2·2	n/a	n/a

* Insignificant.
† Provisional.
‡ Estimated.
n/a = Not available.

Family Practitioner Services
Gross Current Expenditure

	£ million cash	Percentage increase in real terms (GDP deflator)	Percentage increase deflated by the Retail Price Index	Percentage increase deflated by NHS pay and prices
1971-72	56			
1972-73	64	+6·1	+6·7	+5·8
1973-74	68	−0·8	−3·8	−0·5
1974-75	80	−1·5	−0·2	−0·8
1975-76	109	+8·2	+9·4	+7·6
1976-77	129	+4·7	+2·6	+7·2
1977-78	145	−1·4	−1·3	+1·0
1978-79	167	+4·2	+6·3	+0·4
1979-80	197	+1·0	+1·9	+0·5
1980-81	246	+5·0	+7·3	−0·3
1981-82	281	+3·8	+2·4	+1·0
1982-83	322	+7·3	+7·0	+2·8
1983-84	347	+3·1	+3·0	+2·3
1984-85	380	+5·0	+4·5	+2·3
1985-86†	403	*	+0·2	−0·6
1986-87‡	438	+4·7	n/a	n/a

* Insignificant.
† Provisional.
‡ Estimated.
n/a = Not available.

Centrally Financed Services
Gross Current and Capital Expenditure

	£ million cash	Percentage increase in real terms (GDP deflator)	Percentage increase deflated by the Retail Price Index	Percentage increase deflated by NHS pay and prices
1971-72	13			
1972-73	15	+7·0	+7·7	+5.1
1973-74	19	+18·0	+14·6	+13·3
1974-75	25	+11·1	+11·7	+21·4
1975-76	34	+7·5	+9·1	+8·9
1976-77	39	+1·2	−0·5	*
1977-78	44	*	−3·2	−2·3
1978-79	48	−2·3	−3·0	+3·5
1979-80	62	+10·6	+11·6	+9·5
1980-81	75	+2·1	+4·0	+0·8
1981-82	91	+10·4	+8·8	+10·6
1982-83	97	*	−0·5	+0·3
1983-84	107	+4·7	+5·3	+5·1
1984-85	114	+2·7	+1·4	+1·8
1985-86†	124	+2·6	+2·7	+3·8
1986-87‡	135	+5·1	n/a	n/a

* Insignificant.
† Provisional.
‡ Estimated.
n/a = Not available.

Personal Social Services
Gross Current and Capital Expenditure

	£ million cash	Percentage increase in real terms (GDP deflator)	Percentage increase deflated by the Retail Price Index	Percentage increase deflated by PSS pay and prices
1971-72	36	na	na	na
1972-73	48	+23·9	+24·8	na
1973-74	62	+21·7	+18·2	na
1974-75	85	+14·0	+15·4	na
1975-76	101	na	na	na
1976-77	130	na	na	na
1977-78	137	−7·4	−7·5	−5·7
1978-79	164	+8·7	+11·0	+9·5
1979-80	205	+6·6	+7·6	+2·5
1980-81	258	+6·3	+8·5	+3·1
1981-82	288	+1·3	*	−0·4
1982-83	310	+0·7	+0·6	−0·1
1983-84	334	+2·9	+2·7	+2·8
1984-85†	355	+2·1	+1·2	+1·7
1985-86†	376	*	+0·1	na
1986-87	na	na	na	na

* Insignificant.
† Provisional.
n/a = Not available.

Hospital and Community Health Services
Net Current and Capital Expenditure

	£ million cash	Percentage increase in real terms (GDP deflator)	Percentage increase deflated by the Retail Price Index	Percentage increase deflated by NHS pay and prices
1971-72	177	na	na	na
1972-73	206	+7·8	+8·7	+6·4
1973-74	234	+6·0	+2·8	+3·1
1974-75	346	+23·9	+25·6	+9·8
1975-76	452	+3·9	+4·8	+1·1
1976-77	505	−1·2	−3·1	−1·4
1977-78	574	•	−0·2	+4·3
1978-79	665	+4·5	+6·9	+5·5
1979-80	791	+1·8	+2·7	−1·1
1980-81	1,005	+7·0	+9·2	−0·7
1981-82	1,144	+3·5	+2·1	+5·5
1982-83	1,224	•	−0·1	+0·8
1983-84	1,298	+1·5	+1·2	+1·2
1984-85	1,386	+2·4	+1·7	+1·0
1985-86†	1,471	+0·1	+0·2	+0·9
1986-87‡	1,557	+2·0	na	na

• Insignificant.
† Provisional.
‡ Estimated.
n/a = Not available.

Family Practitioner Services Net Current Expenditure

	£ million cash	Percentage increase in real terms (GDP deflator)	Percentage increase deflated by the Retail Price Index	Percentage increase deflated by NHS pay and prices
1971-72	50			
1972-73	58	+7·3	+8·3	+5·9
1973-74	61	−1·7	−4·8	−0·5
1974-75	73	+0·4	+1·6	+0·8
1975-76	101	+9·9	+11·1	+9·4
1976-77	120	+5·1	+3·0	+6·8
1977-78	134	−1·9	−1·9	+1·5
1978-79	157	+5·7	+8·5	+1·4
1979-80	183	•	+0·7	−0·6
1980-81	227	+4·3	+6·5	−1·0
1981-82	257	+2·7	+1·5	+0·4
1982-83	294	+7·0	+6·8	+2·4
1983-84	316	+2·8	+2·7	+2·1
1984-85	347	+5·5	+4·6	+2·6
1985-86†	367	−0·3	−0·1	−1·7
1986-87‡	396	+4·0	n/a	n/a

• Insignificant.
† Provisional.
‡ Estimated.
n/a = Not available.

Centrally Financed Services Net Current and Capital Expenditure

	£ million cash	Percentage increase in real terms (GDP deflator)	Percentage increase deflated by the Retail Price Index	Percentage increase deflated by NHS pay and prices
1971-72	12			
1972-73	14	+7·5	+9·0	+11·9
1973-74	17	+14·0	+9·9	+16·3
1974-75	24	+16·9	+7·2	+6·9
1975-76	34	+13·2	+13·7	+9·4
1976-77	39	+0·1	−0·5	+0·6
1977-78	42	−4·6	−1·0	+1·8
1978-79	48	+2·4	+0·6	−0·5
1979-80	62	+10·6	+11·6	+10·0
1980-81	75	+2·1	+4·0	+0·8
1981-82	90	+9·4	+7·6	+10·5
1982-83	96	•	−0·4	−0·2
1983-84	106	+4·8	+5·4	+5·4
1984-85	113	+2·7	+1·5	+1·8
1985-86†	122	+1·8	+2·0	+3·5
1986-87‡	133	+5·2	n/a	n/a

• Insignificant.
† Provisional.
‡ Estimated.
n/a = Not available.

Personal Social Services
Net Current and Capital Expenditure

	£ million cash	Percentage increase in real terms (GDP deflator)	Percentage increase deflated by the Retail Price Index	Percentage increase deflated by PSS pay and prices
1971-72	31			
1972-73	41	+24·6	+25·5	n/a
1973-74	56	+26·8	+23·0	n/a
1974-75	77	+14·3	+15·8	n/a
1975-76	93	n/a	n/a	n/a
1976-77	118	n/a	n/a	n/a
1977-78	123	−8·1	−8·2	−6·4
1978-79	149	+9·4	+11·8	+10·3
1979-80	189	+8·3	+9·3	+4·1
1980-81	239	+6·5	+8·7	+3·3
1981-82	263	+0·2	−1·1	−1·5
1982-83	283	+0·4	+0·3	−0·5
1983-84	308	+4·2	+4·0	+4·1
1984-85†	323	+0·7	+0·1	+0·4
1985-86†	343	•	+0·1	n/a
1986-87	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

• Insignificant.
† Provisional.
n/a = Not available.

Notes:

1. There are no Family Practitioner Committees in Scotland. Since 1974, Family Practitioner Services have been administered by Health Boards. Administration costs are included in the Hospitals and Community Health Service totals.
2. Hospitals and Community Health Service expenditure before 1974-75 does not include certain Community Health functions previously carried out by local authorities.
3. No separate NHS pay and price factors are available for Scotland. The factors used are those maintained by DHSS for England.
4. Due to reorganisation, the local authority financial year 1975-76 lasted only 10¼ months (16 May 1975 to 31 March 1976). The personal social services expenditure figures for that year are therefore not comparable and have not been deflated.
5. The local authority elements of expenditure included in the PSS totals exclude loans and loan charges.

DEFENCE

Military Aircraft

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence how service aircraft replacements are costed; what was the value of military aircraft listed as destroyed in the defence White Paper; and if there was any residual value in such aircraft.

Mr. Lee: Most initial orders for service aircraft include an allowance for forecast attrition and therefore one-for-one replacement of aircraft lost in accidents does not normally arise. The notional value for accounting purposes of aircraft listed as destroyed in the 1986 Statement on Defence Estimates was £74 million based on

the current production cost or, if the type is no longer in production, the original cost uprated to current prices. In both cases an allowance for depreciation has been applied. Whenever the aircraft is recoverable, serviceable parts are reused or utilised as ground training aids. The small residual element is sold as scrap.

Royal Marines

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for defence whether he is in a position to make a statement on the future provisions of amphibious warfare ships and craft for the Royal Marines.

Mr. Lee: I have nothing further to add to what I said on this matter in the debate on the Defence Estimates on 1 July at column 859.

Cruise Missiles (Convoys)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which a cruise convoy support vehicle overturned on the A339 on the morning of Tuesday 22 July; and on how many previous occasions such accidents have happened involving similar vehicles.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that the driver of a vehicle belonging to the United States Air Force was forced to swerve suddenly to avoid several demonstrators who deliberately stepped into the road in front of the vehicle on the A339 near Kingsclere. The vehicle did not overturn but a trailer it was towing, and which contained miscellaneous field and personal equipment, did. There were no casualties. I am not aware of any similar incidents which have been caused in this way but such activity by demonstrators is clearly both irresponsible and dangerous.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost to his Department of policing the cruise missile convoys on their exercises.

Mr. Freeman: It is not the practice, for both operational and security reasons, to give details of matters relating to exercises conducted by nuclear missile units.

Woolwich Arsenal (Pigeon Infestation)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence what further temporary roof repairs are required at building 10 in the Woolwich Arsenal to prevent pigeon infestation; and when the necessary work will be carried out.

Mr. Freeman: The inner ceiling of building 10 is inspected regularly and maintenance work carried out as necessary to ensure that the ceiling remains intact and in a safe condition. It is intended to replace the roof of building 10 completely in due course.

Plessey (Takeover)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he submitted any evidence to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission regarding the proposed takeover of Plessey by the General Electric Company.

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Cruise Missiles (Securicor Vans)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the role of the Securicor vans which accompany the cruise missile convoy on its exercises; if the radiation symbols attached to these vans relate to the performance of this duty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Securicor vans do not accompany convoys of cruise missile vehicles on exercises.

Quality Assurance

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those divisions and branches of the Directorate General of Defence Quality Assurance which are located at the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich.

Mr. Lee: The following divisions and branches of the Directorate General of Defence Quality Assurance are located at Royal Arsenal, Woolwich:

Directorate of Quality Assurance—Project Support
Branches:
- Fighting Vehicles and Engineer Equipment (part)
- Weapons (Army) (part)
- Guided Weapons Electronics (Army) (part)

Directorate of Quality Assurance—Industry
Branches:
- Plans
- Contractor Assessment

Directorate of Quality Assurance—Technical Support
Branches:
- Mechanical Engineering
- Explosives
- Polymers
- Chemistry

Directorate of Quality Assurance—Policy
Branches:
- Design
- Manufacture and Documentation
- Realiability and Maintainability
- Training and Conferences

Directorate of Quality Assurance—Administration
Branches:
- Finance, Procurement and Site Management
- Personnel
- Central Secretariat

Directorate of Quality Assurance — Project Support Development
Branches:
- Publications
- Statistics and Reliability
- Design and Documentation

Public Bodies

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a list of all the bodies in Wales to which he has the sole or joint responsibility for making appointments.

Mr. Freeman: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Defence Secretariat 19

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to the answer of 11 July, he will state the current posting of each former member of defence secretariat 19;

what is the function of the sections to which they are currently posted in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The former head of DS19, Mr. J. K. Ledlie, is now the chief of public relations in the MOD. Three of the other former members of the division have resigned from the Civil Service. One has taken up a posting overseas with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and another is serving in the Cabinet Office. Of the remaining two, one is serving in the MOD public relations organisation and one in an equipment secretariat division in the Procurement Executive.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence how his Department now carries out the functions formerly carried out by defence secretariat 19; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces gave on 21 July, at column 71, setting out the functions of the disbanded defence secretariat 19. These functions are now carried out as part of the duties of the defence arms control unit in conjunction, as appropriate, with other branches in the Department.

US Aircraft (UK Bases)

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the designations of all United States tactical and strategic reconnaisance aircraft whih have flown from RAF airbases in the United Kingdom in 1986.

Mr. Freeman: The following United States tactical and strategic reconnaisance aircraft are based in the United Kingdom: SR71 and RC135 at RAF Mildenhall; TR1 and RF4 at RAF Alconbury. The United States authorities have confirmed that in addition EP3 and U2 reconnaissance aircraft visited the United Kingdom during 1986.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the European repair facility for the ground-launched cruise missile will be located in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: The European repair facility for the ground-launched cruise missile will be located in Belgium.

NATO Weaponry

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there is a 1985-90 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation force goal for *(a)* a nuclear surface to surface missile, *(b)* a nuclear air to surface missile and *(c)* nuclear 155 mm and 8 in artillery.

Mr. Freeman: Details of NATO force goals are classified.

United States Stealth Aircraft

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether United States aircraft using new stealth technology have flown from any Royal Air Force bases in 1986.

Mr. Freeman: The United States authorities have made no request to my Department to operate any such aircraft from any RAF base in 1986.

United States Aircraft (Mildenhall)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what were the designations of all United States aircraft which have flown from Royal Air Force Mildenhall in 1986.

Mr. Freeman: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the designations of all aircraft which the United States authorities have requested to operate from Royal Air Force Mildenhall.

Mr. Freeman: The following United States Air Force aircraft are normally based at RAF Mildenhall:

C12
C130
EC 135
KC 135
RC 135
SR 71

South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will give details of all contracts involving his Department and majority-owned South African companies since June 1979;

(2) if he will provide details of goods procured by his Department from *(a)* South Africa and *(b)* Namibia for each year from 1980 to 1985, including the total value for each year and the value of each category of items for each year.

Mr. Lee: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate effort.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *489*, if he will specify the nature of the chemical weapons force goal addressed to the United States; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I assume the hon. Member is referring to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 15 July at column 489. I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Burnley at Mr. Pike on 17 June at column 885.

Animals (Project Licensing)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what preparations his Department is making to comply with the terms of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 relating to the project licensing system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 is expected to come into force during 1987. The Ministry of Defence is in touch with the Home Office about the project licences needed for its work and will apply for these as and when required.

British Nuclear Fuels (Enrichment Services)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has held, or has any intention of holding, discussions with the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc on the contract for the provision by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. of enrichment services to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have no plans to meet the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc concerning the contract for the enrichment services provided by BNFL, the basis for which was announced by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence on 23 June 1982 at column 128-29. My officials are of course in regular contact with the company concerning the progress of the contract, which is proceeding according to plan.

Military Attachés

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence what contacts the military attachés to Her Majesty's embassies in *(a)* Mexico, *(b)* Nicaragua, *(c)* Honduras, *(d)* El Salvador, *(e)* Costa Rica and *(f)* Belize have had with the respective armed forces in those countries in the last year.

Mr. Freeman: We have normal diplomatic relations with all six countries, including a defence element, although we do not have a defence adviser accredited to Belize. There is regular contact between United Kingdom defence personnel and the armed forces of these countries.

Chile

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence what contacts representatives of the armed forces have had with the Chilean military forces in the last year.

Mr. Freeman: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Islington, North on 24 July.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many courtesy visits by Her Majesty's armed forces have occured with Chile in the past year; and on what dates.

Mr. Freeman: Courtesy visits have been made by Her Majesty's ships to Chilean ports on the following occasions during the last year:

HMS Avenger, HMS Danae and RFA Olwen
August 1985

HMS Herald
October 1985

HMS Olympus
January 1986

HMS Onslaught
July 1986

Sea Wolf

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he is yet able to say when contracts will be allocated for work on the Sea Wolf missile; and what proportion of them will be by competitive tender;

(2) when tenders were issued relating to Sea Wolf missile contracts; and what is the closing date for bids.

Mr. Lee: It is assumed that the hon. Member is referring to the conventional launch Sea Wolf missile. The most recent production order was placed with British Aerospace plc in March 1984. It was not subject to competitive tender. No decision has yet been taken on the purchase of additional missiles.

Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the effect of his proposals to lease the enclave at Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough, for business aviation upon the 1988 air show and those following; and what representations he has received on the matter from the Society of British Aerospace Companies.

Mr. John Lee: The implications for the biennial SBAC air shows have been taken fully into account throughout the development of proposals for a civil enclave at the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough. Discussions have been held with the SBAC on many occasions during this period by both Ministers and officials.

Exercise Brave Defender

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about Exercise Brave Defender.

Mr. George Younger: Last October my predecessor informed the House that he was placing in the Library an unclassified initial assessment of Exercise Brave Defender. This gave our initial judgment that the exercise had been an overall success and in particular demonstrated that the revised military home defence concept for guarding vital installations worked in practice.

The exercise was not designed to test our total military home defence capability nor could it realistically simulate wartime conditions in the nation as a whole. Nevertheless, further detailed analysis has confirmed our first impressions. We were particularly pleased with the co-operation between all three Services, the integration of United States forces and the participation of the reserves on such a large scale. The participation of civilian police forces nationwide was particularly useful since it under lined the fact that the primary responsibility for the internal security of the United Kingdom rests with the police. Following the exercise, studies are under way into improvements to mobilisation procedures; refinements in the deployment of static and mobile guard forces in the defence of vital installations; and the training and equipment available for Home Defence Forces.

We intend to build on the foundation of Brave Defender by conducting further military home defence exercises on both a local and national scale; although no date has yet been fixed for any future national exercise.

Practice Bomb, Friskney

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the circumstances surrounding the dropping of a practice bomb in a field near Friskney, Lincolnshire, on 11 July.

Mr. Freeman [*pursuant to his answer*, 22 July]: In the course of a routine training sortie at Wainfleet range a USAF F-111 from RAF Upper Heyford accidentally released a practice bomb outside the range area. The practice bomb fell in open country to the north west of the range and has since been recovered.

Practice bomb on the F-111 are carried in underwing pods with bomb doors which are closed except when the aircraft is over the designated range area. In this incident, investigation has shown that an electrical system short-circuited just as the bomb doors were closing as the aircraft recovered from a normal bomb release over the range.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Divorce

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many divorces there have been in the Province in each of the past five years for which figures are available; and if he will express these figures as a rate in respect of marriages;

(2) if he will now reply to the question from the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow tabled for priority written answer on 4 July, 24W, concerning divorces in the Province.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

Year	*Number of divorces (Decrees Absolute)*	*Divorce rate per 1,000 marriages*
1981	1,355	14·1
1982	1,387	14·0
1983	1,678	16·8
1984	1,547	14·9
1985	1,602	15·5

Antrim RUC Station

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will pay an official visit to Antrim Royal Ulster Constabulary police station.

Mr. Scott: I make regular visits to RUC stations. It is not, however, my practice to give details of such visits in advance.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if special circumstances exist which render visits by hon. Members or dignitaries to Antrim Royal Ulster Constabulary police station more difficult than to other comparable police stations in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Information on these matters is not available. They fall within the operational responsibility of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many official visits have been made by Royal Ulster Constabulary officers based at Antrim Royal Ulster Constabulary station to schools in the area covered by Antrim Royal Ulster Constabulary station in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986 to the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986, c. *619*]: Although this is a matter for the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, I understand that the information is not readily available and it could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many times the Royal Ulster Constabulary chief constable visited Antrim Royal Ulster Constabulary station in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986 to the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986, c. *619*]: This is a confidential matter for the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if any visits to Antrim Royal Ulster Constabulary station by dignataries were (i) requested and (ii) allowed for Saturday 12 July; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many notifications of *(a)* parades, *(b)* demonstrations, *(c)* major sporting events and *(d)* other major events the Royal Ulster Constabulary received which were scheduled to take place in Antrim during the afternoon of Saturday 7 June;

(3) how many notifications of *(a)* parades, *(b)* demonstrations, *(c)* major sporting events and *(d)* other major events the Royal Ulster constabulary received which were scheduled to take place in Antrim during the morning of Saturday 7 June.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986, c. *619-20*]: Information on these matters is not available. They fall within the operational responsibility of the chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Drugs

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what quantities of drugs have been seized by the authorities in each of the past five years.

Mr. Scott: The available information is set out below. Detailed records were not kept before 1982.

Item	*1985*	*1984*	*1983*	*1982*
Cannabis Resin	10·489 kilos	5·547 kilos	3·037 kilos	331 grams
Cannabis (Herbal)	4·823 kilos 317 plants	400 grams 108 plants	78·102 grams 181 plants	1·387 kilos 113 plants
Liquid	30 grams	—	—	—
Lysergic Acid Diethylamide	903 doses	6 doses	17 doses	4 doses
Diconal	—	—	3·5 microgms (powder trace)	37 tablets
Morphine	—	—	2 ampoules (liquid)	5·89 grams (solid)

Item	*1985*	*1984*	*1983*	*1982*
Diamorphine	8·9 grams	0·24 milligrams (trace)	—	2 grams
Methadone				
Solid	591 tablets	—	2 tablets	31 tablets
Liquid	375 millilitres	20 millilitres	—	—
Cocaine	6 grams	5·1 grams	2 grams	3·75 grams
Amphetamine				
Solid	—	40 tablets	—	81 tablets
Liquid	50 grams	10·842 grams	890 grams	3·13 grams
Methylphenidate	—	—	101 tablets	—
Barbiturates	307 tablets	—	—	—
Dextromoramide	—	—	24 tablets	—
Mephentermine	—	·076 milligrams (trace)	—	—
Methaqualone	60 tablets	—	—	4 tablets
Dimotane	—	—	—	500 millilitres

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary are involved in the detection of misuse of drugs.

Mr. Scott: There are currently 26 officers full-time in the Royal Ulster Constabulary drugs squad with a further nine officers on temporary attachment.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland with which police forces in Europe the Royal Ulster Constabulary have the facility of direct contact in co-operation to detect illegal drugs.

Mr. Scott: The Royal Ulster Constabulary has established effective contact with most police forces in Europe through Interpol and the National Drugs Intelligence Unit at New Scotland Yard.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the extent of involvement of paramilitary organisations in the misuse of drugs and drug trading; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986]: While a number of persons who may have paramilitary links have been prosecuted for drugs offences, there is no evidence at present that paramilitary groupings are involved on an organised basis.

Kidnap Insurance

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received on the subject of kidnap insurance as it affects security in the Province.

Mr. Scott: The only representations my right hon. Friend has received recently are those from the hon. Member.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the effectiveness of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has been affected by the Stalker and Sampson inquiries.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for the Chief Constable, but I understand he is satisfied that the inquiry itself is having little, if any, impact on the overall effectiveness of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. However he is concerned that ill-founded and distorted speculation and comment in the media about the inquiry could adversely affect the morale, and therefore the effectiveness, of officers other than those who are directly involved.

Security

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in the Province.

Mr. Scott: Since 1 July there have been seven deaths in incidents arising from the security situation in the Province. Three of those killed were civilians, two were members of the Regular Army, one was a member of the UDR and one was a police officer.

In their continuing effforts to prevent terrorist activity the police have so far this year charged 404 people with serious offences. This includes six charged with murder. In the same period 129 weapons, 16,279 rounds of ammunition and 1,498 lbs of explosives have been recovered.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will institute inquiries into the allegations about security in Northern Ireland contained in a letter recently sent to him by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby about the case of James Wallace.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend has received no such letter from the hon. Member.

Rothmans Cigarette Factory, Carrickfergus

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in which of the last five financial years grants have been made to the Rothmans cigarette factory at Carrickfergus; whether any of these moneys are now repayable to the Government on the closure of the factory; what restrictions there are on the Rothmans company selling plant and machinery purchased with grant aid or transferring such plant and machinery to manufacturing units elsewhere in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Dr. Boyson: Grants have been paid in each of the years 1981-1982 to 1985-86 and have amounted in total to £3·249 million. Some £144,000 is now repayable, being grant in respect of machinery which had been in use for less than four years on the date of closure of the Carrickfergus factory. There are no restrictions on the sale of grant-aided machinery which has been in use by Rothmans for more than four years.

Housing Executive

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of architectural staff employed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; and what was the number of dwellings approved in new Housing Executive contracts in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but I understand from the chairman that the information on the numbers of architectural staff employed by the executive is not available in the precise form requested. The following figures for the past six years include not only architects and architectural technicians, but administrative staff working in support of architectural staff.

Year ending	*Number of staff*
1980-81	162
1981-82	167
1982-83	193
1983-84	204
1984-85	208
1985-86	207

Details of dwellings approved in new Housing Executive contracts in each of the past 10 years are provided in table 4 to "Northern Ireland Housing Statistics" published by the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) earlier this month. I have arranged for copies of this publication to be placed in the Library.

Ford Plant, Belfast

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial assistance has been provided by his Department for the modernisation of the Ford Motor company plant at Belfast.

Dr. Boyson: In accordance with normal practice, the form and amount of assistance offered will be published in due course in *British Business*, copies of which are placed in the Library.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had over the past 12 months with the Ford Motor Company about the future of the Ford Belfast plant.

Dr. Boyson: Officials of the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland have been in discussion with Ford about the future of the Belfast plant for more than two years. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met senior Ford management in June this year to stress the importance of the plant to the Northern Ireland economy and he subsequently visited the plant on 16 July, when Ford announced its investment plan for the plant, to meet the local management and work force.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much Health Service expenditure as an absolute figure and as a percentage of total National Health Service expenditure in Northern Ireland for each of the past 10 years was spent on *(a)* elderly and geriatric services, *(b)* community services, *(c)* the mentally handicapped, *(d)* the mentally ill, *(e)* obstetric services and *(f)* acute services.

Mr. Needham: Financial information is not collected on a basis which would enable me to provide the breakdown of expenditure in the form requested.

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Rory T. O'Kelly in South Tyrone on 4 March 1977; and if he will give details;

(2) what information he has as to whether anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of John Reid, a constituent of South Tyrone, shot in the Irish Republic on 9 March 1977, and if he will give details;

(3) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of William David Brown in Fermanagh on 13 March 1977; and if he will give details;

(4) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of David Graham in South Tyrone on 25 March 1977; and if he will give details;

(5) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Sean Prendergast in Fermanagh on 4 April 1977; and if he will give details;

(6) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Eric Shiells in South Tyrone on 29 April 1977; and if he will give details;

(7) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Douglas H. Deering in Fermanagh on 12 May 1977; and if he will give details;

(8) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Bobby North in South Tyrone on 20 May 1977; and if he will give details;

(9) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Denis Quinn in South Tyrone on 3 July 1977; and if he will give details;

(10) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of David Morrow in South Tyrone on 6 July 1977; and if he will give details;

(11) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Bob Bloomer in South Tyrone on 24 September 1977; and if he will give details;

(12) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Frank Canavan in South Tyrone on 12 October 1977; and if he will give details;

(13) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Mark D. Carnie in South Tyrone on 19 July 1978; and if he will give details;

(14) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Patrick Fee in Fermanagh on 21 August 1978; and if he will give details;

(15) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Michael Cassidy in South Tyrone on 15 April 1979; and if he will give details;

(16) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Sam Gibson in South Tyrone on 29 April 1979; and if he will give details;

(17) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of George Maughan in Fermanagh on 6 May 1979; and if he will give details;

(18) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Norman Prue in Fermanagh on 6 May 1979; and if he will give details;

(19) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of John McClenaghan in Fermanagh on 19 May 1979; and if he will give details;

(20) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Sylvia Crowe in Fermanagh on 17 July 1979; and if he will give details.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave on 24 July 1986.

Mr. Kevin McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of persons who were initially detained under other Acts and were charged under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts in the first six months of the current year;

(2) how many persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts were charged with *(a)* offences under the Acts and *(b)* offences under other Acts (excluding common law offences) in the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: During the first six months of the year no one was charged with an offence under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 having first been detained in Northern Ireland under another act. Five people detained in Northern Ireland under the Prevention of Terrorism Act were charged with offences under that Act. One hundred and ninety one were charged with offences under other Acts.

Northern Ireland Flag

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the official flag specific to Northern Ireland; if it is displayed from his Department's public buildings; and what is his policy towards the use of the Northern Ireland banner.

Mr. Scott: The official flag of Northern Ireland is the Union flag, which is flown from Government buildings in Northern Ireland on the prescribed days. The Government do not regulate use of the Ulster banner.

Detained Persons

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many persons were detained under Emergency Provisions (Northern Ireland) Acts 1973 and 1978 in the first six months of the current year;

(2) how many persons were detained under the Emergency Provisions (Northern Ireland) Act 1978 and of those persons, how many were charged with scheduled offences and how many were charged with non-scheduled offences, in the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: In the first six months of this year there were 494 arrests by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and 22 by members of the armed forces under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. Some of those arrested by members of the armed forces would be recorded in the Royal Ulster Constabulary figures if they were subsequently handed over to the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Information regarding charges is not yet available and I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Baton Rounds

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many formal complaints have been made about incidents of police use of plastic baton rounds in the first six months of the current year; in how many cases the complaint has been upheld, and in how many cases disciplinary action has been taken against the officers involved.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: During the first six months of this year four formal complaints were made concerning the use of plastic baton rounds by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. One was later withdrawn and the others are still under investigation.

Arms Seizures

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show *(a)* how many firearms, by type, handguns, rifles, shotguns or fully automatic weapons, were seized by the security forces in Northern Ireland in the first six months of the current year; and for each type how many were legally held weapons stolen by terrorist organisation from (i) civilians, (ii) the Royal Ulster

Constabulary, (iii) the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, (iv) the Ulster Special Constabulary, (v) the Ulster Defence Regiment and (vi) the Regular Army.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: This statistical information is not yet available. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Arms Finds

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will detail the number of arms found in 1985 and the first six months of the current year under the headings of (i) machine guns, (ii) rifles, (iii) shotguns, (iv) pistols/revolvers and (v) others.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: This statistical information is not yet available. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

RUC (Attacks)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many attacks on Royal Ulster Constabulary personnel took place monthly in 1985, showing whether the attack was on *(a)* a foot patrol and *(b)* a mobile patrol and the total attacked while on duty each month together with details of the type of attack, namely, (i) physical assault, (ii) stone throwing, (iii) petrol bomb, (iv) explosion and (v) shooting and the number of persons made amenable.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1986]: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give particulars of attacks upon, and injuries sustained by, officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, in operations since November 1985, broken down so far as possible by the characteristics and localities of such incidents.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: The information is not yet available. I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Protestant Demonstrations

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Protestant traditional parades have been held in the Province in the current year to date; how many were re-routed; how many became the occasion of, or were followed by, violence; and what part was played by *(a)* the Orange Order and *(b)* other Protestant organisations in restraint of such violence.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: I am informed by the chief constable that there have been 1,274 parades organised by Protestant organisations or groups this year (as at 21 July). Four were re-routed and disorder occurred at 32. In the vast majority of cases the organisers, including the Orange Order, co-operated with the police at all times.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as to the conduct of the Orange demonstration on 12 July in Newtownards; what was the estimated number of people in Newtownards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave on 25 July 1986.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the level of public order maintained during the recent Orange celebrations in the Ards and Castlereagh districts within the constituency of Strangford; and what estimate the police have made of the numbers taking part.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986]: I am informed by the Chief Constable that all the events associated with the recent orange order celebrations in the Ards and Castlereagh districts passed off peacefully. The main demonstration took place in Newtownards on 12 July. Approximately 2,750 people participated in the procession and it was watched by some 25,000.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has received any representations from the Government of the Republic of Ireland in the aftermath of the Orange parade in Portadown; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1986]: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) on 16 July, at columns 1005-8.

Defence and Security Forces (Land Purchase)

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what lands in the Magilligan area of County Derry have been bought over the past 18 months by or on behalf of the British Army or other defence or security forces; and for what purposes.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: The Police Authority for Northern Ireland is responsible for the purchase of land or property on behalf of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. I understand that the authority has not purchased land in the Magilligan area of County Londonderry over the last 18 months. With regard to the British Army or other defence forces I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to a question by him from my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence on 23 July.

Explosions

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement as to the reasons for the numerous explosions in the Magilligan area which have been detonated by Crown forces over the past year.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: Several tests have been carried out. It is not in the public interest to publish further details.

Irish Language

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the proposed date for publication of the Department of Education and Science's second language guidelines; and if those guidelines will cover the teaching of the Irish language in primary schools.

Dr. Mawhinney [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1986]: The Department of Education for Northern Ireland is not publishing any such guidelines.

The Northern Ireland Council for Educational Development is, however, producing a series of guidelines for primary education which is planned to include one on teaching of a second language. It will deal with the teaching of Irish and French. The date of publication has not yet been decided.

Sectarian Intimidation

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of sectarian intimidation have been reported to the Royal Ulster Constabulary during the month of July.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1986]: This statistical information is not yet available. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Modern Language School Assistants

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken in the light of the arrangement between the United Kingdom Government and other EEC Governments with regard to the exchange of modern language school assistants to arrive at an arrangement with the Government of Ireland for the provision of Irish language school teaching assistants in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1986]: No such steps are being taken.

Newry (Army Patrols)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy regarding Army patrol units patrolling the town of Newry.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1986]: The Army continues to operate in Northern Ireland in support of the RUC. The deployment of troops in Newry, as in any other part of the Province, is an operational matter for the Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding.

Civil Unrest

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many members of the security forces and civilians were injured during civil unrest in Portadown in the period 1 to 14 July in each of the years 1984, 1985 and 1986;

(2) how many plastic bullets were fired by security forces in Portadown in the period 1 to 14 July in each of the years 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply, 18 July 1986*]: The information is as follows:

	Injuries Reported		*Plastic Baton rounds*
	Security Forces	*Civilians*	*Fired*
1984	1	Nil	Nil
1985	92	24	32
1986	80	41	225

IRA Attacks

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each month from 1st January 1985 to date the number of explosions, punishment shootings, and attacks on the security forces for which the Irish Republican Army claimed responsibility or where there is evidence that they are responsible.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986, c. *622-23*]: The information is not yet available. I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Terrorism (Deaths)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each month from 1 November 1985 to date the number of deaths of *(a)* civilians, *(b)* Regular Army, *(c)* Ulster Defence Regiment, *(d)* Royal Ulster Constabulary and *(e)* Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve caused by terrorist activity and specify in respect of which terrorist organisation there has been a claim of, or evidence of, responsibility.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986, c. *622-23*]: The numbers of deaths since 1 November 1985 for which terrorists are believed to have been responsible, and the categories into which they fall, are as follows:

	Royal Ulster Constabulary	*Royal Ulster Constabulary (Reserves)*	*Army*	*Ulster Defence Regiment*	*Civilians*	*Total*
1985						
November	1	—	—	2	3	6
December	1	1	—	—	—	2
1986						
January	1	1	—	1	1	4
February	1	—	—	1	1	3
March	1	—	1	—	1	3
April	1	—	—	1	—	2
May	2	—	1	1	6	10
June	—	—	—	—	1	1
July	1	—	2	1	3	7
Total*	9	2	4	7	16	38

* As at 21 July 1986.

Whilst it is not possible to be certain in every case, Republican terrorist organisations are thought to have been responsible for 31 of these deaths and Loyalist terrorist organisations for the remaining seven.

Explosives

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the weight of explosive mixture which has been used by the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland in the current year and in 1985.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986]: It is thought that Republican terrorist organisations detonated an estimated 4,942 kg of explosives during 1985 and an estimated 1,919 kg in the six months up to 30 June 1986.

In 1985 3,309 kg of explosives were recovered from devices thought to have been constructed by Republican terrorists and neutralised by the security forces; and a further 1,185 kg, also thought to have been intended for use by republican terrorists, were recovered in other circumstances. The corresponding figures for the first six months of 1986 are 1,443 kg and 553 kg.

It is not possible to be certain, but it is thought that most of these explosives were under the control of the Provisional Irish Republican Army.

RUC Stations (Visits)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will meet the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary to discuss the procedures covering visits to Royal Ulster Constabulary stations by hon. Members and other dignitaries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986, c. *620*]: No.

RUC (Disciplinary Proceedings)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many Royal Ulster Constabulary officers of rank below superintendent have been disciplined or had disciplinary proceedings begun against them in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, resulting from incidents when hon. Members have gained access to Royal Ulster Constabulary stations, at which those officers were stationed, without those hon. Members having gained the permission of the Chief Constable; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many Royal Ulster Constabulary officers of rank superintendent or above have been disciplined, or had disciplinary proceedings begun against them in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986 to date resulting from incidents when hon. Members have gained access to Royal Ulster Constabulary stations under their command without those hon. Members having gained the permission of the Chief Constable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986 c. *620*]: Disciplinary proceedings against officers of the rank of chief superintendent and below are the responsibility of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and are confidential.

Disciplinary proceedings against officers above the rank of chief superintendent are the responsibility of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland and are also confidential.

Riots (Portadown)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will make a statement on the riots at Portadown, County Armagh on 12 July;

(2) how many plastic bullets were used in the riots at Portadown on 12 July;

(3) how many persons were injured in the riots at Portadown on 12 July.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986 c. *619*]: I deplore the violence which took place in Portadown on 12 July. This kind of behaviour is quite unacceptable in a responsible and civilised community.

During the disturbances the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Army were attacked on numerous occasions and 14 policemen were injured. Twenty civilians are also known to have been injured. One hundred and eighty six plastic baton rounds were fired, all by members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tax Evasion

Mr. Knox asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many prosecutions there were in each of the past 10 years for tax evasion; and how many of these resulted in convictions.

Mr. Norman Lamont: For the Inland Revenue, information is available only in respect of the number of persons prosecuted. The details are:

	Persons prosecuted	*Convictions*
1976-77	326	317
1977-78	172	166
1978-79	188	180
1979-80	150	142
1980-81	189	172
1981-82	176	146
1982-83	142	134
1983-84	159	148
1984-85	239	233
1985-86	254	242

In addition the number of convictions obtained by the police in each of the last 10 years for tax frauds in connection with construction industry tax deduction scheme was:

	Number
1976-77	149
1977-78	48
1978-79	22
1979-80	10
1980-81	15
1981-82	27
1982-83	3
1983-84	5
1984-85	8
1985-86	74

The details in respect of VAT prosecutions are:

	Prosecutions	Convictions
1976-77	77	76
1977-78	142	135
1978-79	107	103
1979-80	95	86
1980-81	100	97
1981-82	98	94
1982-83	124	123
1983-84	145	142
1984-85	165	158
1985-86	238	231

Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing for those above, and for those below, pensionable age the estimated number of taxable incomes and total yield of income tax at current rates by range of total income, distinguishing between single persons, married couples without wife's earned income and married couples with such income; and if he will provide corresponding information on the basis of the following rates of tax *(a)* single persons: allowance of £2,000 taxed at nil rate, £2,000 at 15 per cent., £10,000 at 28 per cent., £5,000 at 40 per cent. and four successive bands of £5,000 at an incremental rate of five percentage points to a maximum of 60 per cent., *(b)* married persons taxed as one unit: allowance of £2,000 to be exempt from tax, allowance of £3,000 taxed at nil rate, £3,000 at 15 per cent., £14,000 at 28 per cent., and three successive bands of £8,000 at an incremental rate of five percentage points to a maximum of 55 per cent., *(c)* the nil rate band to be reduced by 25 per cent. of the amount by which total income exceeds £6,000 and £10,000 in the case of single and married persons, respectively, on the same basis as the present age allowance and *(d)* all other allowances against income for tax purposes to be abolished.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The estimates are in the tables following. They are based on a projection of the 1983-84 survey of personal incomes to 1986-87. The estimates of the tax liabilities for the alternative tax regime are approximate, because the income corresponding to some tax reliefs, for example employees' superannuation contributions and reliefs for national savings, is not recorded in the survey.

Number of tax units paying income tax and tax liability by range of total income 1986-87
Alternative system

Total income (lower limit) £ per annum	Singles: Number of units paying tax '000s	Singles: Tax yield £ million	Married couple with wife's earnings: Number of units paying tax '000s	Married couple with wife's earnings: Tax yield £ million	Married couple without wife's earnings: Number of units paying tax '000s	Married couple without wife's earnings: Tax yield £ million
			Taxpayers under 65			
2,000	1,100	80	—	—	—	—
3,000	960	220	—	—	—	—
4,000	930	420	—	—	—	—
5,000	1,100	780	210	20	110	10
6,000	980	1,000	330	80	160	40
7,000	820	1,100	440	170	200	80
8,000	580	1,000	410	240	220	140
9,000	480	990	360	310	320	280
10,000	700	1,800	730	930	800	1,000
12,000	430	1,500	610	1,200	1,300	2,700
15,000	240	1,200	440	1,500	1,400	4,600
20,000	100	810	230	1,400	860	5,300
30,000	40	582	100	1,200	250	3,000
50,000	10	410	40	1,300	50	1,800
			Taxpayers aged 65 and over			
2,000	410	40	—	—	—	—
3,000	400	90	—	—	—	—
4,000	240	100	—	—	—	—
5,000	170	120	190	10	90	10
6,000	110	120	100	20	60	10
7,000	110	150	90	40	70	30
8,000	40	70	60	30	80	50
9,000	50	100	30	30	50	40
10,000	60	160	30	40	70	90
12,000	50	170	40	80	80	170
15,000	50	250	40	120	70	230
20,000	30	230	30	200	60	360
30,000	10	210	20	220	20	280
50,000	10	190	10	200	10	210

Number of tax units paying income tax and tax liability by range of total income 1986-87
Current system

Total income (lower limit) £ per annum	Singles: Number of units paying tax '000s	Singles: Tax yield £ million	Married couple with wife's earnings: Number of units paying tax '000s	Married couple with wife's earnings: Tax yield £'million	Married couple without wife's earnings: Number of units paying tax '000s	Married couple without wife's earnings: Tax yield £ million
			Taxpayers under 65			
2,000	650	60	—	—	—	—

Total income (lower limit) £ per annum	Singles: Number of units paying tax '000s	Singles: Tax yield £ million	Married couple with wife's earnings: Number of units paying tax '000s	Married couple with wife's earnings: Tax yield £ million	Married couple without wife's earnings: Number of units paying tax '000s	Married couple without wife's earnings: Tax yield £ million
3,000	920	300	70	10	—	—
4,000	920	560	210	50	10	—
5,000	1,100	940	180	90	40	10
6,000	980	1,100	320	250	140	50
7,000	820	1,200	420	430	180	110
8,000	580	970	410	470	200	160
9,000	480	910	360	530	310	320
10,000	700	1,600	730	1,400	800	1,100
12,000	430	1,200	610	1,500	1,300	2,400
15,000	240	920	440	1,500	1,400	3,800
20,000	100	580	230	1,200	860	4,000
30,000	40	440	100	1,100	250	2,300
50,000	10	340	40	1,300	50	1,600
		Taxpayers aged 65 and over				
2,000	60	—	—	—	—	—
3,000	390	70	—	—	—	—
4,000	240	110	110	10	10	—
5,000	170	130	190	50	30	10
6,000	110	20	100	60	50	120
7,000	110	140	90	80	70	30
8,000	40	60	60	60	80	50
9,000	50	90	30	50	50	50
10,000	60	150	30	70	70	110
12,000	50	150	40	110	80	190
15,000	50	200	40	140	70	230
20,000	30	180	30	200	60	320
30,000	10	170	20	220	20	250
50,000	10	180	10	200	10	190

Mr. Raynsford asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the current annual value of *(a)* all income tax concessions and *(b)* all tax concessions approved since 1979 to the benefit of *(a)* the wealthiest 5 per cent. of the population of Great Britain and *(b)* the wealthiest 10 per cent. of the population of Great Britain.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess; I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *564*, if he will state *(a)* the total revenue obtained from income tax and national insurance at current and constant prices and using 1979 as 100 for each year from 1969-70 to 1985-86 and *(b)* the total revenue obtained from all taxation and national insurance on the same basis as *(a)*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested is as follows:

	Current prices £ million	At 1978-79 prices* £ million	Constant prices 1978-79 = 100
Total revenue from income tax and social security contributions			
1969-70	7,665	22,454	77
1970-71	8,771	23,739	81
1971-72	9,610	23,849	82
1972-73	10,233	23,448	80
1973-74	11,666	24,970	86
1974-75	16,370	29,325	101
1975-76	22,451	32,067	110
1976-77	25,927	32,660	112
1977-78	27,003	29,928	103
1978-79	29,166	29,166	100
1979-80	32,934	28,181	97
1980-81	39,327	28,356	97
1981-82	45,050	29,546	101
1982-83	49,177	30,136	103
1983-84	52,600	30,842	106
1984-85	55,219	31,084	107
†1985-86	60334	31,964	110
Total revenue from all taxation, social security contributions and royalties			
1969-70	17,690	51,821	89
1970-71	19,315	52,276	89
1971-72	20,569	51,047	87
1972-73	21,882	50,141	86
1973-74	24,883	53,260	91
1974-75	31,818	56,998	97
1975-76	40,071	57,233	98
1976-77	46,346	58,382	100
1977-78	52,297	57,961	99
1978-79	58,485	58,485	100
1979-80	72,831	62,319	107
1980-81	85,721	61,808	106
1981-82	102,033	66,917	114
1982-83	110,729	67,854	116
1983-84	118,001	69,189	118
1984-85	128,301	72,224	123
†1985-86	138,918	73,597	126

* Using the GDP deflator.

† Provisional.

Total revenue from income tax and social security contributions comprises taxes paid by persons (net of tax credits), and national insurance, national health, redundancy fund and maternity fund contributions paid by employees and employers.

Total revenue from all taxations and social security contributions comprises taxes on income, expenditure and capital, national insurance, national health, redundancy fund and maternity fund contributions and royalties.

The figures are on a national accounts accruals basis.

Child Benefit

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount by which child benefit could be increased on a revenue neutral basis if it was made taxable, the gross and net cost to the Exchequer if the amount of benefit paid in respect of each child was raised to (i) £15 and (ii) £20 weekly and made taxable, the estimated saving to public authorities of all kinds of reduction of other benefits and the estimated distribution of individual child benefits by range of total income of the parent/guardian and distinguishing between single persons, married couples without wife's earned income, married couples with wife's earned income, and institutions.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is in the table. The first line gives the level of child benefit on a revenue neutral basis if it were made taxable.

Level of child benefit	*Gross cost of increasing children benefit from £7·10 per week*	*Yield from taxing child benefit*
£ per week	*£ million per year*	*£ million per year*
9·90	1,800	1,800
15·00	5,070	2,700
20·00	8,240	3,650

Estimated savings on other programmes following increases could be calculated only at disproportionate cost.

It is estimated that in a typical week in 1986, child benefit will be paid in respect of about 12,150,000 children. The following table shows the distribution of these children according to the size of their parents' or guardians' income. The figures are based on the 1983 and 1984 family expenditure surveys with the income data projected to forecast November 1986 levels, and are therefore provisional. Total income is all sources of income, earned and investment, and includes social security benefits at July 1986 levels on the assumption that families claim all the benefits to which they are entitled. Child benefit is taken into account at £7·10 per child per week.

Estimated distribution of children qualifying for child benefit by parental status and range of parental income (November 1986)
('000s)

Range of total income (£ per week)	*Parental status*			
	Single persons	*Married couples without wife's earnings*	*Married couples with wife's earnings*	*Total*
Less than 60	100	*	*	100
60 to 80	210	60	10	280
80 to 100	420	300	90	810
100 to 120	260	430	180	870
120 to 140	160	350	210	720
140 to 160	80	390	300	770
160 to 180	50	270	330	650
180 to 200	50	300	530	880
200 to 250	70	660	1,350	2,080
250 to 300	30	480	1,160	1,670
300 to 350	20	320	840	1,180
350 to 400	10	180	570	760
Over 400	10	390	980	1,380
Total	1,470	4,130	6,550	12,150

* Less than 10,000.

The number of children in local authority care and institutions receiving child benefit is thought to be less than 10,000.

Income Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* an estimate of the yield from income tax in the current financial year from persons of pensionable age together with an estimate of the cost to the Exchequer, of replacing the age allowance and clawback with a personal allowance of £2,000 and a reduced rate of £2,000 at 15 per cent. for a single person and a personal allowance of £5,000 and a reduced rate of £3,000 at 15 per cent. for a married couple; and if he will add a table showing the estimated number of incomes by range of total income distinguishing between single persons, married couples without wife's earned income, and married couples with such income.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The tax liability of taxpayers over 65 in respect of income in 1986-87 is estimated to be about £4·5 billion. The cost of the tax regime proposed would be about £0·5 billion. The lastest estimate of the distribution of the incomes for income tax purposes of single people and married couples aged over 65 is shown below. Since the information is based on Inland Revenue records the table does not include some 3 million single people and married couples with incomes below the tax threshold for whom records are not kept.

Distribution of total income, 1986-87
For single People and Married Couples over 65

Range of total income (lower limit) (£ pa)	*Single people*	*Married couples without wifes's earned income*	*Married couples with wife's earned income*
	Number of incomes (millions)	*Number of incomes (millions)*	*Number of incomes (millions)*
2,000	·41	·04	·01
3,000	·40	·15	·04
4,000	·24	·25	·08
5,000	·17	·19	·09
6,000	·11	·11	·06
7,000	·11	·09	·07
8,000	·04	·06	·08
9,000	·05	·03	·05
10,000	·06	·03	·07
12,000	·05	·04	·08
15,000	·05	·04	·07
20,000	·03	·03	·06
30,000	·01	·02	·02
50,000	·004	·006	·006

Mr. Lawler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of single people and married

couples who would be below the income tax threshold if transferable tax allowances of £3,000 per person were introduced.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Tax Units

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will bring up to date the information concerning the number of tax units with investment income published in the *Official Report* on 18 January 1984, *Official Report*, column *218*, in reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Inland Revenue's survey of personal incomes does not provide complete information on the distribution of investment income of basic rate taxpayers due to incomplete coverage of investment income on which the liability to basic rate tax has been satisfied, for example under the building societies' composite rate arrangements. The estimates in the tables below are based on a projection from the 1983-84 survey of personal incomes and are therefore likely to be incomplete for the lower income ranges. Total income includes only those forms of income liable to tax, before the deduction of personal allowances and reliefs.

Tax units with investment income in 1986-87

	Single people under 65		*Married one earner under 65*		*Married two earners under 65*	
Total Income Lower limit (£ pa)	*Numbers ('000s)*	*Average Investment Income (£ pa)*	*Numbers ('000s)*	*Average Investment Income (£ pa)*	*Numbers ('000s)*	*Average Investment Income (£ pa)*
2,000	440	920	150	710	70	560
5,000	610	1,000	380	560	290	840
10,000	320	1,800	340	1,100	570	720
15,000	110	3,400	180	1,300	590	990
20,000	65	4,600	150	2,800	580	1,700
30,000	40	15,000	110	7,800	260	5,100

Tax units with investment income in 1986-87

	Single people 65 and over		*Married one earner 65 and over*		*Married two earners 65 and over*	
Total Income Lower limit (£ pa)	*Numbers ('000s)*	*Average Investment Income (£ pa)*	*Numbers ('000s)*	*Average Investment Income (£ pa)*	*Numbers ('000s)*	*Average Investment Income (£ pa)*
2,000	570	740	190	480	50	370
5,000	370	2,500	320	1,500	190	1,000
10,000	100	7,000	70	3,700	110	2,800
15,000	50	11,000	35	7,800	65	5,300
20,000	30	17,000	30	11,000	60	8,100
30,000	20	37,000	20	28,000	30	16,000

Unemployment Costs

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will bring up to date, including his estimate for the current financial year, the information on expenditure from the redundancy fund and so on given in reply to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on 27 July 1983, *Official Report*, column *450*; and if he will include figures from 1973-74 onwards for Government revenues from North sea oil.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates of total benefits paid to the unemployed and of expenditure from the redundancy fund in 1986-87, and in each of the preceding 13 years, are given below. Estimates of Government revenue from North sea oil over the same period are also given.

	(a) Total benefits paid to unemployed people £ million cash*	*(b) Total expenditure from the Redundancy Fund £ million cash*	*(c) (a) plus (b) as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product percentage*	*(d) Revenue from North Sea Tax† £ million cash*
1973-74	340	31	0·5	15
1974-75	440	48	0·5	20
1975-76	870	107	0·9	25
1976-77	1,180	95	1·0	81
1977-78	1,410	82	1·0	238
1978-79	1,370	89	0·8	565
1979-80	1,470	114	0·8	2,311
1980-81	2,530	280	1·2	3,735
1981-82	4,050	422	1·7	6,491
1982-83	5,060	382	1·9	7,814
1983-84	5,750	379	2·0	8,781
1984-85	6,350	289	2·0	12,002
1985-86	6,800	308	2·0	11,400
1986-87	6,750	189	1·8	‡6,100

* Includes rate rebates.

† Royalties, petroleum revenue tax (including advance payments), and corporation tax from North sea Oil and gas production (before advance corporation tax set-off).

‡ As shown in the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1986-87.

Companies (Allowances)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for (i) all companies and (ii) manufacturing companies the estimated amount in losses and allowances from past years available to offset against profits in the current year, the estimated amount of allowances and the amount of interest deductible as a business expense likely to accrue in the present year, the current rates of corporation tax and the expected yield in each category and the estimated yield in each category if the rate were to be increased to 50 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The total of accumulated tax losses is about £25 billion, excluding the public sector, of which some £10 billion is in manufacturing companies. These estimates are extremely tentative.

The available figures of interest paid by companies appear in table 5.1 of the National Income Blue Book. There is no industrial breakdown available apart from the separation of the totals into financial companies and institutions (table 5.5) and industrial and commercial companies (table 5.4). The 1986 issue, with figures up to 1985, will be available in September.

Capital allowances in 1985 are tentatively estimated to have been of the order of £18 billion. I regret that estimates of the amount in manufacturing are not available for that year.

The current (1986-87) rates of corporation tax are 35 per cent. (main rate) and 29 per cent. (small companies'

rate). The estimated yield for 1986-87 is £11·7 billion, as published in the Financial Statement and Budget Report. No breakdown for manufacturing companies is available.

The yield of mainstream corporation tax in 1986-87 is largely determined by profits arising in the two previous years. An increase to 50 per cent. in the current year would have a very small impact on revenues in this year.

Payroll Tax

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the net revenue from a 0·5 per cent. and 1 per cent. payroll tax, taking into account costs of collection, assuming that the tax level was on the same earnings base as secondary (employers) class 1 national insurance contributions at 1985-86 incomes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates of revenue on the national insurance contributions base at 1985-86 incomes are complicated by the fact that the contribution structure was changed in the middle of the year.

The estimated revenue effect, net of costs of collection, in 1986-87 would be £0·8 billion from a 0·5 per cent. tax and £1·6 billion from a 1 per cent. tax.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of the estimated extra number of Customs and Excise officials that will be required following the implementation of the Keith recommendations in the Finance Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: It is confidently expected that the new provisions will secure a significant increase in trader compliance particularly as regards prompt furnishing of accurate returns and payment of the tax and this will result in staff savings. However, this will be offset by the considerable amount of work arising from appeals against penalties and surcharge. The numbers of appeals cannot be predicted with any confidence at this stage, but it is likely that by 1988-89 there will be a small net increase in staff.

Public Bodies

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list of all the bodies in Wales to which he has sole or joint responsibility for making appointments.

Mr. Brooke: None, if the hon. Member is referring to bodies which are solely concerned with Wales. My right hon. Friend does of course have responsibility for certain appointments to national bodies located in Wales, for example the Royal Mint.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Lawler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the estimated extra revenue from restricting mortgage tax relief to the basic rate and the effect on annual revenue of restricting mortgage tax relief to the basic rate and abolishing the £30,000 limit.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Assuming no consequential changes on the distribution of mortgages outstanding, the direct revenue yield in a full year at 1986-87 levels is £320 million for restricting relief to the basic rate, or £160 million if the £30,000 mortgage interest relief limit were abolished at the same time.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the additional annual cost in revenue forgone of increasing the maximum limit on mortgage interest tax relief from £30,000 to *(a)* £35,000 and *(b)* £40,000.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Age Allowance

Mr. Lawler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of single people and married couples entitled to the age allowance who have taxable incomes below the tax threshold; and whether he has any estimate of the average income of people in these two categories.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Children (Income Tax Reliefs)

Mr. Lawler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated cost to the Exchequer of income tax reliefs for children under the age of 16 years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that this informaton is not available.

Deeds of Covenant

Mr. Lawler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the estimated extra tax revenue and staff saving if tax relief was withdrawn from deeds of covenant made by parents to their children.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Investment

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what steps he will take to encourage investors to subscribe long-term funds for British companies through the medium of investment instruments other than equities;

(2) if he will take steps to stimulate long-term investment in British companies;

(3) if he will take steps to encourage companies to issue stocks which constitute prior charges before calculation of net profit.

Mr. MacGregor: It is for companies to determine how they wish to raise finance, and for investors to decide on what terms they are prepared to subscribe it. I have, however, been encouraged to see the significant increase, this year, in issues of long-term fixed-interest stock by United Kingdom companies.

Loan Stocks (Redemption)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to permit the

interest and redemption cost of loan stocks offered on fixed terms, other than the inclusion of an index related to the performance of the company, to rank for tax purposes as the equivalent of debentures.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Occupational Pensions

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is currently the combined rate of contribution to private sector occupational pension schemes by employers and employees as a percentage of total payroll renumeration; and if he will take steps to encourage higher rates of contribution by employers or by employees.

Mr. Norman Lamont: At present, the average level of contributions by employers and employees to occupational pension schemes amounts to about 18 per cent. of payroll. Provided contributions are not excessive, they may be at whatever level is considered appropriate.

Companies (Profit-sharing)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he will take to encourage investors to seek to promote profit-sharing schemes in companies in which they have an interest.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government believe that there are major advantages for employers and employees in relating a part of pay to profits. It is therefore in the interests of investors to support the wider adoption of profit related pay arrangements. I hope that the Green Paper, "Profit-Related Pay: a Consultative Document", which sets out the merits of relating a part of pay to profits and an outline of possible arrangements for tax relief, will be carefully considered by employers, employees and investors.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, further to his answer, *Official Report*, column *608*, of 5 June, he will state the total public expenditure at current and real prices using 1979 as 100 for each year from 1969-70 to 1985-86; and if he will state whether the 1985-86 figure is actual or estimated.

Mr. MacGregor: The public expenditure planning total figures expressed in current prices and in real terms, using 1978-79 as 100 are as follows:—

Year	*Current Prices**	*Real Terms*†*
1969-70	26	75
1970-71	29	79
1971-72	33	80
1972-73	38	86
1973-74	45	95
1974-75	60	107
1975-76	74	106
1976-77	83	104
1977-78	86	96
1978-79	100	100
1979-80	118	101
1980-81	141	102
1981-82	158	104
1982-83	172	106
1983-84	183	107
1984-85	197	111
‡1985-86	204	108

* Figures from 1973-74 are based on the definition used in the 1986 public expenditure White Paper (PEWP), (Cmnd 9702). The figures up to and including 1972-73 are based on the definition used in the 1985 PEWP (Cmnd 9428) but do not include market and overseas borrowing by public corporations (including nationalised industries).

† Cash figures adjusted for general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator at market prices.

‡ Indices based on the estimated outturn figures shown in the 1986 Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Books (Seizure)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether Her Majesty's Customs and Excise maintain a list of books which it is their policy to seize under current legislation relating to imports of obscene or indecent goods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: No.

South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an estimate of the total sum offset for each year from 1980 to 1985 under the double taxation agreement with South Africa.

Mr. Norman Lamont: To date, the tax credit relief given for South African tax against United Kingdom tax under the terms of the United Kingdom/South Africa double taxation convention is:

Accounting periods ending in Financial Year

	£ million
1979-80	59
1980-81	25
1981-82	45
1982-83	7
1983-84	5

Figures for 1984-85 are not yet available.

In view of the period of time that may elapse between the end of a company's financial year and final agreement of its tax liability, these amounts are not yet final and will eventually be significantly higher.

Retired Persons (Income)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number of people annually whose incomes after their retirement from public sector employment, taking into account their national insurance pension and income derived from lump sum entitlements, are greater than they received in their last employment.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is not available.

Pensions

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people changing employment within the public sector are required to accept pension

entitlements in their new appointments smaller than they would have enjoyed if they had remained in their earlier employment; and what is the comparable number of those leaving the public sector for private sector employment.

Mr. Brooke: No one is required to transfer his or her accrued pension rights when leaving a public sector employer, but there is an option to do so. If the transfer is to another public sector scheme there are arrangements which can be expected to produce benefits in the receiving scheme of equivalent value to the individual. A similar option is available for those moving to the private sector but the benefits allowed in the receiving scheme will depend upon the advice of the scheme's actuaries.

Exchange Rate

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his current estimate of the rate of exchange between the pound sterling and the deutschmark which would correspond to purchasing power parity in respect of the items included in the retail prices index.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government do not make such calculations. Some estimates of purchasing power parities were given in "Purchasing Power Parities and Real Expenditures in the OECD" published by the OECD in 1985, a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library. As this publication explains, purchasing power parities should not be interpreted as equilibrium exchange rates.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table indicating the extent of the variations in the rates of exchange for the pound sterling and the mark from week to week in the London market over the past year.

Mr. Ian Stewart: End-week rates are published in table 18 in the Bank of England *Quarterly Bulletin*. Average sterling/deutschmark rates on a monthly basis are published in table 13.1 of "Financial Statistics".

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his reply dated 12 March 1984, *Official Report*, column 53, what is his estimate of the increase in gross domestic product less oil and gas since the decade 1963-1973 and since May 1979; and whether he will provide corresponding figures for manufacturing output.

Mr. MacGregor: Information is not available in the precise form requested but the following comparisons can be made:

	Percentage change	
	1973 to 1986 1st quarter	*1979 1st half to 1986 1st quarter*
Gross domestic product* excluding extraction of mineral oil and natural gas†	+11	+6
Manufacturing	−10	−6

*Based on the output measure of GDP at constant factor cost, which is the appropriate measure where an industrial analysis is required.

†Extraction of mineral oil and natural gas comprises Class 13 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980.

Source: Central Statistical Office.

Economic Growth

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will bring up to date the information on actual and assumed productivity growth in the United Kingdom given in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 3 July 1980, *Official Report*, columns *634-36*, concerning the International Monetary Fund index of relative export prices;

(2) whether he will bring up to date his rough estimate of the difference between growth of potential output and actual output between the two most recent cyclical peaks on a comparable basis as that given in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 22 July 1980, *Official Report*, column *146*, concerning the International Monetary Fund index of relative normal unit labour costs.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Government Fixed Assets

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the reply of 17 July, *Official Report*, columns *603-4*, which Government fixed assets are covered by commercial insurance.

Mr. Brooke: Commercial insurance is considered where it confers additional advantages apart from compensation for loss. Two examples are the insurance of lifts and boilers which include periodical expert inspection as well as compensation. An insurance premium may also be paid on goods in transit to ensure extra care in handling. It is for individual Departments to decide whether particular situations warrant taking out commercial insurance and no central records are kept.

Gay's The Word Bookshop

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any officers in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are to be, or have been, reprimanded for their part in the action against Gay's The Word bookshop and its directors and staff.

Mr. Brooke: No.

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether Her Majesty's Customs and Excise were acting on complaints received from members of the public when the decision was taken to launch Operation Tiger against Gay's The Word bookshop in Marchmont street.

Mr. Brooke: No.

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total cost of Operation Tiger and all the subsequent legal proceedings against Noncyp Ltd., trading as Gay's The Word, and its nine directors.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to him on 7 July at column 80.

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of hours engaged by all grades of staff in Operation Tiger and subsequent legal proceedings, including all preparatory work, against Gay's The Word bookshop in Marchmont street.

Mr. Brooke: Information about deployment of resources on particular cases in the detail required is not readily available. A retrospective estimation would be subject to a considerable margin of error and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether Her Majesty's Customs and Excise will compensate Gay's The Word bookshop and the nine directors and staff for losses incurred as a direct result of the Operation Tiger raids in April 1984, the subsequent seizure of stock, the charges brought by the Department, the loss of turnover, and the legal expenses incurred by them up until the time the Department applied to the Central Criminal Court for the case to be struck out.

Mr. Brooke: No.

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps are being taken to issue guidance, following the European Court ruling, to prevent a repetition of the action taken by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise against Gay's The Word bookshop and its nine directors and staff.

Mr. Brooke: Immediately after the European court ruling was known, guidance was issued to Customs staff to ensure that it was applied to future importations from whatever source.

Customs and Excise Officers (Training)

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Department of Customs and Excise will reassess and improve the training of officers investigating literature which they believe may contravene import prohibitions.

Mr. Brooke: Following the judgment by the European Court of Justice in the Conegate case, Customs are now applying the standards of relevant domestic legislaton to imported literature. Instructions to Customs staff are being revised accordingly. These will be reflected in future training programmes.

"Official Report"

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the normal number of copies printed of the daily part of the *Official Report*; for what reason larger print runs are made; in what circumstances those issues of the daily part of the *Official Report* which go out of print within less than two months are reprinted; and how often since May 1979 the daily part for any date has been reprinted.

Mr. Brooke: The normal number of copies printed is 4,750. Larger print runs are made if justified by expected demand. Reprints are also made when called for by demand. This has occurred on 16 occasions during the current Session; earlier records are not available.

European Capital Market

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to accelerate the development of a fully integrated European market for capital.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A fully integrated European market for capital will not be possible until all member states dismantle controls on the movement of capital, as the United Kingdom did in 1979. I have been encouraged by recent moves in this direction in France and Italy. The ECOFIN Council on 16 June had a general discussion on the liberalisation of capital movements in the Community, in particular on the recent proposals by the European Commission for the achievement of full liberalisation by 1992. There was general support for the Commission's objectives. This topic is being given priority during the United Kingdom Presidency of the Community, and it is hoped that in the first instance a new Council directive designed to extend the current liberalisation obligations can be adopted by the Council later this year.

Wives (Earned Income)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated cost at current rates of tax and earnings of the wife's earned income allowance together with a table showing the number of allowances falling within each range of total joint income and the total amount of the allowance in each range;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the estimated number of wives claiming earned income allowance in each range of joint total income and the cost to the Exchequer in the current financial year and *(b)* the number of wives with earned income on Inland Revenue records in each range of wife's total income.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

General Government Financial Balance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the general Government financial balance as a percentage of gross domestic product/gross national product in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the United States of America, *(c)* Japan, *(d)* Germany, *(e)* France and *(f)* Italy in 1984 and in 1985.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is published in table 24, page 39, of the May 1986 edition of "OECD Economic Outlook".

Banks (Pre-tax Profit)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report*, a table showing for the London clearing banks less the Midland bank the amount of pre-tax profit earned in *(a)* 1956, *(b)* 1969 and *(c)* each year since 1979.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The following figures are readily available from published sources. The hon. Member may wish to ask the banks themselves if they would be able to provide figures for earlier years.

Pre-tax profits

	Barclays £ *million*	*Lloyds* £ *million*	*Natwest* £ *million*
1979	*529	286	441
1980	*523	305	415
1981	539	373	500

	Barclays £ million	Lloyds £ million	Natwest £ million
1982	462	329	449
1983	505	419	518
1984	623	468	671
1985	854	561	804

• The available figures for these two years have not been adjusted to reflect present Group structure.

Pay-As-You-Earn

Mr. Lawler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated number of whole-time equivalent staff required to administer the cumulative system of pay-as-you-earn, including the coding of pay-as-you-earn and the processing of form P45.

Mr. Norman Lamont: About 30,000.

Tax Rebate Forms

Mr. Marlow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the reasons why forms for tax rebates must be issued by the Inland Revenue; why photocopies cannot be used; and why there is a delay in the provision of such forms by the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Norman Lamont: These forms are designed and issued by the Inland Revenue to meet the requirements of the Taxes Acts and are normally obtainable without delay. The board is presently considering the possibility of allowing photocopies to be used.

Gross National Product (International Comparisons)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will bring up to date the information on increases in gross national product in the United Kingdom and in the principal exporting countries given in the answer to the hon. Member for Grimsby on 16 November 1979, *Official Report*, columns 810-812.

Mr. MacGregor: Information about gross national product at constant market prices for the United Kingdom and for a limited number of other countries can be obtained, respectively, from the HMSO publication "United Kingdom National Account, 1985 edition" and from the OECD publication "Quarterly National Accounts, 1986".

Information about gross domestic product at constant prices, compiled to international definitions, is available for the United Kingdom and for a wide range of other countries from the OECD publication "National Accounts: Main Aggregates, Volume 1, 1960-1984".

Copies of all three publications can be obtained from the House of Commons Library.

EC Budget

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Dagenham of 20 May, *Official Report*, columns 173-4, on United Kingdom contributions to European Economic Community budget, he will provide figures for the gross contribution including the addition as a result of supplementary budgets.

Mr. Brooke: The estimate of our gross contribution contained in the 1986 Budget is 4,898 mecu (£3,043 million) after deducting our abatement of 1,900 mecu (£1,180 million). These figures do not take account of sizeable VAT adjustment we expect to pay next month (which will itself give rise to a larger VAT abatement in respect of this year).

Civil Service Unions (Elections)

Mr. Martin asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy when permitting the circulation of material in working time to civil servants in connection with trade union elections, to seek to ensure that equal opportunities are provided for each candidate to circulate material; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Such equal opportunities are provided under the terms of the Civil Service National Whitley Council agreement on facilities which allows unions representing non-industrial civil servants to send, under cover, correspondence to their members through Departments' internal distribution systems. They may also use the inter-departmental dispatch service for delivery of mail. It is the responsibility of individual unions to ensure the proper conduct of elections including opportunities for candidates to circulate material to members.

Mr. Martin asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to meet the leaders of trade unions representing civil servants to discuss the facilities provided to facilitate union elections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have no such plans. There are well established arrangements for allowing facilities for civil service union elections under the terms of the Civil Service National Whitley Council agreement on facilities for industrial relations duties and trade union activities in the non-industrial Civil Service.

Taxation Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report*, a table showing for single persons and married couples *(a)* the estimated number in each £1,000 step of total income qualifying for a reduction of tax on account of age and *(b)* the estimated number in each range of income qualifying for the additional personal allowance, together with the estimated cost to the Exchequer, in the current financial year in each case.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Public Sector Employers

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the top 30 United Kingdom public sector employers, including local authorities, showing in each case the number of employees employed in the United Kingdom and giving available information about part-time workers.

Mr. Brooke: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the tax treatment of payments of invalid care allowance to married women.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Payments of invalid care allowance to married women are taxable under existing law. But the wife's earned income allowance could not be set against such payments because the law as it stands does not specifically provide for this in the way that it does for other taxable social security benefits paid to wives in their own right. To bring the tax treatment of invalid care allowance into line with the treatment of these other benefits, the Government have decided that a provision should be included in next year's Finance Bill permitting the wife's earned income allowance to be set against payments of invalid care allowance due to married women. The proposed legislation would apply with effect from the tax year 1984-85 so that the wife's earned income allowance would be available against arrears of invalid care allowance which may be payable for periods back to December 1984. Meanwhile the Inland Revenue will give the benefit of the wife's earned income allowance against payments of invalid care allowance to married women for years from 1984-85 on an extra-statutory basis.

Expenditure Statistics

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will republish and update to the latest year for which figures are available the indices of gross national product, industrial production, public authorities' current expenditure, public sector domestic fixed capital formation and public sector transfer payments, deflated by the gross domestic product deflator, given in reply to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) of 17 October 1975, *Official Report*, columns 830-32 and 3 November 1975, *Official Report*, columns 2-3.

Mr. MacGregor: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Building Societies Bill

Mr. Alan Howarth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the provisions of the Building Societies Bill will come into force.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Subject to the Bill receiving Royal Assent today, the Building Societies Commission will come into being on 25 September 1986.

Paragraph 7 of schedule 20 comes into operation immediately on Royal Assent. This removes retrospectively any doubt about the vires of work undertaken since 19 December 1985 by a building society in preparation for powers which will be available to it under the new legislation.

During the autumn the commission will make those statutory instruments which need to be effective when the main provisions of the Bill come into operation. It is intended that most of the main provisions affecting societies will be brought into effect from 1 January 1987 by a commencement order. There will be few exceptions which for various reasons it will not be practicable to bring into operation until later.

The Building Societies Association has asked that adequate time should be allowed for the establishment of an ombudsman scheme and its recognition by the commission. The Government have accordingly agreed that the requirement to belong to a recognised scheme should not be brought into effect until 1 July 1987.

Before societies can invest in bodies which lend on security of land in other EC member states, links will need to be established with supervisors in those other countries. The power to invest in such bodies will accordingly not be brought into effect until 1 January 1988.

Extensive preparatory work and consultation will be needed before detailed regulations governing the conversion of any society to company status can be made. It is at present proposed that these powers should therefore be brought into effect from 1 January 1988.

Clause 35, which prohibits making the offer of a class 1 advance conditional on the use of another service offered by the society and requires different services to be priced separately, will not be brought into effect so long as a satisfactory code of practice covering the same ground has been introduced by 1 January 1988 and proves to be effective in practice.

Sections 28-30 of the Building Societies Act 1962 will not be repealed until a suitable code of practice has been introduced dealing with the taking of additional security from third parties.

It is intended to make a transitional order in due course under section 121. This will provide, among other things, for the new accounting provisions to apply to accounts for a society's financial year starting on or after 1 January 1987; for mergers to proceed under the provisions of the 1962 Act if the statement required by section 20 of that Act has been approved by the Chief Registrar before 1 January 1987; and for phasing out the special advance provisions in sections 21 to 24 of the 1962 Act.

Societies will be able to adopt the powers provided under the Bill by passing a special resolution approving the necessary memorandum of powers from two months after Royal Assent and then registering it to take effect from 1 January 1987. Other rule changes to conform to the new Act may be made between 1 January 1987 and the autumn of 1988.

Implementation of the conveyancing provisions in clause 124 and schedule 21 is a matter for my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor.

Benefits (Taxation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the receipts in the current financial year from the taxation of unemployment benefit and all other supplementary benefits.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Enterprises (Equity Shareholdings)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1956 the estimated percentage of equity shareholdings in United Kingdom enterprises held by private individuals; and if he will

provide for the latest year a breakdown of the figures showing the percentage held by insurance companies, pension funds, investment trusts and so on, other companies, and the overseas sector.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mr. John Fraser asked the Attorney-General what is the time taken to deal with an application for civil legal aid in each area office in London for which sample survey figures are available.

The Attorney-General: The only figures available at present on the time taken to deal with civil legal aid applications are those contained in the Law Society's 35th legal aid annual report (House of Commons paper 156) appendix 2G (page 94). The samples from individual area offices on which those national figures were based were not analysed separately and are no longer available. More comprehensive figures for 1985-86 will be available shortly, and I will arrange for them to be sent to the hon. Member.

Mr. John Fraser asked the Attorney-General if the Lord Chancellor will make it his policy not to fund the increases in payment for legal aid services by the profession by cuts in the legal aid and advice schemes; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Any changes in legal aid services will be made in the interest of efficiency and economy and in no circumstances will the interests of users of the service be sacrificed to those of the legal profession.

Mr. John Fraser asked the Attorney-General why the free limits for legal aid eligibility have not been increased to coincide with the July social security benefits uprating; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: To have increased the legal aid eligibility limits in line with the social security benefits uprating would have involved a rise of only 1·1 per cent., which, for civil legal aid, would have meant a rise in the lower income limit from £2,255 to £2,280. It was felt that such a small rise did not justify an uprating. However, this will be taken into account when the legal aid eligibility limits are next reviewed, which will be when social security benefits are uprated in April 1987.

Attendance Allowance

Mrs. Beckett asked the Attorney-General how many decisions were made in 1984 and 1985 by the Social Security Commissioner on appeals *(a)* by the Secretary of State and *(b)* by the claimant concerning attendance allowance; and, in each case, in what number of cases the allowance was awarded.

The Attorney-General: In 1984, two decisions were made on appeals by the Secretary of State and 44 on appeals by claimants. Twenty six appeals, including one by the Secretary of State, succeeded. I understand from the Secretary of State that, of the 26 successful appeals, 20 resulted in an award of the allowance by the Attendance Allowance Board. In 1985 one decision was made on appeal by the Secretary of State, and 69 on appeals by claimants. Forty appeals, including that by the Secretary of State, succeeded. The information requested on the actual awards for 1985 cases is not immediately available, but will be sent to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Attorney-General what is the average time between receipt by the Social Security Commissioner of an appeal concerning attendance allowance after leave to appeal has been granted and a decision on that appeal; and how long it takes to grant leave of appeal in such cases.

The Attorney-General: For applications for leave to appeal decided in 1985 (by the grant or refusal of leave) the average time was 15 working days. For appeals decided in 1985, it was 136 working days, including the period before the case was ready for determination.

Public Bodies

Mr. Wigley asked the Attorney-General if he will publish a list of all the bodies in Wales to which he or the Lord Chancellor have sole or joint responsibility for making appointments.

The Attorney-General: The meaning of the expression "bodies" is not clear. On the basis that it includes tribunals but excludes courts of law, the Lord Chancellor has responsibility for making appointments to the following tribunals, some of whose members sit in Wales:
industrial tribunals, social security appeal tribunals, medical appeal tribunals, mental health review tribunals, agricultural land tribunals and the rent assessment panel.

I make no appointments to bodies in Wales.

THE ARTS

Museum Charges

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts if he has made an assessment of the impact on attendances arising from museum charges.

Mr. Luce: As I told the hon. Member in my written answer of 11 July, many factors can affect attendances at museums and it is difficult to isolate the effects of any one factor. The introduction of museum charges is a matter for the trustees' discretion.

Libraries

Mr. Cartwright asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to which public library authorities in England have failed to provide statistics on library expenditure to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in the last two years for which the institute has published figures; and what use he proposes to make of his powers under section 1 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to ensure that he has complete statistics for all authorities as a basis for discharge of his duty under that Act to superintend the public library services.

Mr. Luce: Five authorities out of 108 failed to provide statistics for 1984-85. These were Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Sheffield and Liverpool. For 1983-84 only one authority, Tower Hamlets, did not respond.

Participation by library authorities is voluntary, and the high level of co-operation reflects the value placed on them by local librarians and managers. Although it is disappointing that the figures are not always complete, my superintendency of the public library service does not depend on them, and I concur with the view of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy that participation should continue to be voluntary.

Arts Council

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Minister for the Arts if he has any proposals to change the constitution of the Arts Council.

Mr. Luce: Not at present.

WALES

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Sir Adam Butler asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* individual sheep and *(b)* flocks have had to be destroyed in Wales as a result of radioactivity from the Chernobyl fall-out.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: No flocks have been destroyed as a result of radioactivity from the Chernobyl fall-out. Up to 19 July approximately 1,840 sheep had been slaughtered for the purpose of monitoring radiocaesium levels in sheepmeat in north Wales.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of sample tests undertaken by his Department in monitoring the level of radiocaesium in lambs in Gwynedd in each of the weeks since the Chernobyl disaster, analysed between the number taken in each of the districts of Arfon, Dwyfor, Meirionnydd, Ynys Môn and Aberconwy.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is shown in the following table:

District	*11-17 May*	*18-24 May*	*25-31 May*	*1-7 June*	*8-14 June*
Ynys Môn	—	—	—	—	3
Dwyfor	—	—	—	—	5
Aberconwy	2	—	—	2	9
Arfon	—	—	—	2	6
Meirionnyd	—	—	—	—	9
	15-21 June	*22-28 June*	*29 June-5 July*	*6-12 July*	*13-19 July*
Ynys Môn	29	152	96	192	28
Dwyfor	3	—	40	8	15
Aberconwy	23	8	28	8	61
Arfon	2	—	52	92	8
Meirionnydd	3	8	97	—	52

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many farms on Anglesey had sheep with radiocaesium levels in excess of 1,000 b/kg throughout the currency of the ban on sales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Results of tests on lambs have shown levels of caesium above 1,000 b/kg on four farms in Anglesey.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he next expects to meet the farmers' unions to discuss compensation for sheep farmers whose flocks are affected by high radiation levels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I met the two farming unions and the Country Landowners' Association when I attended the Royal Welsh Show on Tuesday 22 July.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what basis of compensation for sheep farmers whose flocks are affected by high radiation levels has been proposed to him by the farmers' unions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he is yet in a position to announce the basis of compensation for sheep farmers affected by the ban on sales; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what proposals he has for giving assistance to those sheep farmers on Anglesey still affected by the ban on sales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) on 24 July by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the figures, both numerically and as a percentage of the whole, of those lambs that have been brought to market on Anglesey that have been rejected as over-fat following the lifting of the ban on sales for part of the island, giving the figures separately for each market.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: From 4 July to 24 July inclusive 10,222 lambs from the newly released areas were presented for certification at markets on Anglesey; 469 lambs (4·5 per cent.) were rejected as overfat, 268 of which were withdrawn from auction. Figures for individual markets cannot be given on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many officials of his Department are present at each of the markets on Anglesey during sheep sales following the lifting of the ban on part of the island; what is their practice regarding giving instructions to the auctioneers; whether they identify themselves prior to the auction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: At least one official from my Department has been present at each of the livestock

markets where sheep have been sold on Anglesey since restrictions were first removed from parts of the island. My officials carry the necessary form of authority under the Food and Environment Act 1985, are well known to the auctioneers and work closely with them to ensure that sheep from within the areas where restrictions remain are not sold at the markets.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now visit Anglesey in order to meet farmers who have been affected by the ban on sheep sales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Farmers from Anglesey were amongst those who made representations to me at the Royal Welsh Show on Tuesday 22 July. I am kept fully abreast of the current situation by my officials in the area. I have no plans at present to visit farmers on the island.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state *(a)* the number of farmers and *(b)* the approximate number of sheep still subject to the ban on sales on Anglesey; what discussions he has had with them or their representatives about the problems of cash flow; if he will give consideration to making an interim payment of compensation to them pending determination of the final basis of compensation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: As a result of the latest derestriction on 24 July only 297 holdings and some 65,000 sheep remain within the designated area on Anglesey. On the question of compensation I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) on 24 July by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is now in a position to determine when the remaining part of Anglesey subject to the ban on sheep sales will be taken out of the ban; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I removed restrictions from a further part of Anglesey with effect from midnight on Thursday. Testing will continue with a view to removing restrictions from the remaining areas as soon as possible.

Community Programme

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for Wales what plans exist for new community programme opportunities to be provided by his Department.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: It is planned that some 22,400 community programme places will be filled by Wales by the end of the year. The Welsh Office is involved in national initiatives to promote the widest possible use of the community programme in areas such as crime prevention, energy conservation and environmental and countryside improvement.

Private Practice

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state, for each health authority in Wales, the amount of money received from consultants in each of the last five years in payment for the use of National Health Service facilities in private practice.

Mr. Robinson: The information requested is not available centrally.

Public Bodies

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the total expenditure of the district health authorities in Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are their sources of finance; and what proportion of their expenditure in that year was incurred in administration;

(2) what was the total expenditure of the examinations in public panels in Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are the sources of its finance; and what proportion of its expenditure is incurred in administration;

(3) what was the total expenditure of the Health Education Advisory Committee for Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are the sources of its finance; and what proportion of its expenditure is incurred in administration;

(4) what was the total expenditure of the Health Policy Board during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of income; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(5) what was the total expenditure of the Historic Buildings Council for Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(6) what was the total expenditure of the Housing Management Advisory Panel during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(7) what was the total expenditure of the Land Authority for Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of their expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(8) what was the total expenditure of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its fundingduring that year was incurred in administration;

(9) what was the total expenditure of the National Park Committee in Wales for the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(10) what was the total expenditure of the Place Names Advisory Committee in the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(11) what was the total expenditure of the Library and Information Services Council in Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(12) what was the total expenditure of the Rent Assessment Panel for Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure in that year was incurred in administration;

(13) what was the total expenditure of the Review of Community Nursing Services for Wales during the last

year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure in that year was incurred in administration;

(14) what was the total expenditure of the South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee in the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(15) what was the total expenditure of the Sports Council for Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(16) what was the total expenditure of the Wales Advisory Board for Local Authority Higher Education during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(17) what was the total expenditure of the Wales Committee for Post Graduate Pharmaceutical Education during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration.

(18) what was the total expenditure of the Welsh Development Agency during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; what proportion of its expenditure was incurred in administration;

(19) what was the total expenditure of the Welsh health common services authority during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration costs;

(20) what was the total expenditure of the Welsh industrial development advisory board during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration costs;

(21) what was the total expenditure of the Welsh scientific advisory committee during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration costs;

(22) what was the total expenditure of the Welsh water authority during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration costs;

(23) what was the total expenditure of the Wales tourist board during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(24) what was the total expenditure of the regional land drainage committee of the Welsh Water Authority during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure in that year was incurred in administration;

(25) what was the total expenditure of the perinatal mortality group during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of funding; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(26) what was the total expenditure of the all-Wales advisory panel on development of services for the mentally handicapped during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of finance; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(27) what was the expenditure of the agricultural dwelling house advisory committees in Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what is the source of their finance; and what proportion of that expenditure was incurred in administration;

(28) what was the expenditure of the Agricultural Wages Committee in Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what is its source of finance; and what proportion of that expenditure was incurred in administration;

(29) what was the expenditure of the agricultural advisory panel for Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what is its source of finance; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(30) what was the total expenditure of the Committee on Agricultural Valuation in Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of finance; and what proportion of its expenditure during that year was incurred in administration;

(31) what was the total expenditure of the Ancient Monuments Board for Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of finance; and what proportion of its expenditure in that year was incurred in administration costs;

(32) what was the total expenditure during the last year for which figures are available of the Committee on opportunities for volunteering; what are its sources of finance; and what proportion of its expenditure in that year was incurred in administration costs;

(33) what was the total expenditure during the last year for which figures are available of the Committee for the Welsh Scheme for the Development of Health and Social Research; what are its sources of finance; and what proportion of its expenditure in that year was incurred in administration costs;

(34) what was the total expenditure of the Committee for Under Fives Initiatives in Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of finance; and what proportion of its expenditure in that year was incurred in administration costs;

(35) what was the total expenditure of the community health councils in Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are their sources of finance ; and what proportion of their expenditure in that year was incurred in administration costs;

(36) what was the total expenditure of the Cwmbran development corporation during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of finance; and what proportion of its expenditure in that year was incurred in administration costs;

(37) what was the total expenditure of the Development Board for Rural Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are its sources of finance; and what proportion of its expenditure in that year was incurred in adminstration costs.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In view of the need to collect the information required, I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure of the Forestry Commission reference committee panels in Wales during the last year for which figures are available; what are the sources of their finance; and what proportion of their expenditure is incurred in administration.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Reference committee panels are maintained under section 27 of the Forestry Act 1967 for each of the Forestry Commission's conservancies. Their purpose is to provide a pool of persons from which committees can be set up to advise Forestry Ministers on appeals against decisions taken by the Forestry Commissioners on felling licences and felling directions. No such appeals have been received in Wales since these procedures were introduced and no expenditure has therefore been incurred.

Nature Conservancy Council (Consultation Zones)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the system of consultation used by the Nature Conservancy Council in connection with consultation zones in Wales; if he has any proposals for modification of the system; what proportion of consultation cases has resulted in the payment of compensation in each of the last four years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The only consultation zone in Wales is the Berwyn mountains. The successful operation of the zone depends on the voluntary co-operation of interested parties. Inevitably there are occasions when conflicting interests are difficult to reconcile but I am satisfied that both the Nature Conservancy Council and the farming community are approaching the matter constructively. The working of the system is primarily a matter for the parties concerned and I have no proposals to modify it.

Details of compensation are not collected in the form requested. One management agreement has been concluded since 1982 and 14 are under negotiation.

Speech Therapy

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he makes of the weekly time children needing speech therapy receive; and if he has any plans to increase it.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is not available centrally. The level of speech therapy services provided within their districts is a matter for individual district health authorities.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much Health Service expenditure as an absolute figure and as a percentage of total National Health Service expenditure in Wales for each of the past 10 years was spent on *(a)* elderly and geriatric services, *(b)* community services, *(c)* the mentally handicapped, *(d)* the mentally ill, *(e)* obstetric services and *(f)* acute hospital services.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Financial information in Wales is not collated on a programme expenditure basis, therefore it is not possible to provide the breakdown of expenditure as requested.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for *(a)* Wales and *(b)* each local authority in Wales, the change in real terms of the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87, compared to the 1979-80 assessment.

Mr. Mark Robinson: New rate support grant arrangements were introduced in 1981-82 and valid comparisons cannot be drawn between the settlements made before and after the change.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what extra allocation has been made to Ynys Môn borough council towards the backlog of home improvement grants over and above the allocation for enveloping schemes.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In addition to the £1 million for three enveloping projects allocated last month, Ynys Môn borough council received a further £0·1 million to enable them to group together home improvement grants under the block repair scheme. These allocations are on top of the authority's original allocation for 1986-87 which included £0·174 million towards the reduction of the backlog of renovation grants.

National Health Service (Expenditure)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out the *(a)* gross and *(b)* net of charges expenditure, current and capital, on the National Health Service and personal social services for each year from 1971 to 1986-87 for Wales for *(a)* the hospital and community health service, *(b)* family practitioner committees and their predecessors, *(c)* centrally funded National Health Service services, and *(d)* the personal social services with the percentage increase deflated by: (i) the gross domestic product, (ii) the retail price index and (iii) pay and prices.

Mr. Mark Robinson [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. 25]: The following tables set out the position for the period 1974-75 to 1985-86, the last year for which information is available:

Family practitioner services, administration and related services—net

	£ million cash	*Percentage increase in real terms (cash repriced to 1985-86 prices using GDP deflator)*	*Percentage increase deflated by the Retail Prices Index*	*Percentage increase deflated by NHS pay and prices*
1974-75	42·3	—	—	—
1975-76	57·0	+7·2	+8·1	+6·8
1976-77	67·5	+4·6	+2·8	+7·2

	£ million cash	Percentage increase in real terms (cash repriced to 1985-86 prices using GDP deflator)	Percentage increase deflated by the Retail Prices Index	Percentage increase deflated by NHS pay and prices
1977-78	76·7	−0·2	−0·3	+2·8
1978-79	91·2	+7·5	+9·7	+3·1
1979-80	104·9	−1·6	−0·6	−1·7
1980-81	131·3	+5·4	+7·6	−0·2
1981-82	149·4	+3·4	+2·1	+0·8
1982-83	172·7	+8·0	+8·0	+3·6
1983-84	185·6	+2·9	+2·6	+2·0
1984-85	203·4	+5·2	+4·4	+2·5
1985-86*	217·3	+0·8	+0·9	+0·3
1986-87†	218·6	—	—	—
	Family practitioner services, administration and related services—Gross			
1974-75	46·2			
1975-76	60·8	+4·7	+5·5	+4·3
1976-77	72·3	+5·1	+3·2	+7·6
1977-78	82·3	−0·1	−0·1	+3·0
1978-79	97·2	+6·8	+9·0	+2·4
1979-80	113·0	−0·5	−0·4	−0·7
1980-81	142·3	+6·0	+8·3	+0·4
1981-82	162·4	+3·8	+2·4	+1·1
1982-83	187·9	+8·1	+8·1	+3·7
1983-84	202·3	+3·1	+2·8	+2·1
1984-85	221·0	+4·9	+4·0	+2·2
1985-86*	235·1	+0·3	+0·5	−0·1
1986-87†	237·9			
	Hospital and community health services (Current and Capital) Expenditure—Net			
1974-75	155·9			
1975-76	210·6	+7·5	+8·4	+4·7
1976-77	232·1	−2·6	−4·4	−3·0
1977-78	262·1	−0·9	−0·9	+3·5
1978-79	297·2	+2·5	+4·6	+3·3
1979-80	350·2	+0·8	+1·8	−2·2
1980-81	454·9	+9·4	+11·7	+1·6
1981-82	518·5	+3·6	+2·3	+5·7
1982-83	561·3	+1·2	+1·1	+2·1
1983-84	591·7	+0·9	+0·6	+0·6
1984-85	634·5	+3·0	+2·1	+1·5
1985-86*	676·0	+0·5	+0·6	+1·3
1986-87†	722·9			
	Hospital and community health services (Current and Capital) expenditure—Gross			
1974-75	156·3			
1975-76	211·0	+7·4	+8·3	+4·6
1976-77	232·5	−2·6	−4·4	−3·0
1977-78	262·6	−0·8	−0·9	+3·6
1978-79	297·7	+2·5	+4·6	+3·3
1979-80	350·8	+0·8	+1·8	−2·2
1980-81	455·7	+9·4	+11·7	+1·6
1981-82	519·4	+3·6	+2·3	+5·7
1982-83	562·5	+1·2	+1·2	+2·1
1983-84	593·1	+0·9	+0·6	+0·6
1984-85	636·0	+3·0	+2·1	+1·5
1985-86*	677·9	+0·5	+0·7	+1·3
1986-87†	724·9			
	Other centrally funded Health Services—Gross and net			
1974-75	4·4	—	—	—
1975-76	6·2	+11·4	+13·0	+11·3
1976-77	7·1	+1·2	−0·6	+1·3
1977-78	8·0	−0·6	−1·2	+1·2
1978-79	9·6	+8·4	+11·1	+9·2
1979-80	10·8	−3·9	−2·8	−3·7
1980-81	12·9	+0·6	+2·3	−0·5
1981-82	15·0	+6·0	+4·5	+6·1
1982-83	17·0	+6·0	+5·9	+5·6
1983-84	19·9	+12·2	+11·6	+11·4
1984-85	24·1	+15·9	+15·4	+15·2
1985-86*	28·4	+11·4	+11·4	+12·6
1986-87†	33·3	—	—	—
	Regional Social Services (Central Government and Local Authority)—Gross			
1974-75	37·1	—	—	—
1975-76	50·4	+8·1	+9·0	+12·9

	£ million cash	Percentage increase in real terms (cash repriced to 1985-86 prices using GDP deflator)	Percentage increase deflated by the Retail Prices Index	Percentage increase deflated by NHS pay and prices
1976-77	57·9	+1·6	−0·3	+1·4
1977-78	62·9	−4·6	−4·7	−0·9
1978-79	70·8	+1·7	+3·8	+3·9
1979-80	92·7	+12·1	+13·1	+11·1
1980-81	111·4	+1·2	+3·3	−0·1
1981-82	120·2	−1·9	−3·2	−3·9
1982-83	130·7	+1·6	+1·6	+1·5
1983-84	142·9	+4·6	+4·3	+3·7
1984-85	148·8	‡	−0·8	+0·2
1985-86	156·2	−1·0	−0·9	−0·8
1986-87†	170·8	—	—	—
	Personal Social Services (Central Government and Local Authority)—Net			
1974-75	33·1	—	—	—
1975-76	44·8	+7·7	+8·5	+12·4
1976-77	51·1	+0·8	−1·1	+0·7
1977-78	55·1	−5·4	−5·3	−1·7
1978-79	61·7	+1·2	+3·3	+3·3
1979-80	77·4	+7·3	+8·4	+6·4
1980-81	93·6	+1·8	+3·9	+0·5
1981-82	99·3	−3·5	−4·8	−5·6
1982-83	107·9	+1·6	+1·5	+1·4
1983-84	118·9	+5·5	+5·2	+4·6
1984-85	123·8	‡	−0·8	+0·2
1985-86*	130·0	−0·9	−0·8	−0·7
1986-87†	142·8	—	—	—

* Provisional outturn.
† Estimates provision.
‡ Insignificant.

Notes:

1. The information requested is not available prior to 1974-75.
2. Figures relating to specific pay and prices terms have been constructed by reference to the pay and prices indices for health and personal social services maintained by DHSS from English data: no seperate pay and prices indices for Wales are available.

SOCIAL SERVICES

War Pensions

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent on (i) weekly war pensions and (ii) other additional war pensions in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. Expenditure on war pensions for the financial year 1984-85 (the latest for which figures are available) is shown in the following table:

	£'000
Disablement pensions, gratuities, allowances and grants	362,607
Pensions, allowances and grants in respect of widows and dependents	176,325
Expenditure on medical treatment for war pensioners	5,273
TOTAL	544,205

Retirement Age

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of men and women, respectively, of retirement age; how many are in receipt of the state pension; how many in each case are on social security and how many of these are on the state pension; how many have no pension; how many would cease to qualify for supplementary benefit if the state pension were to be increased by (i) 10 per cent. and (ii) 20 per cent.; and what would be the additional cost of such increases together with the saving in benefits and the increase in yield of taxation.

Mr. Major: Information is not readily available on all the items requested, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The information which is available is as follows:—

(i) number of persons over minimum pension age

	Number ('000)
Men	3,293
Women	6,691
Total	9,984

Source: OPCS, mid 1985 data.

(ii) persons in receipt of retirement pension (March 1985)

	Number ('000)
Men	3,113
Women	6,009
Total	9,122

This figure excludes people receiving graduated pension only.

(iii) persons over minimum pension age receiving no retirement pension (except graduated pension). About 860,000 people were in this category in 1985. Of these about 126,000 had opted to receive other benefits, such as invalidity benefit and widow's pension, which can be received in the first five years after minimum pension age and a further 189,000 were receiving graduated pension only. The remaining 545,000 will include, women over 60 who have no entitlement

to retirement pension on their own contributions and whose husbands have not yet reached age 65 or retired; both men and women who have chosen to defer retirement; and an unknown, but small, number who have no entitlement to state retirement pension in any form.

Source: DHSS

(iv) the numbers of persons over minimum pension age in receipt of supplementary pension were as follows:

	Male '000	*Female '000*
Numbers receiving both supplementary benefit and retirement pension or widows' pension	415	1,116
Numbers receiving supplementary benefit only	25	80
Total receiving some supplementary benefit	440	1,240

Source: DHSS, Annual Statistical Enquiry 1984 (latest figures available)

(v) no reliable estimate is readily available of the numbers of pensioners who would be floated off supplementary benefit if basic retirement pension levels were increased by 10 per cent. and 20 per cent. but the level of supplementary pension and housing benefit needs allowances were not increased.

(vi) the gross cost of such increases would be in a full year:

(a) 10 per cent. increase—£1,750 million.
(b) 20 per cent. increase—£3,500 million.

The savings on supplementary benefit and housing benefit are *(a)* £550 million and *(b)* £950 million.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his latest estimate of the numbers of males and females paying various classes of national insurance contributions, the numbers paid in 1979, the estimated amount collected from employers and employees by way of contributions in the current financial year and the estimated amount by which the contributions would be increased if the rate of unemployment were to be reduced to 3 per cent.

Mr. Major: The number of people paying national insurance contributions in each class in 1979-80 and an estimate of those paying contributions in 1986-87 is given in the table. It is estimated that in 1986-87 £11·51 billion will be collected from employees, and £12·92 billion from employers by way of class 1 national insurance contributions, and that if the unemployment rate were to fall to 3 per cent., the National Insurance Fund would receive an extra £2·6 billion a year from contributions at current contribution rates.

Number of people paying national insurance contributions (thousands)
United Kingdom

	Class 1	*Class 2*	*Class 3*
1979-80			
Males	[1] 14,777	[3,4] 1,299	66
Females	[1,2] 9,647	[3,4] 77	24
Estimates for 1986-87			
Males	11,300	[4] 1,800	80
Females	7,500	[4] 200	40

[1] Includes people who paid a mixture of Class 1 and Class 2 and/or Class 3 contributions.
[2] Includes women who paid reduced rate contributions.
[3] Includes people who paid a mixture of Class 2 and Class 3 contributions.
[4] Includes people paying Class 4 contributions. Precise information about the number of Class 4 contributors is not available, however it is estimated that in 1979-80 between 1 million and 1¼ million people were liable to pay Class 4 contributions, and in 1986-87 between 1¼ and 1½ million were liable to pay Class 4.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the estimated number of reduced rate class 1 contributions for women, broken down by type if appropriate; how the figures compare with 1979 and the forecast for 1988; how the rates of contribution compares with the standard rate; what is his estimate of the number of contributors who would be worse off if the reduced rates were replaced by a standard rate of 5 per cent. on earnings in excess of £2,000 for a single person and £5,000 for a married couple; what would be the loss to the Exchequer; and whether he will add a table showing the number of incomes affected by range of income and the yield from contributions now and from the proposed change.

Mr. Major: The information requested by the hon. Member in the first three parts of his question is presented in the table.

I will write to the hon. Member about the remaining points in his question.

Number of women paying reduced rate contributions (millions)
United Kingdom

	Number
*1979-80	3·5
†1986-87	1·8
†1988-89	1·4

* Includes women who paid reduced rate reate contributions at some time during the year: optants earning less than the lower earnings limit are excluded.
† The average number of women who paid reduced rate contributions during the year: optants earning less than the lower earnings limit are included.

Class 1 primary contribution rates 1986-87

	Not contracted-out		*Contracted-out*		
			Standard rate		
	Standard Rate per cent.	*Reduced Rate* per cent.*	*On first £38·00 per cent.*	*On earnings over £38·00 per cent.*	*Reduced Rate* per cent.*

Contributions payable on:-

		Not contracted-out		Contracted-out		
		Standard rate		Standard rate		
		Standard Rate per cent.	Reduced Rate* per cent.	On first £38·00 per cent.	On earnings over £38·00 per cent.	Reduced Rate* per cent.
All earnings if they reach But do not exceed	£38·00 £59·99	5·00	3·85	5·00	2·85	3·85
All earnings if they reach But do not exceed	£60·00 £94·99	7·00	3·85	7·00	- 4·85	3·85
All earnings if they reach But do not exceed	£95·00 £285·00	9·00	3·85	9·00	6·85	3·83
Earnings exceeding	£285·00	†9·00	†3·85	9·00	‡6·85	†3·85

* The primary reduced rate remains the same for all the earnings brackets; it is the secondary rates which vary depending on the bracket.
† Per cent. of £285·00.
‡ Per cent. up to £285·00.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the estimated loss of revenue from the reduced rate national insurance contributions for (i) working wives and (ii) widows in the current financial year, *(b)* the estimated number of contributors in each range of annual earnings and the resultant loss and *(c)* the estimated number with a total income, including the husband's income, of more than (1) £10,000, (2) £15,000 and (3) £20,000 a year;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the number of nationally insured males and females working in manufacturing and non-manufacturing, *(b)* the number of females in each case paying reduced rate contributions, *(c)* the upper and lower limit of contributions, *(d)* the latest figure in each case for average earnings and *(e)* the latest figure in each case for the median, upper quartile and lower quartile earnings.

Mr. Major: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Departmental Offices (Staff)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many staff at his Department's offices at *(a)* Arab street, *(b)* Archway Tower, Finsbury Park, and *(c)* Archway Tower, Highgate, for each year since 1979 have handled (i) supplementary benefit and (ii) other claims.

Mr. Major: Information is not available before 1984. The Department does not have an office in Arab street. Islington, North constituency is covered by three of the Department's offices, Finsbury Park, Highgate, and Hoxton, but the boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

The table shows the number of staff in post on 1 April 1984 and 1 April 1985 and the staff allocation on 1 July 1986.

	1984		1985		1986	
	Supplementary Benefit	Contributory Benefit	Supplementary Benefit	Contributory Benefit	Supplementary Benefit	Contributory Benefit
Finsbury Park Integrated Local Office	130	52	149·5	51·5	157	53
Highgate Integrated Local Office	136·5	71	146	71·5	156	63
Hoxton Integrated Local Office	92	52	97	48	108	41

National Health Insurance Charges

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will bring up to date the information concerning average earnings, national insurance contributions and so on published in the *Official Report*, column 80, on 14 March 1983 in answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby.

Mr. Major: The figures are as follows:

Month-Year	Average Earnings*	Contribution of employee† with average earnings		Employer's contribution† for employee with average earnings		NI Surcharge element
		NI contributions	NHS Element	NI Contributions	NHS Element	
(1)	(2) £	(3) per cent.	(4) per cent.	(5) per cent.	(6) per cent.	(7) per cent.
April 1983	141·60	9·0	0·75	11·95	0·6	1·5
August 1983	145·10	9·0	0·75	11·45	0·6	1·0
April 1984	152·70	9·0	0·75	11·45	0·6	1·0
October 1984	158·60	9·0	0·75	10·45	0·6	—
April 1985	163·60	9·0	0·75	10·45	0·6	—
April 1986	176·90	9·0	0·75	10·45	0·6	—

* Average weekly earnings of full-time adult male manual workers.
Estimate for April 1986 is provisional.
† The not contracted-out contribution for men.
Note: In each case figures for NI contributions include NHS and NI surcharge elements as applicable.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current yield of the employers' and employees' national insurance contributions, respectively; and by how much the yield of the employee's contributions would be reduced if *(a)* the contribution rate was reduced from 9 per cent. to 5 per cent., *(b)* no charge was levied on the first £2,000 for a single person and £5,000 for a married couple and *(c)* the upper earnings limit were to be removed; and if he will pubish in the *Official Report* a table showing the estimated number of incomes in each range of income and the current yield in each range compared with the yield which would result from the proposed changes.

Mr. Major: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Unemployed Persons (Bonus)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will bring up to date the information given in reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 24 February and 17 March 1982, *Official Report*, columns 414 and 129, concerning a bonus for the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Newton: The information in relation to the long-term unemployed is given in the table. The number of unemployed persons represents those who were in receipt of unemployment or supplementary benefit in Great Britain in November 1985, the latest date for which figures are available. The cost is based on a weekly bonus for the unemployed of £40·50.

Duration of unemployment	*Unemployed persons*	*Number of weeks bonus per person*	*Cost £ million*
Between 1 and 2 years	384,900	4	62·4
Between 2 and 3 years	228,200	8	73·9
Over 3 years*	431,600	12	209·8
Total	1,044,700		346·1

* These numbers cannot be further split.

The cost of providing a bonus equal to two weeks' benefit for all social security beneficiaries in 1986-87 is £1,400 million. This is based on the total estimated social security expenditure in 1986-87 excluding housing benefit and all one-off payments (Christmas bonus, maternity grant, death grant and single payments of supplementary benefit).

Community Programme

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans exist for new community programme opportunities to be provided by his Department.

Mr. Whitney: There have been preliminary discussions about how the Department can assist the MSC with the provision of new community programme opportunities but no plans exist at present.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* such information as is available to his Department concerning the number and distribution by type of case of persons in receipt of social security benefit who are also in receipt of rent rebates, rate rebates and rent allowances and other forms of housing benefit; and what is the total amount of security and housing benefit, respectively, paid out under each heading.

Mr. Major: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to permit his Department to apply to have a fair rent registered in relation to properties for which housing benefit is paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: No. Local authorities are responsible for administering housing benefits and, where there is a regulated tenancy, authorities in England and Wales may apply to the rent officer for the registration of a fair rent as they consider necessary.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, how many households are in receipt of housing benefit; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing how the total is divided up between categories of claimant.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) on 12 May at column *383*.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) 23 May, *Official Report*, columns *386-390*, if he will publish fresh figures, for benefit entitlement, taking into account, entitlement to family income supplement and family credit.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986, c. *613-614*]: Two of the four tables in the earlier reply referred only to pensioners without dependent children. Tables 1 and 2 show information comparable to that in tables 1B and 2B in the earlier reply, but assuming family income supplement or family credit is also in payment. The amounts of FIS/FC are shown separately. It should be borne in mind that because the family credit scheme will be considerably more generous, on the basis of our illustrative assumptions, than the present family income supplement scheme, only about 3 per cent. of all family credit recipients will also be receiving assistance through housing benefit with both rents and rates.

Table 1

Amounts of housing benefit and family income supplement under current scheme—Working households (with one wage earner)

	Unemployment benefit		*Weekly gross earnings level* £45	£55	£65	£75	£85	£95	£110	£125	*Earnings level at which housing benefit no longer payable*
Single parent, one child											
(i) Average rent and rates	Housing benefit	21·60	19·55	17·46	15·81	14·16	12·39	10·29	4·75	—	120·61

	Unemployment benefit	Weekly gross earnings level £45	£55	£65	£75	£85	£95	£110	£125	Earnings level at which housing benefit no longer payable
	Family income supplement	25·50	25·50	21·80	16·80	11·80	6·80	1·80	—	—	—
(ii) 75 per cent. average	Housing benefit	16·20	15·94	14·22	12·57	10·92	9·15	7·05	1·26	—	112·64
	Family income supplement	25·50	25·50	21·80	16·80	11·80	6·80	1·80	—	—	—
(iii) 125 per cent. average	Housing benefit	26·66	22·79	20·70	19·05	17·40	15·63	13·53	7·99	1·53	*128·58
	Family income supplement	25·50	25·50	21·80	16·80	11·80	6·80	1·80	—	—	—
Couple, one child											
(i) Average rent and rates	Housing benefit	19·90	21·05	18·97	17·32	15·67	14·02	12·21	6·66	0·54	125·16
	Family income supplement	24·70	25·50	21·80	16·80	11·80	6·80	1·80	—	—	—
(ii) 75 per cent. average	Housing benefit	16·20	16·20	15·73	14·08	12·43	10·78	8·97	3·42	—	117·19
	Family income supplement	24·70	25·50	21·80	16·80	11·80	6·80	1·80	—	—	—
(iii) 125 per cent. average	Housing benefit	23·14	24·29	22·21	20·56	18·91	17·26	15·45	9·90	3·60	133·13
	Family income supplement	24·70	25·50	21·80	16·80	11·80	6·80	1·80	—	—	—
Single parent, two children											
(i) Average rent and rates	Housing benefit	22·80	21·75	18·62	16·97	15·32	13·66	11·56	8·41	2·06	130·39
	Family income supplement	28·50	28·50	28·00	23·00	18·00	13·00	8·00	0·50	—	—
(ii) 75 per cent. average	Housing benefit	17·11	17·11	15·20	13·55	11·90	10·24	8·14	5·00	—	121·86
	Family income supplement	28·50	28·50	28·00	23·00	18·00	13·00	8·00	0·50	—	—
(iii) 125 per cent. average	Housing benefit	28·48	25·17	22·04	20·39	18·74	17·08	14·98	11·84	5·74	138·93
	Family income supplement	28·50	28·50	28·00	23·00	18·00	13·00	8·00	0·50	—	—
Couple, two children											
(i) Average rent and rates	Housing benefit	21·85	22·60	20·12	18·47	16·82	15·17	13·48	10·32	4·24	134·94
	Family income supplement	28·50	28·50	28·00	23·00	18·00	13·00	8·00	0·50	—	—
(ii) 75 per cent. average	Housing benefit	17·11	17·11	16·70	15·05	13·40	11·75	10·05	6·91	0·91	126·41
	Family income supplement	28·50	28·50	28·00	23·00	18·00	13·00	8·00	0·50	—	—
(iii) 125 per cent. average	Housing benefit	25·28	26·68	23·54	21·89	20·24	18·59	16·89	13·75	7·67	143·48
	Family income supplement	28·50	28·50	28·00	23·00	18·00	13·00	8·00	0·50	—	—

Table 2

Amounts of weekly housing benefit and family credit under proposed scheme—Working households (with one wage earner)

	Unemployment benefit	Weekly gross earnings level £45	£55	£65	£75	£85	£95	£110	£125	Earnings level at which housing benefit no longer payable
Single parent, one child										
(i) Average rent and rates	Housing benefit	14·20	4·36	—	—	—	—	—	—	50·11
	Family credit	40·15	40·15	38·00	31·40	26·70	22·30	19·20	12·80	6·40 (+40·15 FC)
(ii) 75 per cent. average	Housing benefit	9·11	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	43·35
	Family credit	40·15	40·15	38·00	31·40	26·70	22·30	19·20	12·80	6·40 (+40·15 FC)
(iii) 125 per cent. average	Housing benefit	19·29	9·45	4·45	1·88	66p	—	—	—	76·40
	Family credit	40·15	40·15	38·00	31·40	26·70	22·30	19·20	12·80	6·40 (+26·10 FC)
Couple, one child										
(i) Average rent and rates	Housing benefit	8·29	11·52	6·52	4·36	2·73	1·04	—	—	92·90
	Family credit	40·15	40·15	38·00	31·40	26·70	22·30	19·20	12·80	6·40 (+20·10 FC)
(ii) 75 per cent. average	Housing benefit	3·20	6·43	1·17	—	—	—	—	—	59·33
	Family credit	40·15	40·15	38·00	31·40	26·70	22·30	19·20	12·80	6·40 (+35·10 FC)
(iii) 125 per cent. average	Housing benefit	13·38	16·61	11·61	9·45	7·82	6·30	5·26	3·06	81p 127·82
	Family credit	40·15	40·15	38·00	31·40	26·70	22·30	19·20	12·80	6·40 (+5·20 FC)
Single parent, two children										
(i) Average rent and rates	Housing benefit	13·62	3·78	—	—	—	—	—	—	49·72
	Family credit	45·45	45·45	43·30	36·70	32·00	27·60	24·50	18·10	11·70 (+45·45 FC)
(ii) 75 per cent. average	Housing benefit	8·24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	42·48
	Family credit	45·45	45·45	43·30	36·70	32·00	27·60	24·50	18·10	11·70 (+45·45 FC)
(iii) 125 per cent. average	Housing benefit	19·01	9·17	4·17	1·94	72p	—	—	—	77·02
	Family credit	45·45	45·45	43·30	36·70	32·00	27·60	24·50	18·10	11·70 (+31·10 FC)
Couple, two children										
(i) Average rent and rates	Housing benefit	7·71	10·94	5·94	3·78	1·96	82p	—	—	90·81
	Family credit	45·45	45·45	43·30	36·70	32·00	27·60	24·50	18·10	11·70 (+26·30 FC)
(ii) 75 per cent. average	Housing benefit	2·01	5·56	68p	—	—	—	—	—	56·41
	Family credit	45·45	45·45	43·30	36·70	32·00	27·60	24·50	18·10	11·70 (+42·30 FC)

	Unemployment benefit	Weekly gross earnings level £45	£55	£65	£75	£85	£95	£110	£125	Earnings level at which housing benefit no longer payable
(iii) 125 per cent. average	Housing benefit	13·11	16·33	11·33	9·17	7·55	6·03	4·99	2·52	87p
	Family credit	45·45	45·45	43·30	36·70	32·00	27·60	24·50	18·10	11·70	128·48 (+10·20 FC)

Notes
1. The final column of table 1 is the same as the final column of table 1B in the earlier reply, except for the figure marked with an asterisk which was incorrectly printed in the earlier table.
2. The following average rent and rate levels have been assumed: £15·40 and £6·20 per week respectively for households with one child, and £16·50 and £6·30 per week with two children.
3. The children are assumed to be aged 15 (one child) and 10 and 16 (two children).
4. Child benefit and one-parent benefit have been assumed to be in payment, in addition to the earnings levels shown in the table, at November 1985 rates.
5. The first column should be interpreted to mean "earnings level equivalent to unemployment benefit", since unemployment benefit is not normally payable to recipients of FIS/Family Credit.
6. The final column shows the *earnings* level at which housing benefit is no longer payable if the household is also receiving FIS/Family Credit. In table 2, the amount of Family Credit assumed to be in payment is shown in brackets. Child benefit (and one-parent benefit where appropriate) should be added to the total of the figures in the final column in order to find the *income* level at which housing benefit is no longer payable.
7. November 1985 tax rates and allowances have been assumed and the current minimum benefit level of 50 pence has been used throughout. In table 2, other assumptions are based on the illustrative figures used in the Technical Annex to Cmnd. 9691 including tapers of 60 per cent. (rents), and 20 per cent. (rates) and a minimum contribution towards domestic rates of 20 per cent.

Warnock Report (Legislation)

Sir John Osborn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what main areas dealt with in the Warnock report he now considers suitable for legislation; and whether he will be publishing a Green Paper or a White Paper indicating the options before presenting legislation to Parliament.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 25 March at columns *445-46*.

Benefit Claims (Staff)

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to increase staff complements in his Department's offices in Ayrshire to handle the growth in the number of benefit claims.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the reply from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) on 7 March at column *322*, in which he announced a major improvement to the Department of Health and Social Security manpower. Over 5,000 staff have been made available in addition to the normal complement. Ayrshire's share of the increase is 38. A full complement review in social security local offices is currently being carried out and the results will form the basis of the 1987-88 complement.

NHS (Pay)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report*, for the latest year for which figures are available, total expenditure on pay for National Health Service staff, broken down by *(a)* medical and dental; *(b)* nurses and midwives; *(c)* administrative and clerical; *(d)* ancillary; and *(e)* all other National Health Service staff; and what were the percentage increases in pay levels for those groups since *(a)* 1979-80 and *(b)* 1980-81.

Mr. Hayhoe: The available figures are shown in the following table:

Staff Group	(1) Expenditure 1984-85 £ million	(2) Increase 1979-80 to 1985-86 Per cent.	(3) Increase 1980-81 to 1985-86 Per cent.
Medical and Dental	931	84·4	40·3
Nurses and Midwives	3,034	91·7	39·0
Admin and Clerical	760	46·5	28·5
Ancillary	937	63·3	30·6
Other staff	1,067	64·7	33·7
TOTAL	6,729		

Notes:
1. Figures in column 1 are for Hospital and Community Health Services in England and are for the latest available year. They are derived from the summarised accounts of health authorities and include employer's national insurance and superannuation contributions but exclude agency staff.
2. The increases shown cover the period to 1985-86, the latest year for which figures are available, and include the full rates recommended in the 1985 pay awards (some of these were not paid in full until February 1986). The base year figures are for August 1979 and August 1980 pay years respectively.
3. Figures on pay increases for 'other staff' cover professionals allied to medicine, professional and technical staff 'Whitley B', scientific and professional staff and ambulancemen.

Deafness

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will outline those services which are available to elderly hearing-impaired citizens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: A wide range of services is available for elderly and other hearing-impaired people. People who suffer a hearing loss should first see their general practitioner and arrange for the fitting of a hearing aid. A comprehensive range of hearing aids is available under the National Health Service. As far as social services are concerned, help may be available from specialist social workers and where necessary assistance is available towards the provision of environmental aids such as flashing door bells. Traditionally voluntary organisations have provided a range of services to people whose hearing is impaired and many receive grants from statutory sources to help them provide such services.

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to improve those services which are available to elderly hearing-impaired citizens, in

particular *(a)* the implementation of staffing norms for audiology clinics, *(b)* the making of induction loop systems mandatory in all public buildings and *(c)* allocating more funds to researching the causes of hearing impairment.

Mr. Newton: As I announced earlier this year, we are consulting professional and other bodies on ways of reducing waiting times for NHS hearing aids.

The Department has not prescribed staffing norms for audiology clinics, and staffing levels are a matter for decision by health authorities.

The Disabled Persons Act 1981 requires local planning authorities, when granting planning permission for buildings to which the public are admitted, to draw attention to the British Standards Institution code of practice BS 5810. This recommends the installation of induction loops in new conference halls and similar facilities. We are also considering whether the provision of induction loop systems could usefully be promoted through the existing sympathetic hearing scheme.

The Medical Research Council is the main Government agency for the promotion of medical and related biological research in this country. It receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science.

Health Services (Avon)

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much is being spent on health services in Avon during the current year; and what was the comparable figure in 1978-79.

Mr. Hayhoe: The annual accounts of health authorities within the county of Avon and those of the Avon family practitioner committee show total expenditure of £117·2 million for 1978-79 and £250·9 million for 1984-85 (the latest year available). This is an increase in real terms of 20 per cent.

The figures include capital expenditure by the South Western regional health authority on services for the district health authorities in Avon but exclude expenditure on services for the region as a whole.

Children's Therapist (Thurlow Park School)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide additional funding to enable a children's physiotherapist to remain at Thurlow park school, London SE27.

Mr. Whitney: No. Camberwell health authority currently provides a physiotherapy service to Thurlow park school. The health authority has decided to review its physiotherapy services across the whole district with the aim of deploying staff to the best effect and reducing waiting lists as far as possible. Whatever the outcome of the review I am assured that the district health authority will continue to provide a physiotherapy service to Thurlow park school.

Supplementary Benefit

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Barking in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents;

(2) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the local Department of Health and Social Security offices for the same period.

Mr. Major: Barking is covered by one of the Department's offices, Barking, but the office's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the office is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	Number
1982-83	14,620
1985-86	14,652
Percentage change	+0·2

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Number
1982-83	16,918
1985-86	17,060
Percentage change	+0·8

Percentage change in complement 1982-83—1985-86

	Number
Supplementary benefit staff	+10·9
All staff	−1·8

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in Leicester, West at local offices of his Department at Yeoman street, Leicester, and Lower Hill street, Leicester in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in staff handling (i) supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at those offices over the same period.

Mr. Major: Comprehensive figures are not available before 1980-81 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is shown in the table. The Yeoman street and Lower Hill street offices cover a larger area than the Leicester, West constituency.

	1980-81	*1985-86*	*Per cent. change*
Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)			
Yeoman street	16,706	18,629	+11·5
Lower Hill street	12,585	11,913	−5·3

	1980-81	1985-86	Per cent. change
*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**			
Yeoman street	11,049	16,264	+47·2
Lower Hill street	9,152	12,781	+39·7

Change in complement 1982-83—1985-86†

	Supplementary benefit staff	
	Yeoman street	Lower Hill street
1980-81	98	76
1985-86	113	90
Percentage change	+15·3	+18·4

	All staff	
	Yeoman street	Lower Hill street
1980-81	200	159
1985-86	181	148
Percentage change	−9·5	−6·9

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.
† In January 1981 Leicester, East area office and national insurance office combined to form Yeoman street.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases have been instigated during the last 12 months under the Supplementary Benefit Act 1976, as amended, to recover supplementary benefit paid to a person seeking entry to the United Kingdom from the person undertaking to be responsible for maintenance and accommodation for a period of any leave granted; and how much money has been recovered.

Mr. Major: Departmental statistics do not show the types of case in which action under Section 18 and 25 of the Act is instigated but, so far as I am aware, no such action has been taken in a case involving a sponsored immigrant.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the estimate of supplementary benefit take-up derived from the 1983 families with low income tables broken down into *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* non-pensioners, *(c)* sick and disabled, *(d)* unemployed and one-parent families, showing (i) the number entitled to supplementary benefit, (ii) the proportion receiving benefit, (iii) the number eligible but not receiving benefit, (iv) the estimated benefit unclaimed and (v) the average weekly amount unclaimed on the same basis as his answer of 30 November 1983, *Official Report*, column *532-6*.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 22 July 1986.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people claimed supplementary benefit at the *(a)* Parkgate, *(b)* Arndale and *(c)* Irene house offices of his Department in Wandsworth in 1985; and what were the comparable figures in 1979;

(2) what were the *(a)* total staff and *(b)* staff handling supplementary benefit at the (i) Parkgate road (ii) Arndale and (iii) Irene house offices of his Department in 1985; and what were the comparable figures in 1979.

Mr. Major: Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

The information that is available is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)

	1982-83	1985-86
Parkgate Road	14,893	14,842
Arndale	13,016	10,729
Irene House	19,454	19,353
*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**		
Parkgate Road	12,673	14,040
Arndale	8,514	9,285
Irene House	12,378	13,111

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

The change in complement for these offices 1982-83 —1985-86 is as follows:

	Supplementary benefit staff		All staff	
	1982-83	1985-86	1982-83	1985-86
Parkgate Road	104	114	137	144
Arndale	80	75	139	117
Irene House	106	116	158	161

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Hamilton constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; and what percentage change that represents;

(2) what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit and *(b)* all staff at the Hamilton local office of his Department between 1979 and 1985.

Mr. Major: Hamilton constituency is covered by one of the Department's offices, Hamilton, but the office's boundary is not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

The information that is available for the office is as follows:

Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (inc. unsuccessful)

	Number
1979-80	14,665
1985-86	21,714
Percentage change	+48·1

*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**

	Number
1979-80	2,443
1985-86	15,556
Percentage change	+84·2

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

Percentage change in complement 1979-80—1985-86:

	Number
Supplementary benefit staff	+64·8
All staff	+8·4

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present number of persons in receipt of supplementary benefit in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency.

Mr. Major: The constituency of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth is covered by the Department's office at Cumbernauld but their boundaries are not conterminous. The number of people receiving supplementary benefit from that office on 6 May 1986, the latest available figure, was 10,270.

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Liverpool, Riverside constituency in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at the local offices of his Department for that same period.

Mr. Major: Liverpool, Riverside is covered by three of the Department's offices, Liverpool (City), Bootle and Toxteth, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available is as follows:

	1982-83	*1985-86*	*Percentage change*
Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)			
Bootle	14,782	12,252	−17·1
City	8,554	4,943	−42·2
Toxteth	9,981	12,164	+21·9
*Number of people receiving supplementary benefit**			
Bootle	11,967	13,577	+13·5
City	9,225	8,822	−4·4
Toxteth	10,289	14,878	+44·6

* Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February.

The percentage change in complement for these offices 1982-83 to 1985-86 is as follows:

	Supplementary benefit staff	*All staff*
Bootle*	−11·3	−21·4
City†	−16·0	−23·8
Toxteth‡	+29·6	+10·5

* In January 1983 30 posts were transferred to Kirkby ILO because of a boundary change. In 1983-84 two posts were transferred to Kirkby ILO following relocation of work in respect of Walton prison.

† In 1984-85 nine posts were removed from the office following transfer of social security appeal tribunal work to the office of the president of the tribunal.

‡ In April 1983 14 posts were transferred to Toxteth ILO following boundary changes.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list what are included within the normal requirements subsumed within the supplementary benefit rate for a child aged *(a)* 16 to 17 years, *(b)* 11 to 15 years and *(c)* 0-10 years; how the supplementary benefit rates for dependent children cover these needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Low Income Families

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to publish the low income families tables for 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The tables have been placed in the Library of the House today.

Since the Government first came to office, the real value of supplementary benefit has risen by around 6 per cent., and by more for some families with children. Between the last two years in the tables the real rates rose by about 2½ per cent. Up to one third of the total increase in the number of families included in the tables is directly due to this improvement in the help provided for those most in need.

The technical assumptions underlying the low-income families tables have remained largely unaltered since the first analysis was undertaken. I have therefore set in train a technical review of the methods and assumptions on which the tables are based. Any improvements in measurement methods should be reflected in future issues of the tables. On the wider question of alternative approaches to the measurement of living standards, I refer my hon. Friend to the discussion in the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9519) Volume 3.

McColl Report

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to make a further statement about the McColl report.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 24 July.

Social Security Bill

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are his intentions in regard to the timing of implementing the proposals of the Social Security Bill.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the changes to the industrial injuries scheme proposed in the Social Security Bill to come into effect.

Mr. Newton: The extension of entitlement to invalid care allowance to married women is to take effect immediately after Royal Assent (with retrospective effect from 22 December 1984).

As has already been announced, the changes in respect of benefit in cases of voluntary unemployment will be introduced in October 1986. We intend that the provisions concerning the reduced rates of short term benefits and modifying the trade dispute provisions will also be brought in, in October 1986. At about the same time, subject to completion of the necessary transitional arrangements to protect existing beneficiaries, we expect to make a start on the industrial injuries changes by introducing the provisions concerning most disablement below 14 per cent. and extending the scheme to cover more accidents abroad.

As has also been announced earlier, statutory maternity pay will be introduced in April 1987, as will the new arrangements for help with maternity and funeral expenses from the Social Fund. We expect at the same time to introduce the proposed common provisions for adjudication and overpayment.

While the timing on a number of other matters remains to be decided, my hon. Friend will be aware that the main structural changes provided for in the Bill are intended to take effect in April 1988.

Dr. Bray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the president of social security appeal and medical appeal tribunals consulted him prior to sending a letter to chairmen and members of tribunals dated 16 July, suggesting that those feeling conscience bound to join in the debate on the new Social Security Bill should first give up their position with the tribunals.

Mr. Major: No. This is a matter entirely for the president.

Benefits

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list each change made since 1979 in the calculation, level, entitlement to, or payment of social security benefits other than the indexation which took place during the 1978-79 financial year giving for each *(a)* the estimated first-year revenue effects in current prices and *(b)* the cumulative estimated revenue effects up to August 1986, or the most recent available date.

Mr. Newton: To attempt to assemble such a list would entail disproportionate cost, and a calculation of the kind requested at *(b)* of the hon. Lady's question would involve so wide a range of assumptions about the interaction of successiv. measures as to make it of doubtful practicality and questionable worth. However, section 3.15 of volume II of the January 1986 public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702-II) gives some broad estimates of the main factors contributing to the increase of £17·7 billion in the social budget between 1980-81 and 1985-86, which represents an increase of 30 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the latest take-up estimates for family income supplement, one-parent benefit, free welfare milk, free school meals, standard housing benefit, certificated housing benefit, and housing benefit supplement, derived from the 1983 families with low income tables showing for each benefit *(a)* the number entitled to benefit, *(b)* the proportion receiving benefit, *(c)* the number eligible but not receiving benefit, *(d)* the estimated amount of benefit unclaimed and *(e)* the average weekly amount unclaimed.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1986]: The latest available information is as follows (take-up figures for 1983 are not yet available):

Benefit	*Percentage take-up rate*	*Annual amount unclaimed*	*Average weekly amount unclaimed*	*Entitled non-claimants*
	per cent.	*£ million*	*£*	*Thousands*
Family income supplement*	50	57	8·30	130
Free milk†	45	44	1·30	660
Standard housing benefit Certificated housing benefit Housing benefit supplement	First take up estimates for housing benefit are expected to be available shortly.			
Free school meals	Information held centrally does not enable an answer to be provided in the form requested.			
One parent benefit	Take-up of one parent benefit is based on those who stand to gain by claiming (not all families can gain because some receive supplementary benefit which counts one parent benefit as income). The latest estimate suggests that about 75 per cent. of those who stood to gain were receiving it. In 1982-83, about 100,000 families are estimated to have unclaimed benefits (at £3·65 per week) of £18 million.			

* Derived from 1981-82 family expenditure survey.
† Derived from 1981 family expenditure survey and administrative statistics. Based on numbers of children under 5.

Consultant Referral Rates

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice has been issued to general practitioners concerning referral rates to consultants.

Mr. Hayhoe: None.

Special Health Authorities

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each special health authority and for each year since 1979, the number of *(a)* medical staff and *(b)* nursing staff and *(c)* ancillary staff, expressing these figures both in terms of actual numbers of employees and in whole-time equivalent terms; and if he will also give these figures adjusted to take account of the change in the working week.

Mr. Hayhoe: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the special health authorities responsible for the management of the London post-graduate teaching hospitals. Such information as is available for each of these special health authorities is shown in table 1. Information on numbers of staff in the nursing and midwifery and ancillary staff groups is not available for all the years requested. Estimated changes in nursing and midwifery staff whole-time equivalents between 1979 and 1985, adjusted for the effect of the change of working hours during 1980, are given in table 2.

Table 1
National Health Service directly employed staff in special health authorities for London post-graduate teaching hospitals
Number and whole-time equivalent

Staff group	*Total*	*(4) Hospitals for sick children*	*(4) National hospitals for nervous diseases*	*(4) Moor-fields eye hospital*	*(4) Bethlem Royal and Maudsley hospitals*	*(4) National heart and chest hospitals*	*(4) The Royal Marsden Hospital*	*(5) Ham-mersmith Hospital*	*(5) Queen Char-lotte's hospital*	*(6) The Eastman dental hospital*
At 30 September 1979										
Medical and dental (1)										
Number	1,367	302	129	247	186	216	136	n.a.	59	92
Whole time equivalent	842	164	87	105	126	149	103	n.a.	43	66
Nursing and midwifery (2)										
Number	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Whole-time equivalent	3,442	953	318	187	562	683	420	n.a.	309	9
Ancillary										
Number	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Whole-time equivalent	1,883	488	243	167	103	359	286	n.a.	219	19
At 30 September 1980										
Medical and dental (1)										
Number	1,366	284	140	254	197	213	135	n.a.	58	85
Whole -time equivalent	865	168	95	113	133	151	105	n.a.	40	61
Nursing and midwifery (2)										
Number	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Whole-time equivalent	3,737	1,045	384	219	586	728	450	n.a.	317	7
Ancillary										
Number	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Whole-time equivalent	1,924	495	245	170	105	373	299	n.a.	217	20
At 30 September 1981										
Medical and dental (1)										
Number	1,383	301	134	242	194	197	130	n.a.	69	116
Whole-time equivalent	874	182	88	113	131	142	98	n.a.	47	73
Nursing and midwifery (2)										
Number	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Whole-time equivalent	3,788	1,120	359	208	591	703	466	n.a.	331	10
Ancillary										
Number	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Whole-time equivalent	1,933	514	228	174	109	376	295	n.a.	213	24
At 30 September 1982										
Medical and dental (1)										
Number	1,658	274	130	240	191	213	135	301	64	110
Whole-time equivalent	1,020	172	86	112	134	131	105	165	44	71
Nursing and midwifery (2)										
Number	5,815	1,269	497	214	679	834	485	1,212	615	10
Whole-time equivalent	5,183	1,122	451	199	648	768	460	1,150	373	10
Ancillary										
Number	2,772	564	242	186	123	419	349	626	241	22
Whole-time equivalent	2,399	504	221	148	109	359	292	543	207	18
At 30 September 1983										
Medical and dental (1)										
Number	1,668	275	117	216	205	226	140	308	65	116
Whole-time equivalent	1,046	161	80	109	135	164	111	166	44	76
Nursing and midwifery (2)										

Staff group	Total	(4) Hospitals for sick children	(4) National hospitals for nervous diseases	(4) Moorfields eye hospital	(4) Bethlem Royal and Maudsley hospitals	(4) National heart and chest hospitals	(4) The Royal Marsden Hospital	(5) Hammersmith Hospital	(5) Queen Charlotte's hospital	(6) The Eastman dental hospital
Number	5,522	1,119	498	268	717	799	520	1,198	395	8
Whole-time equivalent	5,173	1,044	450	261	689	765	493	1,118	346	8
Ancillary										
Number	2,755	558	235	193	123	420	339	623	242	22
Whole-time equivalent	2,398	497	214	164	108	362	285	541	210	18
At 30 September 1984										
Medical and dental (1)										
Number	1,677	280	118	213	194	222	135	400		115
Whole-time equivalent	1,076	163	83	106	129	164	104	254		73
Nursing and midwifery (2)										
Number	5,319	1,024	522	259	706	828	528	1,443		9
Whole-time equivalent	4,898	928	455	251	679	745	476	1,355		9
Ancillary (3)										
Number	2,369	475	208	184	108	364	324	681		25
Whole-time equivalent	2,066	421	188	154	96	314	272	600		21
At 30 September 1985							*Provisional*			
Medical and dental (1)										
Number	1,614	285	115	211	214	237	144	294		114
Whole-time equivalent	996	153	80	104	139	180	114	160		66
Nursing and midwifery (2)										
Number	4,694	903	380	275	696	706	467	1,258		9
Whole-time equivalent	4,527	889	353	259	671	694	448	1,205		9
Ancillary (3)										
Number	2,013	450	206	180	99	296	291	469		22
Whole-time equivalent	1,759	398	184	151	88	251	243	426		18

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of Medical and Non-Medical Manpower

Notes to table 1:

n/a Not available. (NUMBERS of non-medical staff of SHAs were not recorded prior to 1982).

All whole-time equivalent figures are rounded to nearest 10.

1. Includes Hospital Practitioners, Part-time Medical/Dental Officers and Locums.
2. Includes agency staff. Figures *not* adjusted for change in nurses' working hours during 1980 (see Table 2).
3. On 1 April 1984, Operating Department Assistants transferred from the Ancillary to the Professional & Technical Staff Group. These figures will reflect this change.
4. Prior to 1982, these Authorities were managed by Boards of Governors.
5. Queen Charlotte's Hospital merged with Hammersmith SHA on 1 April 1984. Prior to 1982, Hammersmith Hospital was managed by Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow AHA(T).
6. Prior to 1 April 1984, this hospital was managed by a Board of Governors.

Table 2

National Health Service directly employed staff in special health authorities for London postgraduate teaching hospitals
Estimated increases in nursing and midwifery staff adjusted for the change in the working week during 1980

	Total	Hospitals for sick children	National hospital for nervous diseases	Moorfields eye hospital	Bethlem Royal and Maudsley hospitals	National heart and chest hospitals	The Royal Marsden hospital	Hammersmith hospital	Queen-Charlotte's hospital	The Eastman Dental hospital
	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.
Adjusted percentage change 1979-85	2·4	−12·6	3·8	29·6	11·8	−4·7	−0·1	n/a	n/a	−6·2

Note to table 2:

During 1980 the standard working week for Nursing & Midwifery staff was reduced from 40 to 37·5 hours.

n/a. Compatible figures not available for 1979 and 1985 (see note 5 to table 1)

Unemployment

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's estimate of the implications for the annual level of resources provided to the National Health Service of the growth of unemployment since 1979.

Mr. Hayhoe: No such estimate has been made.

Accident and Emergency Provisions (Nucleus Design)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the efficiency and suitability of the nucleus design of accident and emergency provisions; and what he proposes to make good revealed deficiencies.

Mr. Whitney: An assessment has been made by an independent academic organisation, the medical architecture research unit. All the departments surveyed were found to be working smoothly and efficiently except one where local factors were causing a rate of attendance 50 per cent. above the national average. The health authority responsible is taking steps to relieve the pressure on this department.

Childminders

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available to his Department in respect of the number of children cared for by childminders; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not collected in the form requested. There were 57,800 registered childminders and 126,600 places available in England at 31 March 1985, but it is not known how many of these places were taken up. The figures show an increase of about 9 per cent. over March 1984.

Artificial Limb-fitting Centres

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many centres there are for fitting artificial limbs in the United Kingdom and how many people are employed in them.

Mr. Newton: There are 27 DHSS centres and subcentres for fitting artificial limbs in England employing 872 staff. Services in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Northern Ireland.

Home Helps

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of home helps employed by local authorities are from the ethnic minorities.

Mr. Whitney: Figures are not collected centrally to provide this information.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what proportion of home helps currently in post have received any form of training; and if he will make a statement on the type of training generally offered;

(2) what proportion of home care organisers employed by local authorities hold *(a)* the CSS qualification, *(b)* the CQSW qualification, *(c)* the local government training board diploma in domiciliary-care management or its earlier IHHO equivalent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Local social services authorities in England have responsibility for the training of their home helps and home help organisers and it is normal practice for newly recruited home helps to receive some in-service training. No figures are collected centrally to show the numbers in post who have received training. The local government training board has recently developed a new diploma in domiciliary care management and training material for home help organisers and home helps.

Social Services Inspectorate

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the members of his Department's social services inspectorate, based either in London or in the regions, worked as domiciliary care management at any time before they entered the inspectorate.

Mr. Whitney: Since 1971 most local social services departments have decentralised domiciliary care services so that they are managed at local level. A major criterion for entry to the social services inspectorate is that candidates should have at least five years experience of senior management in a personal social services agency. While it is not possible, without incurring disproportionate cost, to offer precise numbers it is estimated that half of the inspectors will have been responsible for managing domiciliary care services (among other services) prior to joining the social services inspectorate.

Elderly People

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the expenditure per head of population aged 75 years and over in 1984-85 on *(a)* local authority home care services and *(b)* meals on wheels, expressed as a proportion of expenditure on these services per head of those aged 75 years and over in 1978-79;

(2) what has been the increase in each year since 1979, expressed in index form using 1979 as the base year of expenditure in real terms on *(a)* home helps and *(b)* meals served through lunch clubs and meals on wheels, to people aged 75 years and over.

(3) what has been the change in *(a)* the number of home help hours delivered to people aged 75 years and over, and *(b)* the number of meals served through lunch clubs and meals on wheels to those aged 75 years and over, in each year over the period from 1979 to the latest year for which figures are available, expressed in index form and using 1979 as the base year;

Mr. Whitney: It is not possible to provide the analyses requested in respect of persons over 75 on the basis of centrally held information about local authority home help and meal-on-wheels services.

The information available is set out in the "Personal Social Services Statistics Actuals" published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (columns 196-200 and 213-231 in the volume for 1984-85) copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the increase in the number of people in Great Britain aged over 75 years every year since 1979 expressed in index form using 1979 as the base year.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is as follows:

Estimated resident population of Great Britain aged 75 and over

Mid-year	*Numbers*	*Index (1979 = 100)*
1979	3,038,000	100
1980	3,123,600	103
1981	3,209,500	106
1982	3,289,100	108
1983	3,376,400	111
1984	3,465,900	114
1985	3,543,000	117

Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many operating theatres have been closed and for how long at the Queen Alexandra hospital in Portsmouth; and what effect this has had on the hospital's waiting lists.

Mr. Whitney: I understand from the district health authority that all 14 main operating theatres at Queen Alexandra hospital, Portsmouth will close for essential repairs on 18 August. The work will not be complete until February 1987 although it is hoped to reopen some theatres before then. The authority is making every effort to ensure that the impact on patient care is kept to a minimum by taking on work elsewhere but up to 600 non-urgent operations may be delayed.

Artificial Limbs

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now publish his response to the McColl report on artificial limbs and appliances.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 24 July.

Mr. A. F. Farr (Prescription)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, when he hopes to reply to the hon. Member for Westminster North's letter of 1 July concerning the request of Mr. A. F. Farr to be supplied under the National Health Service with a particular nasal decongestant or an acceptable alternative.

Mr. Whitney: I replied to my hon. Friend on 23 July.

Contact Lenses

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, when he intends to lay regulations concerning charges for contact lenses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The National Health Service (Payments for Optical Appliances) Amendment Regulations (SI 1986 No. 1136) were laid on 7 July and come into operation on 28 July 1986.

Public Bodies

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a list of all the bodies in Wales to which he has sole or joint responsibility for making appointments.

Mr. Fowler: There are no bodies in Wales, whose functions relate only to Wales, for which I have sole or joint responsibility for making appointments. There are a number of bodies to which I do make appointments whose work relates to the whole of the United Kingdom, or to both England and Wales, and these are listed in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1985", HMSO, 1985 [ISBN 0 11 430008 9], a copy of which is held in the Library. Of the bodies listed in that publication, several have local centres in Wales, and these include medical appeal and vaccine damage tribunals, medical boards, and war pension committees.

Residential Homes

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the average age of admission to local authority residential homes for the elderly in Great Britain;

(2) what is the average age of current residents of local authority homes fo the elderly in Great Britain.

Mr. Whitney: The data available centrally for England on persons admitted to, and resident in, local authority homes for the elderly and younger disabled relate to age groups. These data do not allow for precise calculations of the average age of such persons but a rough estimate indicates an average of about 81 years for both categories. Statistics for Scotland and Wales are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Asbestos Disease

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what conditions regarding the presence of asbestos bodies are required for the diagnosis by special medical boards of asbestos disease.

Mr. Newton: The diagnosis of asbestos-related diseases by special medical boards is not conditional on the presence of asbestos bodies. These bodies indicate past exposure to asbestos dust but are not proof of the presence of disease due to the inhalation of asbestos. However, the boards take this into account along with other medical evidence and the claimant's occupational history.

Medical Boards

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what he attributes the trends in the number of cases referred to medical boarding centres between 1975 and 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to medical boarding centres (respiratory diseases). The downward trend in the number of cases referred to these centres between 1975 and 1984 can be attributed in part to the steadily reducing numbers employed in the mining industry and in part to improved working conditions. The slight increase in 1983 followed the inclusion of occupational asthma as a prescribed disease in 1982. The low figures for 1984 can probably be attributed to the miners' strike.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he takes to ensure that his Department's officers appropriately and expeditiously assist potential applicants to special medical boards.

Mr. Newton: Applications to special medical boards are from people suffering from malignant respiratory diseases. Advice to these people is contained in leaflets N12, N13 and PN1.

These cases are handled with extreme urgency. Arrangements are made immediately for a medical board whilst at the same time the other information needed to decide the claim is gathered. Extra managerial checks are undertaken to ensure that these claims are progressed as quickly as possible.

If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind perhaps he would write to me.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether medical boarding centre examinations are carried out by Dr. K. Browne; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Dr. K. Browne was appointed in 1985 as a part-time medical officer to the medical boarding centre (respiratory diseases) in London following his retirement from the post of medical officer to Cape Asbestos Ltd. He is an internationally known specialist on occupational lung diseases.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions hon. and right hon. Members have written to him or to other Ministers in his Department about individual findings of the special medical boards since 1979.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Disablement Benefit

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will introduce payment of industrial disablement benefit to sufferers from severe forms of industrial disablement immediately it is accepted that they are so suffering but without waiting for the degree of disablement to be determined finally.

Mr. Newton: Industrial disablement benefit can already be paid on the basis of a provisional assessment of disablement.

Hospitals (Alerts)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to collect details of each red alert and yellow alert including the hospital and health authority concerned, the starting and finishing dates of the alert and the causes, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: We have no plans to collect this information centrally. It is the responsibility of health authorities to manage and supervise hospital and specialist services to meet local need. Arrangements for admission to National Health Service hospitals are planned to take into account circumstances which would significantly affect the demand for services.

GPs (Patient Consultations)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1979 the total number of patient consultations with general practitioners.

Mr. Hayhoe: Estimates based on the general household survey sample are as follows:

	Millions
1979	182
1980	193
1981	176
1982	194
1983	193
1984	191

St. Helens and Knowsley Health Authority

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to reduce the cash limits of St. Helens and Knowsley district health authority for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 23 July.

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what effects the planned resource allocation working party reductions in Liverpool and South Sefton will have on the St. Helens and Knowsley health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe: The allocation of resources to the St. Helens and Knowsley health authority is the responsibility of Mersey regional health authority.

The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the regional chairman.

Acute Specialties (Costs)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost per head of the weighted population for the acute specialties in each district health authority; and what is the national average.

Mr. Whitney: The health service costing returns currently in use do not identify costs by specialty. The Department makes estimates by broad service groups but these figures are only available for England as a whole. Total expenditure on acute services per head of population amounted to some £90 in 1984-85.

For acute in-patient services only, the 1984-85 performance indicators published by the Department include information on relative expenditure per head of the resident population in districts. A set of the indicators is available in the Library.

NHS Training Conference

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the purpose of the training conference organised by the National Association of Health Authorities and the National Health Service Training Authority on 24 September; what fees are to be paid to the speakers or the organisations they work for; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is Government policy to develop awareness and expertise in customer relations in the National Health Service following the recommendations of the Griffiths report. It is important that there is a national focus for the subject and the National Association of Health Authorities and the National Health Service Training Authority are uniquely placed to ensure that this is provided by means of a national conference on customer relations.

The aims of the conference on 24 September are to provide those who attend with:

1. An increased awareness of the importance and contribution made by good customer relations to the effective provision and management of patient care services.
2. An increased awareness of strategies and techniques used by enterprises inside and without the National Health Service to ensure that customer interests come first.

The conference will also launch a new joint NAHA and NHSTA publication "Customer relations training in the National Health Service 1986". I understand only one speaker is being paid a fee of £450 for advising on the design and organisation of the conference as well as speaking at it.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are, at the latest available date, awaiting hospital treatment, for each specialty at every hospital in Wandsworth; and what were the comparable figures in each of the last five years.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is given in the table.

The data collected for individual hospitals do not distinguish between urgent and non-urgent cases.

Number of cases on the in-patient waiting list at 31 December, Wandsworth District Health Authority

Hospital/Specialty	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	**1985*
St. George's Hospital						
General medicine	9	4	9	3	9	1
Dermatology	4	3	5	1	3	7
Rehabilitation	3	1	0	3	3	2
Geriatrics	8	6	2	0	0	0
General surgery	289	254	249	166	129	330
ENT	128	265	521	521	488	582
Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery	300	402	330	322	307	223
Ophthalmology	177	114	129	154	173	165
Urology	0	38	24	109	67	0
Plastic surgery	38	57	24	28	16	35
Gynaecology	269	113	85	94	117	201
Cardiac surgery	101	146	127	302	305	240
Total	1,326	1,403	1,505	1,703	1,617	1,786
Atkinson Morley Hospital						
Neurology	32	20	43	36	35	22
Rehabilitation	47	69	53	71	78	86
Neurosurgery	65	56	91	50	86	51
Mental illness	14	13	13	18	18	18
Total	158	158	200	175	217	177
Springfield Hospital						
Mental illness	24	13	25	25	23	13
Total	24	13	25	25	23	13
St James Hospital						
General medicine	0	20	19	12	0	0
Dermatology	4	3	0	0	0	0
General surgery	271	325	299	330	390	123
ENT	50	47	60	98	0	0
Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery	94	83	131	128	104	71
Urology	34	20	31	37	35	33
Plastic surgery	12	223	236	278	253	137
Oral surgery	52	541	546	592	243	0
Gynaecology	23	36	32	22	34	3
Restorative dentistry	0	18	26	17	35	0
Total	540	1,316	1,380	1,514	1,094	367
South London Hospital for Women and Children (Hospital closed in early 1985)						
General medicine	0	1	0	0	0	—
General surgery	28	19	22	31	0	—
Gynaecology	102	73	94	139	0	—
Total	130	93	116	170	0	—
Gardiner Hill Unit						
Mental handicap	10	0	0	0	0	0
Total	10	0	0	0	0	0

* Provisional.

Note:

It should be noted that in certain specialties a hospital may maintain a waiting list which is common to more than one hospital within a district health authority.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of people on the waiting lists for acute surgery every six months since 30 September 1982 for *(a)* each district health authority and special health authority in Greater London, *(b)* the health authorities in Greater London added together and *(c)* the health authorities in Inner London added together;

(2) if he will give the number of people on in-patient waiting lists every six months since 30 September 1982 for *(a)* each district health authority and special health authority in Greater London, *(b)* the health authorities in Greater London added together and *(c)* the health authorities in Inner London added together.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. 95]: The requested information is given in the tables.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list for acute surgery in NHS hospitals wholly or partly within Greater London

District Health Authorities/ Special Health Authorities	*30 September 1982**	*31 March 1983**	*30 September 1983**	*31 March 1984**	*30 September 1984*	*31 March 1985*	*30 September 1985*
Inner London							
Hampstead	1,948	1,675	1,705	1,879	1,776	2,133	2,321
Bloomsbury	8,904	10,342	9,842	11,694	11,921	12,853	12,702
Islington	1,072	1,123	1,312	1,571	1,476	1,748	1,830
City and Hackney	4,131	4,436	4,985	5,434	5,834	6,399	6,439
Newham	2,222	2,000	2,412	1,504	1,550	1,162	999
Tower Hamlets	5,563	5,505	5,495	5,476	5,508	5,823	6,324
West Lambeth	5,602	4,616	4,215	5,006	5,158	4,732	5,471
Camberwell	3,128	2,927	2,949	2,842	2,954	2,748	2,749
Lewisham and North Southwark	4,800	4,726	4,347	5,207	5,496	5,840	7,162
Wandsworth	2,939	3,139	2,863	3,048	2,987	3,044	2,646
Riverside†	5,685	5,661	5,234	5,336	4,931	5,157	5,333
Paddington and North Kensington	2,628	2,416	2,282	2,757	2,881	2,380	2,765
The Hospital for Sick Children	1,177	1,318	1,702	1,548	1,839	1,891	1,790
The National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	126	123	125	133	186	162	125
Moorfields Eye Hospital	1,458	1,281	1,320	1,570	1,720	1,330	1,350
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	47	49	57	68	75	73	77
The National Heart and Chest Hospitals	294	260	276	332	389	405	508
Hammersmith and Queen Charlottes	1,716	2,327	2,305	2,315	2,222	2,536	1,980
All Health Authorities—Inner London	53,440	53,924	53,426	57,720	58,903	60,416	62,571
Outer London							
Barnet	3,521	3,614	3,708	3,356	3,689	3,766	3,549
Harrow	1,271	1,383	1,257	1,521	1,132	1,104	1,105
Hillingdon	5,809	5,900	5,799	5,954	6,162	6,665	7,243
Hounslow and Spelthorne	3,100	3,211	3,707	3,610	4,104	3,839	4,612
Ealing	1,367	1,268	1,610	1,689	1,341	1,659	1,932
Brent	1,620	1,908	2,243	2,169	2,097	1,840	1,772
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	4,312	4,497	4,234	5,199	5,665	6,103	6,280
Enfield	2,952	2,676	2,755	2,829	2,792	3,069	3,005
Haringey	1,708	1,456	1,350	1,108	1,211	1,208	1,055
Redbridge	1,688	1,658	1,465	1,623	1,577	1,375	1,388
Waltham Forest	3,245	3,712	3,566	3,963	3,670	3,945	4,132
Bexley	1,049	1,148	1,026	920	1,268	1,348	1,659
Greenwich	2,138	2,579	2,463	2,435	2,241	2,026	1,972
Bromley	1,906	2,122	2,103	1,910	1,806	1,919	1,932
Croydon	3,006	2,922	2,709	2,390	1,942	2,142	2,368
Kingston and Esher	3,168	3,038	2,948	3,118	2,934	3,070	2,954
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	2,266	2,333	2,571	2,740	2,899	2,770	4,005
Merton and Sutton	3,530	3,374	3,285	2,622	2,411	2,424	2,605
All Health Authorities—Greater London	101,096	102,723	102,225	106,876	107,844	110,688	116,139

* Figures before 30 September 1984 exclude a small number of surgical specialist units which were not separately identifiable.

† Prior to 1985, Victoria District Health Authority and Hammersmith and Fulham District Health Authority.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list in NHS hospitals wholly or partly within Greater London—all specialties

District Health Authority/ Special Health Authority	*30 September 1982*	*31 March 1983*	*30 September 1983*	*31 March 1984*	*30 September 1984*	*31 March 1985*	*30 September 1985*
Inner London							
Hampstead	1,979	1,716	1,737	2,013	1,866	2,276	2,321

District Health Authority/ Special Health Authority	30 September 1982	31 March 1983	30 September 1983	31 March 1984	30 September 1984	31 March 1985	30 September 1985
Bloomsbury	9,632	11,112	10,657	12,607	12,697	13,652	12,702
Islington	1,098	1,151	1,335	1,593	1,484	1,758	1,830
City and Hackney	4,586	4,857	5,390	5,886	6,321	7,128	6,439
Newham	2,222	2,000	2,426	1,504	1,560	1,164	999
Tower Hamlets	6,003	5,828	5,880	5,759	5,771	6,053	6,324
West Lambeth	6,038	5,126	4,643	5,516	5,511	5,161	5,471
Camberwell	3,388	3,196	3,215	3,013	3,129	2,907	2,749
Lewisham and North Southwark	5,335	5,148	4,805	5,750	6,116	6,481	7,162
Wandsworth	3,239	3,481	3,242	3,548	3,177	3,199	2,646
Riverside*	5,888	5,928	5,413	5,531	5,140	5,406	5,333
Paddington and North Kensington	2,813	2,614	2,466	2,996	3,007	2,444	2,765
The Hospitals for Sick Children	1,456	1,528	1,903	2,205	2,162	2,162	2,117
The National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	441	517	336	456	502	422	456
Moorfields Eye Hospital	1,458	1,281	1,320	1,570	1,720	1,330	1,350
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	128	136	119	144	148	131	115
The National Heart and Chest Hospitals	1,073	1,163	1,115	1,287	1,221	1,049	1,064
The Royal Marsden Hospital	331	301	212	306	274	252	289
Hammersmith and Queen Charlottes	2,167	2,826	2,758	2,707	2,596	2,864	2,322
All Health Authorities—Inner London	59,275	59,909	58,972	64,391	64,402	65,839	64,454
Outer London							
Barnet	3,628	3,758	3,821	3,462	3,839	3,905	3,549
Harrow	1,370	1,509	1,372	2,174	1,254	1,269	1,105
Hillingdon	6,009	6,155	6,040	6,215	6,370	6,871	7,243
Hounslow and Spelthorne	3,127	3,242	3,720	3,620	4,119	3,851	4,612
Ealing	1,489	1,406	1,759	1,890	1,583	1,862	1,932
Brent	1,737	1,993	2,333	2,255	2,152	1,885	1,772
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	4,474	4,663	4,348	5,462	5,800	6,222	6,280
Enfield	3,068	2,818	2,871	2,946	2,917	3,197	3,005
Haringey	1,708	1,456	1,350	1,108	1,211	1,208	1,055
Redbridge	1,719	1,709	1,493	1,701	1,624	1,473	1,388
Waltham Forest	3,271	3,717	3,570	3,966	3,672	3,945	4,132
Bexley	1,123	1,205	1,075	963	1,308	1,399	1,659
Greenwich	2,362	2,733	2,574	2,522	2,323	2,094	1,972
Bromley	1,931	2,151	2,184	1,935	1,823	1,944	1,932
Croydon	3,093	3,014	2,812	2,435	1,990	2,201	2,368
Kingston and Esher	3,194	3,063	2,981	3,156	2.959	3,128	2,954
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	2,313	2,408	2,643	2,810	2,994	2,842	4,005
Merton and Sutton	3,639	3,500	3,386	2,746	2,536	2,551	2,605
All Health Authorities—Greater London	108,530	110,409	109,304	115,757	114,876	117,686	118,002

* Prior to 1985, Victoria District Health Authority and Hammersmith and Fulham District Health Authority.

National Health Service

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the total final consumption of the National Health Service at 1980 prices on the basis set out in table 9.3 of the 1985 United Kingdom National Accounts.

Mr. Hayhoe: The table shows the growth which has taken place in National Health Service expenditure in recent years, after taking account of National Health Service pay and price increases. The figures are different from those used, for example, in public expenditure White Papers and in the Government's evidence to the Social Services Committee for its inquiries into public expenditure on the social services as they refer to calendar years and have been prepared using slightly different definitions of expenditure and accounting conventions. They exclude, for example, income from patients' charges, some capital spending and, up to 1 April 1974, expenditure by local authorities on services which were then transferred to the National Health Service.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available to his Department on the impact of rises in prescription charges on the average length of medication provided by the amount of drugs supplied on prescriptions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that information is not available in the form requested.

Information is available on the average quantity of medicines prescribed per prescription. The data for the last 10 years show no clear relationship between changes in the quantity prescribed and increases in the prescription charge.

South Africa

Mr. Cabom asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider a ban on the use of South African products in all health service facilities.

Mr. Hayhoe: Under the Government's public purchasing policy health authorities are expected to seek best value

for money in their purchasing decisions and to adopt procedures compatible with international obligations under the European Community purchasing directives and GATT Agreement. There is no specific provision in National Health Service purchasing guidance for the inclusion or exclusion of particular countries of origin or sources of supply and I have at present no plans to change this situation.

Cancer Treatment Scanner (Whipps Cross Hospital)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to provide the Waltham Forest district health authority with additional funds for the purchase of a cancer treatment scanner for Whipps Cross hospital of an amount sufficient to make up for any shortfall in the sums raised towards the cost by private donations or charities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The allocation of resources to Waltham Forest health authority is a matter for North East Thames regional health authority. It is for the authorities concerned to consider in the light of priorities and the existing provision of services for patients suffering from cancer whether they wish to fund the provision of a cancer treatment scanner at Whipps Cross hospital.

Hospital Services (Hampstead)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will take steps to ensure that the four wards at the Royal Free hospital occupied by patients moved from the New End hospital will in future be returned to the acute function;

(2) whether he will ensure that the full amount obtained by the sale of the New End hospital is returned to Hampstead heath authority to meet capital and revenue costs associated with the redevelopment of the Queen Mary hospital.

Mr. Whitney: Hampstead health authority's proposals for the future provision of services for elderly people are laid out in a consultative document issued by the authority on 21 July. The document details both the authority's plans for the four wards at the Royal Free that would be occupied by patients from New End, and the current understanding between Hampstead and North East Thames regional health authority over the use of the proceeds from any sale of New End. If following public consultation, the proposals are formally adopted by the health authority, and the Hampstead community health council objects, they will come to Ministers for a final decision. It would not therefore be appropriate for me to comment.

Medical Statements

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether a standard form exists for his Department's officers to submit to general practitioners where medical statements are required.

Mr. Newton: A standard form, DLSB/131 is available for issue to the claimant when doctor's evidence is needed to support a claim. The claimant is asked to approach his doctor for him to complete it.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice has been given to his Department's officers in relation to accepting claimants' own word rather than demanding medical statements especially for weekly additional requirements.

Mr. Major: Guidance on the circumstances in which doctor's evidence is needed to support a claim is set out in paragraphs 4003-4005 of the S manual, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what procedures exist for the reimbursement by general practitioners of charges for medical statements where these should not have been levied.

Mr. Hayhoe: Complaints that a general practitioner may have failed to comply with his terms of service by charging for a certificate which should have been provided free are investigated by the family practitioner committee. If, following an investigation, the doctor is found in breach of his terms of service, the family practitioner committee may recommend to the Secretary of State that a sum should be recovered from the doctor's remuneration and the charge refunded. Anyone who believes that he may have been wrongly charged should first seek clarification from the doctor and, if the matter is not resolved satisfactorily, should complain to the family practitioner committee within eight weeks of the issue of the certificate.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why general practitioners provide medical statements for social security purposes free of charge.

Mr. Hayhoe: This is a provision of general medical practitioners' terms of service. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 15 April at column *367-368*.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much Health Service expenditure as an absolute figure and as a percentage of total National Health Service expenditure for each of the past 10 years was spent on *(a)* elderly and geriatric services, *(b)* community services, *(c)* the mentally handicapped, *(d)* the mentally ill, *(e)* obstetric services and *(f)* acute hospital services.

Mr. Hayhoe: The requested breakdown by client group is available only for hospital and community health services current expenditure which accounts for about two thirds of total National Health Service expenditure. The table shows estimated gross current expenditure by health authorities, in cash and as a percentage of total hospital and community health services expenditure, on the main client groups each year between 1975-76 and 1984-85, the latest year for which these estimates are available. These estimates of health authorities' spending are valid for monitoring broad trends, but not for making close comparisons between individual programmes. They are derived from my Department's programme budget analyses which have been provided to the Social Services Committee each year since 1980 and have been published in minutes of evidence associated with the Committee's reports. The latest analysis at constant prices, together with notes of caution on the limits of its accuracy, are given in the Committee's Fourth Report (HC 387-II) which was published earlier this month.

Hospital and Community Health Services Expenditure (£ million cash)—England

	1975-76	*1976-77*	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85**
Geriatric Services†	269	311	356	410	489	649	714	763	804	860
(percentage of total)	(8·7)	(8·9)	(9·1)	(9·3)	(9·2)	(9·5)	(9·4)	(9·4)	(9·4)	(9·5)
Community Services	260	294	329	370	449	598	665	728	780	856
(percentage of total)	(8·4)	(8·4)	(8·4)	(8·4)	(8·5)	(8·7)	(8·8)	(9·0)	(9·1)	(9·4)
Services for mentally handicapped people	162	181	205	229	275	355	389	419	437	462
(percentage of total)	(5·3)	(5·2)	(5·2)	(5·2)	(5·2)	(5·2)	(5·1)	(5·2)	(5·1)	(5·1)
Services for mentally ill people‡	354	389	444	490	593	775	860	916	965	1,029
(percentage of total)	(11·5)	(11·1)	(11·3)	(11·1)	(11·2)	(11·3)	(11·3)	(11·3)	(11·3)	(11·4)
Obstetric Services	167	188	207	224	273	353	392	427	435	457
(percentage of total)	(5·4)	(5·3)	(5·3)	(5·1)	(5·1)	(5·2)	(5·2)	(5·3)	(5·1)	(5·0)
Acute Hospital Services	1,455	1,653	1,833	2,052	2,459	3,163	3,505	3,745	3,958	4,163
(percentage of total)	(47·2)	(47·1)	(46·7)	(46·6)	(46·3)	(46·2)	(46·2)	(46·3)	(46·2)	(45·9)
Other Services	414	495	548	631	772	958	1,057	1,087	1,182	1,235
(percentage of total)	(13·4)	(14·1)	(14·0)	(14·3)	(14·5)	(14·0)	(13·9)	(13·4)	(13·8)	(13·6)
Total Hospital and Community Health Services (excluding Joint Finance)‖	3,081	3,511	3,923	4,406	5,310	6,849	7,582	8,085	8,561	9,062

* (provisional).
† includes expenditure on non-psychiatric day patients.
‡ includes expenditure on psychiatric day patients.
‖ as given in health authorities summarised accounts.

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total current expenditure on the National Health Service in each year since 1970, at constant prices.

Mr. Fowler: Total gross current expenditure on the National Health Service in England, at 1985-86 prices*, was as follows:

	£ million
1970-71	8,361
1971-72	8,588
1972-73	8,985
1973-74	9,461
1974-75	10,744
1975-76	11,233
1976-77	11,374
1977-78	11,761
1978-79	†11,412
1979-80	11,652
1980-81	12,771
1981-82	12,954
1982-83	13,249
1983-84	13,443
1984-85	13,814
1985-86	‡‖13,809
1986-87	‡14,304

*Expenditure figures revalued in line with the movement in the GDP deflator at market prices.

†From 1978-79 expenditure is recorded on a cashflow basis rather than the earlier accruals basis. If expenditure were recorded for 1978-79 on the same basis as in 1977-78, it would be £11,481 million.

‡Provisional figures, dependent partly on the outcome of any revenue to capital transfers.

‖Takes account of expected transfer of £35 million from current to capital expenditure.

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total capital expenditure on the National Health Service in each year since 1970, at constant prices.

Mr. Fowler: Total gross capital expenditure, including capital receipts, on the National Health Service in England, at 1985-86 prices*, was as follows:

	Total expenditure
1970-71	651·0
1971-72	760·5
1972-73	882·8
1973-74	1,013·2
1974-75	859·2
1975-76	896·7
1976-77	863·6
1977-78	677·7
1978-79	702·5
1979-80	673·5
1980-81	771·6
1981-82	856·2
1982-83	829·2
1983-84	830·1
1984-85	894·3
1985-86	†914·4

* Expenditure figures revalued in line with the movement in the GDP deflator at market prices.
† Provisional figures.

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing, for the European Economic Community as a whole, for each present member state of the European Economic Community, the United States of America and Japan, the percentage of the gross domestic product in constant prices devoted to health and social security expenditure in each year between 1979 and 1986.

Mr. Newton: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the information on the National Health Service and personal social services expenditure per capita given in his answer of 11 November 1985, *Official Report*, column *96*, so as to give data for 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *99*]: Estimates of health and personal social services expenditure per capita for 1984-85 are expected to be available by mid-August and comparable estimates for 1985-86 at about the same time next year.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the information on National Health expenditure provided in his answer of 1 July 1985, *Official Report*, column *47*, to include 1985-86 and an estimate for 1986-87.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *103*]: The available information is set out in the following tables. Since the reply to the hon. Member last year there have been a number of technical changes to the figuring to reflect a revised Vote structure and a change in accounting for hospital and community health services spending. I have therefore provided figures on a comparable basis from 1978-79 onwards. The figures now also include income from land sales. Fully comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

The figures for spending deflated by the services own pay and price increases are not an adequate measure of the resources available for patient care as they exclude the very significant improvements in efficiency which have been made.

Hospital and Community health services gross current and capital expenditure (including land sales)

	£ million cash	Percentage change in real terms (GDP deflator)	Percentage change deflated by the Retail Price Index	Percentage change deflated by NHS pay and prices
1978-79	4,772	—	—	—
1979-80	5,684	+1·9	+2·9	−1·2
1980-81	7,519	+11·4	+13·7	+3·5
1981-82	8,351	+1·0	−0·4	+3·0
1982-83	8,935	‡	−0·1	+0·8
1983-84	9,381	+0·5	+0·3	+0·2
1984-85	9,965	+1·9	+1·1	+0·6
1985-86*	10,552	−0·1	‡	+0·7
1986-87†	11,314	+3·3	n/a	n/a
Family practitioner services gross current and capital expenditure				
1978-79	1,473			
1979-80	1,731	+0·5	+1·5	+0·3
1980-81	2,178	+5·9	+8·2	+0·5
1981-82	2,509	+4·7	+3·3	+2·1
1982-83	2,900	+8·0	+7·9	+3·6
1983-84	3,117	+2·9	+2·7	+2·0
1984-85	3,426	+5·5	+4·7	+2·8
1985-86*	3,659	+0·7	+0·8	+1·1
1986-87†	3,910	+3·0	n/a	n/a
Central health and miscellaneous services: gross current and capital expenditure (including land sales)				
1978-79	181			
1979-80	225	+6·4	+7·3	+6·2
1980-81	275	+2·9	+5·0	+1·1
1981-82	324	+7·1	+5·7	+8·1
1982-83	361	+4·1	+4·0	+4·2
1983-84	423	+12·1	+11·9	+11·8
1984-85	483	+9·6	+8·6	+8·7
1985-86*	513	+0·2	+0·3	+1·4
1986-87†	537	+0·9	n/a	n/a

n/a = Not available.
* Provisional.
† Estimated.
‡ Indicates insignificant change.

NHS (Tendering)

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consultation was held with commercial contractors prior to the preparation of specimen contracts for tendering in the National Health Service; and whether he has any plans to revise the specimen contracts to tailor them more directly to the requirements of individual services.

Mr. Whitney: Consultation took place with the main trade associations representing the cleaning, catering and laundry contractors prior to issue of specimen contracts. We are prepared to consider any proposals which are intended to improve them.

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what independent evaluation of competitive tendering procedures has been carried out.

Mr. Whitney: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 3 July at column *631*.

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 3 July, when health authorities include capital investment in drawing up in-house tenders; and what steps his Department takes to ensure the capital element is fully taken into account in tender adjudication.

Mr. Whitney: The Department issued full advice on the treatment of capital expenditure in the evaluation of tenders in the notes of guidance attached to the specimen contract documents for laundry services and for linen and garment rental services. Copies of both documents are in the Library.

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 3 July, what is the total value of the 48 per cent. of National Health Service laundry services where tenders have not been invited; what timescale he envisages for putting these outstanding services out to tender; and what action will he take to ensure compliance from those authorities who are resisting the tendering system.

Mr. Whitney: The estimated value of the laundry services which still had to be put out to tender at 31 March 1986 was £32 million a year. In all but a few exceptional cases, we expect the outstanding services to have been put out to tender by March 1987.

Only three health authorities in England have failed so far to agree competitive tendering programmes. With the support of Ministers, regional chairmen are continuing with their efforts to secure compliance.

NHS (Linen Losses)

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about an independent study to evaluate linen losses in the National Health Service and to assess the full costs of laundry, linen distribution and linen maintenance services; and whether he would support such a study.

Mr. Whitney: Steps have already been taken to ensure that linen losses are properly recorded by health authorities. The Association of British Laundry, Cleaning and Rental Services has requested the Department to commission a study to obtain the full cost of total linen services to a health authority. This request is being considered.

Emergency, Acute and Geriatric Beds

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current number of *(a)* emergency,

(b) acute and *(c)* geriatric beds available at (i) the Royal Northern, (ii) the Whittington, (iii) St. Bartholomew's hospitals; and what are the comparable figures in July 1985 and July 1984.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may care to approach either the North East Thames regional health authority or the district health authorities concerned for the data he seeks.

Children (Speech Therapy)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he makes of the weekly time children needing speech therapy receive; and if he has any plans to increase it.

Mr. Whitney: Information about individual treatment is not held centrally. Professional staff determine the time needed for therapy for individual patients. It is for health authorities to decide the total amount of speech therapy time that can be made available for children in the light of assessments of need and their current resoucres.

Occupational Pension Schemes

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish an estimate of the amount of the difference between the sum of the transfer payments paid by private occupational pension schemes in respect of early leavers in the last financial year, and the total amount that would have been required to procure pension rights in the schemes from which the members resigned precisely equivalent to those which they forfeited.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Low Incomes

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the low incomes study for 1983.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) today.

Health Authorities (Manpower Statistics)

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the numbers of *(a)* doctors, *(b)* nurses, *(c)* midwives, *(d)* dentists, *(e)* opticians and *(f)* pharmacists in (i) Bristol and Weston and (ii) Frenchay health authorities in 1979, 1983, and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Pharmacists

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what safeguards he intends to introduce into the new pharmacy contract to prevent a pharmacist who has received compensation from a closure from opening a new pharmacy.

Mr. Hayhoe: During the debate in Committee on the NHS (Amendment) Bill I agreed to look again at the system of payments to pharmacists who wished to relinquish their NHS contract, or to relocate their business to areas where they could better serve patient needs, to ensure that the system will work as intended and that there are adequate safeguards against abuse.

The proposed system already has a number of important safeguards. It will operate for two years only and small pharmacies only will be eligible; there is no opportunity for someone to open a pharmacy and then quickly close it to obtain a payment; under the new arrangements a new National Health Service contract will be granted only where it is necessary or desirable for patient services, so new pharmacies will be opened only where patient needs dictate.

I have considered carefully the need and the options for strengthening these in-built safeguards. Both the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain and the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee have been consulted and both have given the assurance that they will be playing an active role to make sure that the system operates as intended.

Mental Health Act Commission

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those persons and organisations who have commented on the draft prepared by the Mental Health Act Commission of the code of practice referred to in section 118 of the Mental Health Act; if he will set out the procedure by which these comments will be considered; and when he anticipates laying copies of the code of practice before Parliament.

Mr. Whitney: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were in receipt of unemployment benefit within the county of Avon on 1 April; and what was the comparable figure on 1 April 1980.

Mr. Major: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

North Western Regional Hospital Authority

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received any proposals from the North Western regional hospital authority for the closure or partial closure of wards at Rainhill hospital.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. Rainhill hospital is administered by St. Helens and Knowsley health authority and is therefore the responsibility of Mersey regional health authority. The hon. Member may therefore wish to address his inquiries to the chairman of that authority.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received any application from the North Western regional hospital authority for changes in the financing of district health authorities which would affect any hospital with a regional secure unit.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. The funding of individual districts is the responsibility of regional health authorities. The hon. Member may therefore wish to address his inquiries to the chairman of the regional health authority for the hospital he has in mind.

Family Credit Scheme

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 9 June, *Official*

Report, column 92, to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, if, before he determines when and how to introduce family credit, he will make known to the House the approximate compliance costs.

Mr. Newton: The Government have now announced that family credit will be paid direct when it is introduced in 1988. Accordingly, any costs which would have resulted from payment with wages will no longer arise.

Benefits

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people at the latest date for which information is available were receiving war disablement pension at (i) 20 per cent. or less, (ii) 30 per cent., (iii) 40 per cent., (iv) 50 to 90 per cent., (v) 100 per cent., (vi) unemployability supplement, (vii) constant attendance allowance, (viii) exceptionally severe disablement allowance, (ix) comforts allowance, (x) allowance for lowered standard of occupation, (xi) age allowance, (xii) clothing allowance, (xiii) invalidity allowance and (xiv) war pensioners' mobility supplement.

Mr. Newton: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Research Management

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if a new chief scientist has yet been appointed; and if he will make a statement about the administration of research management in his Department.

Mr. Fowler: I am pleased to announce that Professor Francis William O'Grady CBE TD MD FRCP FRCPath has agreed to become the chief scientist to my Department. He will be taking up his advisory appointment which is part-time on 1 September 1986. Professor O'Grady is currently professor of microbiology at the university of Nottingham and will continue to fill that post part-time while advising me on the research structures of the Department and the scientific validity of the programme which he will steer as chairman of the departmental research committee. Professor O'Grady will also represent the Department on major research committees and councils, particularly the Medical Research Council. Executive responsibility for managing the Department's research management division lies with Dr. Jeremy Metters, the deputy chief scientist and director of research management.

Mentally Handicapped People (Mobility Allowance)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received on the availability of mobility allowance to the mentally handicapped.

Mr. Newton: We have recently received a number of representations in various forms, all of which seek a widening of the scope of the mobility allowance scheme so that more mentally handicapped people are likely to qualify for the allowance. The representations are aimed mainly at making provision for people who are unable to make purposeful use of their physical ability to walk without guidance or supervision from another person.

Basildon Hospital Obstetric Department

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent changes have been made in the resources available to the Basildon hospital obstetric department; how many foetal heart monitors are available in that department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The *Daily Mirror* article on this subject on 5 April was misleading. There have been no reductions in the resources available for obstetric services in Basildon. The obstetric department had seven heart monitors, five more than the *Daily Mirror* reported as available to the labour ward at that time.

King's College Hospital, London

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what basis restrictions have been placed by pathology consultants at King's college hospital, London, on tests for blood and urine; whether urgent cases are in any way affected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The *Daily Mirror* report on this subject on 16 July was misleading. Consultants at King's College Hospital have themselves decided to introduce a system to control the number of routine and non-urgent cases that they are responsible for undertaking: urgent cases are not affected. It is this example of good management which the *Daily Mirror* chose to condemn.

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the real increase in salary at the bottom of the scale for each grade of nurse for each year since 1979, indicating the annual percentage change and the overall cumulative percentage increase for each grade.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the department of anaesthesia and intensive care at Addenbrooke's hospital, Cambridge, concerning the number of ventilators available for use on small children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The *Daily Mirror* report on this subject on 14 May was misleading as the consultant himself has pointed out.

Up to the middle of May as many as 27 ventilators for use on small children were available in Addenbrooke's hospital, although not all are designed for use with children of all sizes. Nevertheless the consultant was concerned that a time might arise when the type of ventilator suitable for a child liver transplant patient would not be available when it was required for an operation, although no such occasion had in fact arisen. As a result of prudently voicing this concern, I am delighted that a charitable source has supplemented the resources of the NHS by offering the money to purchase an additional suitable ventilator.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what funds have been made available this

financial year to the Queen Elizabeth hospital, Birmingham, for liver transplant operations; how many operations have been undertaken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The *Daily Mirror* report on this subject 12 July was misleading.

The funds allocated under the arrangements for supra regional funding of highly specialised services for the liver transplant programme at the Queen Elizabeth hospital, Birmingham, were £482,000 in 1985-86 and £647,000 in 1986-87, an increase of 34 per cent. 25 liver transplant operations were performed in 1985-86, and 13 were performed between 1 April and 22 July 1986.

Charing Cross Hospital

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans there are for Charing Cross hospital to acquire a new gastroscope; what change has been made in Charing Cross hospital's budget to replace and repair medical equipment of this kind; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The *Daily Mirror* article on this subject on 24 June was misleading.

There has been no reduction in the Charing Cross hospital's budget for replacement and repair of medical equipment. Indeed the purchase of a new gastroscope was recently authorised by the health authority.

Bloomsbury Health Authority

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the response made by the Bloomsbury health authority to the complaint that a sick baby, who later died, was discharged from the Middlesex hospital early in 1986, as a result of a shortage of beds for young patients.

Mr. Hayhoe: The *Daily Mirror* report on this subject on 3 March was misleading.

The Bloomsbury health authority issued a press statement on 3 March. The baby in question was admitted to the Middlesex hospital for 24 hours observation and then discharged. The consultant concerned considered her healthy and well upon discharge — a fact the *Daily Mirror* belatedly acknowledged on 11 July. The baby tragically died six days after discharge. The authority stated that the baby "was not discharged as a result of pressure on beds". The coroner found no connection between the baby's death and her discharge from hospital.

Cervical Carcinoma

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the following age categories (i) 15 to 24 years, (ii) 45 to 54 years, (iii) 55 to 64 years, (iv) 65 to 74 years and (v) 75 to 84 years, the number of deaths from cervical carcinoma in *(a)* England and *(b)* each health authority in England for each year since 1979.

Mr. Hayhoe: Information for the years 1980 to 1984 inclusive is available from "Mortality Statistics: area, series DH5 nos. 7-11, table 4," copies of which are in the Library. Tables giving figures for 1979 and 1985 have been placed in the Library.

British Pensioners (Poland)

Mr. Normanton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any steps are being taken to ensure that naturalised Britons of Polish origin who have retired to Poland on British pensions can receive their pensions with annual adjustments to the pension.

Mr. Major: We have no proposals for treating this group of pensioners differently from others who go abroad to live in countries with which the United Kingdom has not reached an agreement to provide for payment of pension upratings.

Irradiated and Novel Food

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he plans any change in his policy on irradiated and novel foods in the light of the report of the advisory committee on irradiated and novel foods;

(2) what reply he is making to the response of the Liverpool, Central and Southern community health council to the report submitted by the advisory committee on irradiated and novel foods.

Mr. Whitney: The Liverpool central and southern community health council is being informed that its views will be taken fully into account, along with those of other organisations, when Ministers formally consider the advice in the report. At present, we have no plans further to amend the Food (Control of Irradiation) Regulations 1967.

Rent Rebates and Allowances

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, column *514*, if he is yet able to give the information there sought by the hon. Member for Birkenhead.

Mr. Major: I have written to the hon. Member today explaining the delay.

Special Health Authorities

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the membership of the special health authorities giving the nominating bodies and the date of expiry of each term of office.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Mortality Rates

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the standardised mortality rates for people in social classes 1 and 5 for the year 1981.

Mr. Whitney: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Tobacco

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimate received from the Government economic adviser on the total social cost of tobacco, including his own Department's estimate of costs for the National Health Service and a breakdown of each component of the costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Black Report

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services if he will now implement all of the recommendations of the Black report; if he will identify those recommendations which would not require any increase in public expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Wheelchairs

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in the last six months, any orders have been placed for wheelchairs that *(a)* do not conform to British standards and *(b)* are made by manufacturers that have no previous experience of wheelchair manufacture.

Mr. Newton: I shall write to the right hon. Member.

Family Statistics

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the proportion of children in care from families in which the head of household is unemployed.

Mr. Whitney: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate the number of children who live in families in which there are no working adults, giving the most recent figure;

(2) if he will estimate the number of children who live in families in which the head of household is *(a)* unemployed and *(b)* has been unemployed for over one year, giving the most recent figures.

Mr. Major: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Suicide

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received the results of the Medical Research Council's study of the rate of attempted suicide among unemployed and employed men; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Children's Health (Parental Unemployment)

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what evidence there is of the effects of parents' unemployment on children's health; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Radiotherapy

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what departmental guidance is given to operators of linear accelerator machines used in radiotherapy regarding the length of time the machines are in use;

(2) how many linear accelerator machines for radiotherapy treatment are in current use in the United Kingdom;

(3) whether he is satisfied with the safety of the older linear accelerator machines still in use for treatment in radiotherapy.

Mr. Whitney: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Linear Accelerator Waiting Lists

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the safety of the older linear accelerator waiting lists for cardiology departments for every year for the past 15 years.

Mr. Whitney: I shall write to the hon. Member.

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what provision is made for community care of terminally ill acquired immune deficiency syndrome patients;

(2) what provision is made for hospice care of terminally ill acquired immune deficiency syndrome patients;

(3) what central funding is available for community care and hospice provision for terminally ill acquired immune deficiency syndrome patients;

(4) pursuant to his reply of 16 December, *Official Report*, column 71, whether he is yet in a position to announce the results of his consideration of discrimination against acquired immune deficiency syndrome virus carriers in the fields of employment insurance and education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Pharmaceutical Transfer Prices

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on his policy towards pharmaceutical transfer prices.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Cancer Test

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy on the use of the hydrolised deoxyribo-nucleic acid assay test for detection of cancer.

Mr. Whitney: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Family Planning

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he is taking to improve National Health Service family planning and pregnancy counselling services for young people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government are concerned to reduce the risk of unwanted pregnancy among young people, and to encourage them to seek advice early if they suspect they are pregnant. To aid the further development of health services in this area, I shall be inviting interested health authorities to submit proposals for projects to provide a family planning and pregnancy counselling service specifically for young people under 25. Where teenagers are concerned, such services must take account of the need not to undermine family stability or relationships between parents and their children. These requirements will be fully considered before projects are approved. I would hope to select three projects which would be district-based, and funded centrally for a three-year period starting in this financial year.

The projects will be evaluated and I hope that the findings will help health authorities generally in providing services appropriate to this age group.

Preventive Dental Treatment

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make preventive treatments available under the general dental service.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have agreed to the making of regulations which will permit topical fluoride to be available under the general dental service. Dentists will be able from 1 October to prescribe this treatment to children with special needs where they feel it to be of particular value. Further regulations will be made to permit the prescribing of fissure sealants as soon as agreement has been reached with the profession on points of detail. I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be laying similar regulations.

Social Security Payments (Sunderland)

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he can give the total figures for social security payments in the Sunderland area for the latest year available.

Mr. Major: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

NHS (Overseas Visitors)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 16 January 1985, *Official Report*, column 70, if he will estimate the adminstrative costs associated with the collection of charges to overseas visitors using the National Health Service and with monitoring the system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall write to the hon. Member.

NHS Staff (Hertfordshire)

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Social Service what were the numbers of doctors, nurses, midwives, dentists, opticians, pharmacists, and support staff in the years 1978 to 1985 in *(a)* the North-West Hertfordshire health authority and *(b)* South-West Hertfordshire health authority; and if there are any projections available for staff levels in the future.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Blood

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for each quarter since 1980 the total number of units of blood supplied to non-National Health Services hospitals by the regional blood transfusion service, covering South London, Surrey, Sussex and Kent;

(2) if he will give for each year since 1975 the total number of units of blood supplied to non-National Health Service hospitals by the national blood transfusion service.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986, c. *432*]: From 1982, the first year for which we have figures, the total numbers of units of blood supplied direct to non-National Health Service hospitals from the South London regional transfusion centre were as shown in the table. The national figures follow:

South London Regional Transfusion Centre

Quarter ended	*Total units of blood issued to non-NHS hospitals*
31 March 1982	2,330
30 June 1982	2,122
30 September 1982	2,322
31 December 1982	2,367
31 March 1983	2,507
30 June 1983	2,450
30 September 1983	2,603
31 December 1983	2,614
31 March 1984	1,799
30 June 1984	2,564
30 September 1984	2,957
31 December 1984	3,113
31 March 1985	3,048
30 June 1985	3,947
30 September 1985	3,265
31 December 1985	*3,625

* (provisional)

Regional Blood Transfusion Centres, England and Wales

Year	*Total units of blood issued to non-NHS hospitals*
1982	31,437
1983	40,786
1984	49,232
1985	*54,327

* (provisional)

Social Security Reform

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* extra information expanding tables 10A-16B of the technical annex to Cmnd. 9691 showing separately for sick and disabled, lone parents, couples with children in full-time work and not in full-time work, others in full-time work and not in full-time work, and non-pensioners without children who are couples, the numbers losing, gaining and remaining the same, indicating the amount of the change where appropriate who are *(a)* under 25 years and *(b)* aged 25 years or more;

(2) what is his estimate of the average amounts paid in *(a)* water rates, *(b)* sewerage charges and *(c)* domestic rates in (i) England, (ii) Wales and (iii) Scotland in 1985-86 by those receiving supplementary benefit which were used in the calculations in the technical annex to Cmnd. 9691.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 March 1986, c *157-58*]: I regret that it has proved disproportionately costly to provide the breakdown for which the hon. Member asked, but I will write to him with such additional information as we can provide without such cost.

I regret also the delay in providing the additional information sought by the hon. Member about the basis of certain calculations in the technical annex, which is the result of the two questions having been linked together in error.

The income support model used for the technical annex to Cmnd. 9691 is based on data for Great Britain and separate figures are not available for England, Wales and Scotland. Nor were separate amounts imputed for water rates and sewerage charges.

Where water rates and sewerage charges were included in the supplementary benefit assessment recorded in the "Annual Statistical Enquiry", claimants' actual entitlement was used. Where such charges were not included, the average value imputed in the model was £1·40 a week.

For domestic rates, estimates were derived from available information on claimants' tenure status, family type and age. The average amount for all claimants was £4·80 a week.

Both figures are at November 1985 prices.

Health Authorities (Accommodation)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the names of the district health authorities who have given notice to any of their employees to quit accommodation owned by them, consequent on his circular on surplus accommodation, together with the number of units of accommodation in each case.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 March 1986, c. *527*]: I can now confirm that none of the district health authorities concerned had given any member of staff notice to quit.

Family Credit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate how much of the cash compensation for free school meals and free welfare milk included in the family credit payment under his proposal in Cmnd. 9691 is lost through reduced housing benefit entitlement for a married couple with one, two and three children and a lone parent with one, two and three children at gross earnings levels of *(a)* £60 a week, *(b)* £70, *(c)* £80, *(d)* £90 and *(e)* £100 and so on until entitlement to family credit is extinguished in each case.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 April 1986, c. *264*]: Entitlement to housing benefit under the reformed social security structure will be affected by a number of factors, including receipt of any family credit. On the illustrative assumptions in the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691) something less than 25 per cent. of family credit recipients would also be in receipt of housing benefit. Of these, most would be receiving only rate rebate, a smaller number only rent rebate, leaving only about 3 per cent. of total family credit recipients receiving both rent and rate rebates. Around two-thirds of families receiving both family credit and housing benefit would still be better off overall as a result of the changes, many of them by more than £5 a week. The cash compensation included in the family credit rates in respect of school meals would be paid irrespective of the housing benefit position and would represent an integral part of the total family's credit payable. Although this makes it somewhat artificial to treat it in isolation in the manner requested, the table sets out the extent to which, on the illustrative figures, the housing benefit payable would be less than it would otherwise be if the family credit were reduced by £2·20 a week per child.

Extent to which illustrative Housing Benefit payable is lower than it would otherwise be if illustrative family credit rates were reduced by £2·20 per child.

Gross Earnings (per week)	*£60*	*£70*	*£80*	*£90*	*£100*	*£110*	*£120 and above*
Married Couple and 1 child							
Rent rebate	£1·32	£1·32	£1·32	£1·32	£1·01	nil	nil
Rate rebate	44p	44p	80p	52p	nil	nil	nil
Married Couple and 2 children							
Rent rebate	£2·64	£2·64	£2·64	£2·64	£2·11	£1·03	nil
Rate rebate	88p	88p	88p	60p	nil	nil	nil
Married Couple and 3 children							
Rent rebate	£3·96	£3·96	£4·03	£3·19	£2·11	£1·03	nil
Rate rebate	£1·75	£1·26	88p	60p	nil	nil	nil
Single Parent and 1 child							
Rent rebate	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
Rate rebate	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
Single Parent and 2 children							
Rent rebate	£1·26	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
Rate rebate	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
Single Parent and 3 children							
Rent rebate	£1·26	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
Rate rebate	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil

Note: nil means no Housing Benefit payable.

Assumptions: 1. In the one-child families the child is aged 3; in the two-child families the children are aged 4 and 6; in the three-child families the children are aged 3, 8 and 11.

2. In one-child families rent is £15·40 and domestic rates £6·20 per week. In two and three-child families rent is £16·50 and domestic rates £6·30 per week.

3. As for the present scheme, a minimum payment of 50p for both rent rebate and rate rebate; ie *no* entitlement where amount would be less than 50p.

4. The November 1985 income tax rates and allowances and national insurance contributions apply.

Transcultural Psychiatry

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money is currently being spent on research into the area of transcultural psychiatry; and on what projects this money is spent.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c *80*]: In addition to the care which is taken to provide services to suit the needs of differing groups of patients, the Department is currently supporting one 3 year descriptive research study. This will cover those patients who have been referred to an inter-cultural therapy centre

in north London which provides a specialised service to people from ethnic minority groups. The total cost is £39,800; £13,100 of which has been allocated in the current financial year.

This work will describe the circumstances in which a group of people from ethnic minorities suffering from psychiatric disorder presents for treatment and the effectiveness of the interventions used. The aim is to help to improve the efficiency of mental illness services for people from ethnic minorities.

Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each health authority wholly or partly within Greater London the percentage change in expenditure since 1979 expressed in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* deflated by the gross domestic product deflator and *(c)* deflated by the National Health Service deflator; and if he will give in each case the proportion of the change attributable to (i) national resources allocation working parties and (ii) subregional resource allocation policies.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 June 1986, c. *454-56*]: I regret that there was an error in the table given in my reply to the hon. Member. The revenue expenditure outturn of the Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's hospital for women special health authority in 1984-85 was £40,860,000 and not £22,878,000.

Health Authorities (Beds)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each health authority wholly or partly within Greater London and for each year since 1979 the number of beds for *(a)* acute patients, *(b)* the elderly, *(c)* the mentally ill and *(d)* psychiatric cases.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 June 1986, c. *457*]: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. The available information is given in the tables.

Average daily number of available acute beds in District Health Authorities and Special Health Authorities wholly or partly within Greater London*

District Health Authorities/ Special Health Authorities	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Barnet	1,231·6	1,132·3	1,105·2	1,107·9	1,046·3	949·4
Harrow	559·2	552·9	557·6	567·8	563·2	534·9
Hillingdon	1,232·8	1,097·2	1,133·4	1,125·6	1,100·9	1,008·9
Hounslow and Spelthorne	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	966·7	931·9	891·3
Ealing	241·6	284·2	345·2	374·9	369·3	374·1
Brent	528·3	574·3	536·5	537·9	510·9	470·0
Paddington and North Kensington	1,082·2	1,006·0	963·2	933·7	936·2	921·3
Hammersmith and Fulham	733·4	679·6	677·8	672·2	665·7	608·3
Victoria	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	826·2	788·1	779·3
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	1,437·0	1,411·2	1,382·5	1,312·2	1,300·4	1,278·5
Hampstead	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	747·5	743·7	745·1
Bloomsbury	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,981·4	1,975·0	1,837·2
Islington	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	815·1	751·6	656·5
City and Hackney	1,325·1	1,244·0	1,242·9	1,223·2	1,214·8	1,189·3
Newham	761·1	744·5	740·3	668·7	587·0	534·6
Tower Hamlets	1,007·4	897·3	937·4	925·9	896·3	866·6
Enfield	678·5	652·9	598·8	598·5	591·8	547·4
Haringey	878·2	773·9	793·1	799·3	749·2	688·6
Redbridge	414·7	427·7	432·4	424·2	427·8	427·8
Waltham Forest	1,000·7	969·9	927·6	949·5	873·3	776·7
Bexley	391·6	388·3	370·2	357·9	358·9	348·9
Greenwich	1,074·1	1,011·3	992·4	971·2	986·9	972·8
Bromley	879·2	830·3	818·2	812·8	786·5	687·5
West Lambeth	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	829·3	876·6	833·3
Camberwell	968·4	912·5	903·0	905·0	900·1	861·1
Lewisham and North Southwark	1,703·9	1,589·8	1,520·4	1,443·6	1,470·9	1,323·3
Croydon	650·0	621·6	620·5	616·2	610·4	571·2
Kingston and Esher	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	523·9	511·4	502·9
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	408·7	426·2	397·7
Wandsworth	1,343·9	1,158·9	1,122·6	1,108·8	1,125·9	1,152·0
Merton and Sutton	954·9	929·2	901·8	834·4	849·5	833·4
Special health authorities	2,861·3	2,800·1	2,821·0	2,624·3	2,582·9	2,467·5

*"Acute" is defined as all specialties except geriatrics, younger disabled, obstetrics and GP maternity, mental handicap and mental illness.
n.a. = comparable figures not available because of NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982.

Average daily number of available geriatric beds in District Health Authorities and Special Health Authorities wholly or partly within Greater London

District Health Authority/SHA's	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Barnet	313·4	386·3	403·4	413·3	407·5	434·1
Harrow	158·6	157·5	157·1	157·3	159·0	158·3
Hillingdon	229·7	237·0	247·8	252·0	252·0	251·0
Hounslow and Spelthorne	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	283·1	284·8	287·4
Ealing	125·6	138·0	152·7	156·9	157·5	158·4

District Health Authority/SHA's	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Brent	281·6	278·9	291·5	287·6	285·6	287·9
Paddington and North Kensington	146·1	144·8	147·3	154·8	149·7	150·5
Hammersmith and Fulham	130·0	136·5	143·1	141·2	140·2	138·3
Victoria	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	198·7	189·9	178·3
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	532·1	540·6	538·2	538·7	535·0	535·5
Hampstead	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	133·9	135·5	132·8
Bloomsbury	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	226·3	228·5	225·4
Islington	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	167·3	178·2	188·3
City and Hackney	334·7	293·7	174·2	338·0	337·9	329·7
Newham	91·0	93·0	110·1	131·8	172·4	256·6
Tower Hamlets	292·9	307·5	396·0	232·0	232·0	235·4
Enfield	269·0	256·3	243·4	235·9	235·4	234·0
Haringey	213·0	212·5	212·8	212·8	213·0	211·9
Redbridge	274·4	277·7	277·9	264·3	274·2	275·5
Waltham Forest	506·3	519·3	532·4	522·3	466·6	422·7
Bexley	118·5	135·3	135·9	134·9	134·0	136·1
Greenwich	411·1	369·8	347·9	356·3	356·5	350·4
Bromley	345·1	349·9	348·0	352·0	335·0	297·1
West Lambeth	173·9	171·6	170·4	171·9	171·8	173·9
Camberwell	224·9	215·1	210·3	210·3	207·5	191·7
Lewisham and North Southwark	261·3	249·0	252·9	250·2	248·0	253·3
Croydon	410·7	412·0	400·4	402·0	392·3	368·6
Kingston and Esher	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	138·0	138·0	147·1
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	295·8	293·9	278·3
Wandsworth	235·0	239·0	195·6	194·3	182·6	194·4
Merton and Sutton	303·3	285·8	281·4	338·0	306·4	305·0
Special health authorities	74·4	73·8	76·0	80·4	101·6	127·4

n.a. = comparable figures not available because of NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982

Average daily number of available mental illness beds in District Health Authorities and Special Health Authorities wholly or partly within Greater London

District health authorities/SHA's	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Barnet	1,101·6	1,090·8	1,073·7	1,034·6	1,028·4	987·0
Harrow	69·0	66·3	69·6	83·7	84·1	83·3
Hillingdon	54·9	54·5	54·4	53·5	54·0	54·0
Hounslow and Spelthorne	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	155·0	157·0	158·2
Ealing	1,274·7	1,223·7	1,187·7	1,135·8	1,070·6	1,025·8
Brent	1,403·6	1,377·2	1,318·4	1,288·7	1,246·0	1,140·9
Paddington and North Kensington	53·5	56·0	56·0	56·0	52·8	44·0
Hammersmith and Fulham	117·2	112·5	108·0	95·2	91·7	99·9
Victoria	n.a.	n.a.	n.a	1,914·0	1,872·1	1,807·2
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	1,015·4	986·0	962 8	946·5	907·1	882·0
Hampstead	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,024·9	982·6	959·5
Bloomsbury	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	162·9	169·8	167·0
Islington	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	90·0	90·0	90·0
City and Hackney	157·5	156·1	157·5	172·2	178·7	180·7
Newham	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
Tower Hamlets	160·2	159·7	157·6	171·3	172·0	167·0
Enfield	101·5	116·0	104·7	96·1	116·1	118·4
Haringey	51·2	44·1	42·8	46·1	52·0	49·5
Redbridge	830·1	817·0	805·6	810·9	812·3	797·4
Waltham Forest	1,406·1	1,426·5	1,383·8	1,254·2	1,102·1	1,132·9
Bexley	1,065·1	1,064·7	1,051·0	1,015·7	975·0	907·0
Greenwich	52·6	52·5	51·6	51·7	52·3	52·1
Bromley	1,186·0	1,148·0	1,142·4	1,047·8	1,010·5	963·1
West Lambeth	1,067·0	1,029·2	1,020·6	1,004·8	986·2	978·6
Camberwell	120·2	123·3	105·9	61·7	61·4	70·2
Lewisham and North Southwark	135·5	130·8	131·0	139·7	129·4	150·6
Croydon	554·0	554·0	536·9	490·5	487·0	486·6
Kingston and Esher	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	839·3	805·8	748·8
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	37·7	38·0	37·2
Wandsworth	1,183·0	1,148·2	1,082·0	1,023·8	1,028·4	1,025·2
Merton and Sutton	191·5	191·8	189·0	184·7	185·1	184·8
Special health authorities	402·4	431·4	438·6	441·5	442·0	449·5

n.a. = Comparable figures not available because of NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982.

Average daily number of available handicap beds in District Health Authorities and Special Health Authorities wholly or partly within Greater London

District health authorities/SHA's	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Barnet	29·5	28·0	30·7	31·0	31·0	31·0

District health authorities/SHA's	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Harrow	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hillingdon	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hounslow and Spelthorne	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ealing	—	—	—	—	—	—
Brent	76·1	82·3	90·0	90·6	91·2	92·0
Paddington and North Kensington	—	—	—	9·3	11·0	11·0
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	—	—	—	—	—
Victoria	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	153·0	153·0	153·0	152·0	145·0	145·0
Hampstead	—	—	—	—	—	0·2
Bloomsbury	—	—	—	—	—	—
Islington	—	—	—	—	—	—
City and Hackney	46·0	46·5	54·0	46·0	46·0	46·2
Newham	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tower Hamlets	11·9	11·9	12·0	12·2	2·3	—
Enfield	89·3	93·7	94·0	56·4	64·3	70·9
Haringey	—	—	—	3·8	8·0	8·0
Redbridge	20·0	20·0	20·0	20·0	20·0	20·0
Waltham Forest	294·0	294·0	294·0	221·5	234·4	227·6
Bexley	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greenwich	118·0	111·2	110·0	98·0	94·0	86·0
Bromley	52·2	57·4	66·0	78·0	78·6	82·2
West Lambeth	—	—	—	—	—	—
Camberwell	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lewisham and North Southwark	61·0	92·0	116·0	165·0	164·3	163·0
Croydon	1,466·6	1,394·9	1,346·3	1,309·1	1,275·8	1,224·3
Kingston and Esher	—	—	—	—	—	—
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	na	na	na	199·0	174·8	167·0
Wandsworth	16·3	33·0	40·0	45·7	53·8	48·2
Merton and Sutton	1,114·3	1,079·4	1,029·5	1,032·9	1,041·2	995·5
All Special health authorities	17·0	8·0	8·0	8·0	8·0	8·0

na = Comparable figures are not available because of NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982.

Pregnant Women (Vitamin Supplementation)

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the value of vitamin supplementation for prospective and pregnant mothers who are at risk of having handicapped children who suffer from spina bifida or other neural tube defects.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *98*]: We have sought the advice of the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs on representations made to us on the availability of a proprietary multivitamin drug under the selected list scheme. These representations also raise the general issue of the value of vitamin supplementation in the prevention of neural tube defects. No drug has a product licence for this use, but a major study of vitamin supplementation is in progress. In the meantime, we are assured by the advisory committee that all the vitamins which might play a role in prevention of neural tube defects are available under the selected list scheme.

Factor VIII

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the standard of factor VIII supplied by the manufacturers of Factorate, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1986, c. *107*]: Yes. Since January 1986 all factor VIII which is commercially available in the United Kingdom has been produced from plasma from donors who have been screened for antibodies to the AIDS virus. Factorate has been manufactured from donor tested material since the end of 1985. This is in addition to the heat treatment process to which these products are subjected. Samples of all manufactured batches commercially available in the United Kingdom are tested by the National Institute of Biological Standards and Control before they can be marketed.

Safety of Medicines

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer, *Official Report*, 14, July, if he will list the five drugs which have had the largest cumulative number of adverse reaction reports over the last six months; and if he will indicate which of these have resulted in deaths possibly associated with the drug.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: The five drugs are Fenbufen, Diphtheria/Pertussis/Tetanus Vaccine, Nifedipine, Enalapril Maleate and Piroxicam. In this period, deaths have been reported in association with Fenbufen, Enalapril Maleate and Piroxicam. This information is based on the reports of adverse reactions received by the CSM between 1 January and 30 June 1986; the reports relate to events occurring over a considerably longer period. The heading of Diphtheria/Pertussis/Tetanus vaccine refers to reports associated with all such vaccinations, whether administered singly or in combination. I am advised that it is very important to note that a report does not necessarily indicate a causal relationship between a medicinal product and the reported reaction, and that considerable caution should be exercised in interpreting the volume of such reports in the absence of data on prescription volumes and other relevant factors, and over an arbitrary period when special factors may affect the rate of reporting.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer, *Official Report*, 14, July,

column *422*, of the eight drugs whose licences or certificates were withdrawn, how many had *(a)* been on the market for over five years and *(b)* had at some time over 1 million prescriptions issued for them in one year; and for the drugs falling into either of these two categories, how many months the committee spent in evaluating safety before the decision was taken to revoke the licence or certificate.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: Of the eight drugs discussed by the Committee of Safety of Medicines in the calendar years 1981 to 1985, whose product licences on clinical trails certificates were revoked on the advice of the committee, four had been on the market for longer than five years, and none had in excess of 1 million prescriptions recorded in any one calendar year. Continuous evaluation of the safety profile of all drugs begins as soon as the licence or certificate is granted.

Prevention of Disability

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much the Government have spent in each of the last five years on the prevention of disability in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* developing countries; and in each case what are the projects being supported.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1986]: The Government fully recognise the importance of preventing disability wherever possible, and this concern is reflected in a wide range of programmes in the United Kingdom, such as vaccination and immunisation, screening for potentially disabling conditions, health education, accident prevention, genetic counselling services and medical research. It is not, however, possible to distinguish within those programmes the elements specifically directed to the prevention of disability or their cost.

So far as the developing countries are concerned, I understand that the health aid programme of the Overseas Development Administration is directed towards improving the availability of basic health services in developing countries and therefore helps in the prevention of disability. Since, however, there are no sectoral allocations within the overseas aid programme it is similarly not possible to identify a specific cost for the disability prevention element.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 21 October 1986

ENERGY

Namibia (Uranium)

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Energy what action he intends to take against imports of uranium mineral in Namibia.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer to the answers given to the then Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Hooley) on 15 March 1983, at col 126, and to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 28 January 1985, at col 43.

Mining subsidence (Compensation)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he proposes to publish his response to the Waddilove committee recommendations on compensation for coalmining subsidence.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government's response to the Waddilove report will be published as soon as possible.

Oil Production

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish figures to show, for the 12 months of 1984, the top 20 oil producers in the world in terms of *(a)* per thousand barrels per day and *(b)* per million tonnes per annum.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The 20 largest oil producers in the world in 1984 were as follows:

Production of crude oil and NGLs in 1984

	Thousand barrels per day	*Million tonnes per annum*
1. USSR	12,450	612·7
2. USA	10,505	500·2
3. Saudi Arabia	4,760	233·0
4. Mexico	3,015	150·4
5. United Kingdom	2,580	125·9
6. China	2,300	114·5
7. Iran	2,195	109·3
8. Venezuela	1,875	97·5
9. Canada	1,645	78·2
10. Indonesia	1,410	68·5
11. Nigeria	1,385	68·6
12. Iraq	1,225	60·3
13. Libya	1,105	53·0
14. Algeria	1,075	46·1
15. Kuwait	985	48·9
16. Egypt	860	42·5
17. Abu Dhabi	825	38·9
18. Norway	755	36·8
19. Argentina	465	24·4
20. Brazil	460	22·2

Source: BP *Statistical Review of World Energy*, June 1986.

Coal Industry

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will specify the terms of the new redundancy payments scheme for coalminers operative from March 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Redundancy terms for coalminers following the end of British Coal's current financial year are a matter for British Coal. The chairman announced on 7 October that a scheme will be introduced offering lump sum payments based on £700 for every complete year of aggregate service from age 30, £450 for such service between ages 21 to 29 and £250 between ages 16 to 20, plus concessionary coal or cash in lieu for those between the ages of 50 and 59 on redundancy. He confirmed that future redundancies would continue to be on a voluntary basis. The terms compare very favourably with other industries.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many coalmines have closed down since May 1979; and how many miners have left the industry in that time, specifying numbers of surface and underground workers.

Mr. David Hunt: Since the end of May 1979 there have been 79 pit closures. This figure excludes mergers. During the same period, (up to 4 October 1986), 81,550 underground workers and 25,247 surface workers left the industry.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the latest prospects of the National Coal Board reaching a financial break-even point by 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: British Coal has every expectation of achieving break-even by 1988-89.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many coalminers have left the coal industry since March 1985; on what basis; and how much has been paid out in redundancy pay, both in cash grants and enhanced pension payments.

Mr. Peter Walker: Between the end of March 1985 and 3 October 1986 approximately 49,000 mineworkers left the industry on voluntary redundancy under the redundant mineworkers payments scheme. Payments under the scheme in respect of this group have so far totalled some £600 million. The cost of premature and enhanced pensions to those leaving under RMPS is reimbursed by the Government, under section 4 of the Coal Industry Act 1977, by stage funding over 10 years. The first staged funding payment, in relation to those who left in 1985-86, amounted to approximately £51 million. I am pleased to say that production is currently running at the same level as in 1983-84, before the strike.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Expenditure

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, further to his reply dated 13 May, *Official Report*, columns *433-34*, he will publish in the *Official Report* information available to him on the same basis on the standard salary paid to the average teacher in secondary schools in each of the countries concerned, and the amount paid in terms of local currency.

Mrs. Rumbold: The available estimates shown in the following table are based on OECD and UNESCO data

and are for average annual emoluments. Teacher emoluments cover teacher salaries and employers overheads such as national insurance contributions and contributions to superannuation schemes. Per capita real gross domestic product figures have been used to produce an index which illustrates how teachers salaries compare when they are related to average income levels in their respective countries.

Average annual emoluments of public sector teachers at the second level†*

	Year of data	Local currency	Average emoluments in local currency at 1983 prices‡	Average emoluments at £PPP‖ at 1983 prices	Index of column (e)	Index of real GDP■ per capita, £PPP 1983 prices	Index of the ratio of average teacher emoluments at £PPP prices to real GDP per capita
			000s	000s	United Kingdom = 100	United Kingdom = 100	United Kingdom = 100
(a)	*(b)*	*(c)*	*(d)*	*(e)*	*(f)*	*(g)*	*(h)*
France	1981	Franc	180·7	15·3	135	114	118
Germany, Federal Republic of¶	1982	Deutsche Mark	82·1	18·9	167	117	143
Japan	1982	Yen	4,774·1	11·6	103	105	98
United States of America●	1981	Dollar	33·0	16·6	147	132	111
United Kingdom	1983	Pound sterling	11·3	11·3	100	100	100

* Based on DES estimates of full-time equivalent teachers. There are relatively few part-time teachers in France and Japan.
† Broadly equates to secondary and non-advanced further education.
‡ Adjusted by consumer prices indices on to a 1983 basis.
‖ Purchasing power parity.
¶ Includes private sector, which some 4 per cent. of pupils attend.
● Estimated from data covering elementary and secondary education using average salary differentials.
■ OECD.

Higher Education

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in tabular form public expenditure in support of civil science via *(a)* the University Grants Committee and *(b)* the research councils in each year from 1970 to the latest available date; and if he will express these figures as a proportion of total public spending on higher education in each case.

Mr. Walden: Public expenditure in support of civil science via the University Grants Committee cannot be separately identified, since UGC recurrent grant is only one element in universities' general income. The following table shows estimated expenditure by universities in support of R and D from general income in each year since 1977-78, the earliest for which the information is readily available, together with public expenditure on the civil science budget via the research councils in each year since 1970-71; and the proportions which these sums represent of total public spending on higher education, which is not readily available for years prior to 1974-75.

Expenditure in support of civil science

	1.	2.	3.	4.
Financial year	*R and D expenditure from universities' general income £ million cash*[1]	*1 as percentage of total public expenditure on higher education*[2]	*Public expenditure on the Research Councils £ million cash*	*3 as percentage of total public expenditure on higher education*
1970-71	—	—	108·5	—
1971-72	—	—	126·8	—
1972-73	—	—	139·4	—
1973-74	—	—	139·9	—
1974-75	—	—	157·2	18·1
1975-76	—	—	191·4	16·2
1976-77	—	—	227·4	14·5
1977-78	261·7	15·8	246·9	14·9
1978-79	298·4	16·1	281·1	15·2
1979-80	359·3	16·3	324·5	14·7
1980-81	441·3	16·2	389·7	14·3
1981-82	484·0	16·4	447·8	15·2
1982-83	535·0	16·7	477·8	14·9
1983-84	551·0	16·4	513·3	15·3
1984-85	563·5	16·4	545·1	15·9
1985-86[3]	599·1	17·2	582·6	16·7
1986-87[3]	621·6	17·4	609·2	17·1

[1] From the "Annual Review of Government Funded R & D" (HMSO). Since universities' research activities cannot be clearly distinguished, and thus the UGC's objectives in funding the expenditure cannot be clearly distinguished from its wider objectives in funding the university

system, the assignment of resources to research for the purpose of the review is based on a notional attribution of universities' departmental and central expenditure between research and teaching.

[2] Includes recurrent and capital expenditure on universities, local authority and other institutions of advanced further education and mandatory anddiscretionary student awards in the United Kingdom. Does not include expenditure on the research councils. Estimated for 1974-75 to 1977-78.

[3] Estimates for 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will describe the various performance indicators used by his Department to measure the efficiency of higher education and the value for money obtained in return for the allocation of public funds.

Mr. Walden: Between 1979-80 and 1985-86 the number of home full-time and part-time students in higher education in Great Britain increased by about 140,000, with no increase in public expenditure in real terms. Over the same period the annual output of graduates each year increased by about 22,000. That represents a real increase in efficiency and value for money.

Information on the development of a wide range of performance indicators for higher education is given in annex B to "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s" (Cmnd. 9524) published last year. Further work is being carried out jointly by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the University Grants Committee and I am sending my hon. Friend a copy of a report produced recently by a working group under the chairmanship of Professor Sir Mark Richmond.

School Leaving Age

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the cost of raising the school leaving age to 17 years; what would be the increase in numbers attending schools; and what savings could be made in *(a)* unemployment pay, *(b)* other social security benefits, *(c)* public disbursements on work and other programmes and *(d)* other.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government have no plans to raise the school leaving age to 17 years. However, the effect in 1987-88 of such a policy would be to add around 485,000 pupils to maintained school rolls. of these, some 130,000 would in other circumstances have been expected to participate in full-time further education, including YTS courses. A further 15,000 pupils might remain in non-maintained schools or transfer to the maintained sector. The net cost of introducing such a policy would depend on a complex range of factors, extending beyond those identified in the question. Its estimation would involve disproportionate cost.

Teachers' Salaries

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the average teacher's salary, full-time equivalent, in schools, non-advanced further education, advanced further education and universities in cash terms, real terms and indexed against the rise in average earnings for each year since 1975.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is set out in the table.

England and Wales

	Average salary of full-time teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools (excluding allowances)			*Average salary of full-time lecturers in further education (including allowances)*			*University lecturers mid-point of lecturer scale (pt 13)*			*Average non-manual earnings (M & F combined)*
	(i) Cash	*(ii) Constant price (Apr '86 base)*	*(iii) Cash index*	*(iv) Cash*	*(v) Constant price (Apr '86 base)*	*(vi) Cash index*	*(vii) Cash*	*(viii) Constant price (Apr '86 base)*	*(ix) Cash index*	*(x) Index*
1975	3,790	11,310	100	5,190	15,480	100	5,620	16,770	100	100
1976	4,180	10,490	110	5,640	14,150	109	5,830	14,630	104	121
1977	4,410	9,420	116	5,920	12,650	114	6,400	13,680	114	132
1978	4,900	9,700	129	6,570	13,010	127	7,400	14,660	132	148
1979	5,390	9,690	142	7,240	13,020	139	8,600	15,470	153	166
1980	7,380	10,900	195	9,950	14,700	192	10,680	15,780	190	207
1981	8,030	10,590	212	10,740	14,160	207	11,000	14,500	196	240
1982	8,620	10,390	227	11,350	13,680	219	11,550	13,920	205	263
1983	9,120	10,570	241	11,930	13,820	230	12,080	14,000	215	287
1984	9,650	10,630	255	12,550	13,830	242	12,640	13,920	225	310
1985	10,390	10,710	274	*13,460	13,870	259	13,290	13,690	236	334
1986	*11,150	11,150	294	*14,200	14,200	274	—	—	—	359

Notes:

1. Average salaries for further education are not available for NAFE and AFE separately.
2. Average salaries for all university lecturers are not available and the salaries given in columns (vii) and (viii) are the median of the salary scales for lecturers and senior lecturers.
3. Constant prices [cols. (ii), (v) and (viii)] are the cash prices of the preceding columns adjusted by the RPI.
4. All cash figures are rounded to the nearest £10.

* Estimate.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teachers' pay dispute in England and Wales; and what current plans he has to improve their pay and conditions of service.

Mrs. Rumbold: Following the signing of "Heads of Agreement" on 29 July, talks continue between the employers and unions. The Government have long made clear their willingness to allow extra spending on teachers' pay in return for a satisfactory pay structure and a clarification of the teachers' contract which would secure the provision of uninterrupted education.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what additional cash he has made available to Redbridge council for its schools and further education establishments to ensure the smooth introduction of the new General Certificate of Secondary Education; what information he has as to additional cash made available by Redbridge council for this purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government have directed substantial resources to ensure the smooth introduction of the GCSE, in addition to local education authorities' own plans. In support of expenditure for books and equipment in schools in Redbridge we have made available £57,900 through education support grants this year. A further £41,100 will be supported through ESG in 1987-88. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, in conjunction with the Manpower Services Commission, has made a grant of £19,600 available to Redbridge for the provision of scientific and technological equipment in schools.

For the introductory GCSE in-service training programme, expenditure up to £32,500 has been supported in Redbridge. Under the new arrangements for in-service training in 1987-88, expenditure of £68,000 has been set aside to support the continuing training of teachers of the GCSE in schools and further education in Redbridge. The Department has no information as to the resources which Redbridge is making available for the GCSE.

School Meals

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will bring up to date the information on the gross and net cost of providing school meals given in his answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby of 15 March 1982, *Official Report*, columns 39-40; and if he will give comparable figures for the provision of school transport.

Mr. Dunn: The available information is as follows:

ENGLAND

£ million (1986-87 prices)[1]

	1981-82 Outturn	*1982-83 Outturn*	*1983-84 Outturn*	*1984-85 Outturn*	*1985-86 Provisional Outturn*[2]	*1986-87 Estimated Outturn*[2]
School Meals and Milk						
Gross Expenditure	794	757	757	714	N/A	N/A
Less: Income	274	252	[illegible]	[illegible]	N/A	N/A
Less: EC Subsidy amounting to	12	12	15	14	N/A	N/A
Net Expenditure	508	493	489	475	452	455
Home to School Transport						
Gross Expenditure	205	203	205	199	N/A	N/A
Income	1	2	2	2	N/A	N/A
Net Expenditure	204	201	203	197	N/A	N/A

Notes: [1] The cash figures for the earlier years have been repriced to 1986-87 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.
[2] The 1985-86 provisional outturn and 1986-87 estimated outturn expenditure on school meals has been taken from local authorities' returns of expenditure and rates.

Students (Financial Support)

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list for every year since 1978-79 the number of students who were in receipt of mandatory awards and who were also in receipt of sponsorships, industrial or national engineering scholarships;

(2) if he will list for every year since 1978-79 the number of students who were in receipt of sponsorships, industrial scholarships or national engineering scholarships and who were thereby classified as assisted students within the meaning of the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations;

(3) if he will list for very year since 1978-79 the number of students on designated courses within the meaning of the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations who are or were in receipt of sponsorships, industrial scholarships or national engineering scholarships.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Information about the number of students in receipt of sponsorships or industrial scholarships is not available. The number of national engineering scholarships made in each year since 1978-79 is as follows:

	Number
1978-79	62
1979-80	159
1980-81	263
1981-82	298
1982-83	100
1983-84	103
1984-85	212
1985-86	155

All holders of national engineering scholarships follow designated courses. My Department does not collect information about the number of scholarship holders who are also in receipt of an award or who are assisted students.

Elderly People

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the letter dated 23 July from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) to the hon. Member for Monklands, West regarding special courses for doctors specialising in the care and treatment of elderly people.

Mr. Walden: The text of my letter is as follows:

"I promised to write in reply to your Parliamentary Question of 10 July about special courses for doctors specialising in the care and treatment of elderly people.

Generally speaking, training for doctors wishing to specialise in this area is not provided in the form of self-contained courses at university medical schools. More usually in the medical schools the study of aspects of geriatric medicine forms part of a doctor's overall training (and re-training) programmes. Little specialist training is given formally at the undergraduate level, where the emphasis is more on imparting a basic knowledge of clinical skills.

As far as general practitioner training is concerned, I understand that doctors may select a post in geriatric medicine or geriatric medicine combined with general medicine, and such a training post is recognised for prescribed experience under the Vocational Training Regulations of 1979. Such training posts are provided in all regions. Trainee general practitioners will also receive instruction in the care of the elderly at day release courses during the trainee year; also from their general practitioner trainers in the surgery and on home visits. Short, ad hoc courses may well form part of this wider programme, but details of their incidence or of numbers attending would be very difficult to obtain.

At the postgraduate level, higher professional training is primarily the concern of the Royal Colleges and Faculties and the Joint Higher Training Committees, but there are also facilities for pursuing higher academic (university) qualifications. For the training programme in Geriatric Medicine, the Joint Committee on Higher Medical Training recommends 3 years of general professional training and a further 4 years of higher specialist training which must include responsibility for the care of patients in acute, rehabilitation and continuing care units, day hospital and out-patient clinic, and experience of assessment of patients at home. Specific training in the administrative aspects of geriatric medicine is also required and psychogeriatric experience is especially desirable. The 4 year period of higher specialist training may be aimed at one of two possible career posts: general physician with special responsibility for the elderly or physician in geriatric medicine. Again information is not readily available on particular courses forming part of this process at university medical schools.

It should be noted that while this describes formal training in care and treatment of the elderly in the narrowest sense, many hospital doctors (cardiologists, neurologists, rheumatologists, endocrinologists and other specialists) as well as general practitioners provide services for the elderly."

Voluntary Aided Schools

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state the amount of capital grant to voluntary aided schools for *(a)* Hampshire and *(b)* the United Kingdom during each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is responsible only for the payment of grant to voluntary aided and special agreement schools in England. Information on payments is available in the form requested only from 1980-81, and is as follows:

Capital Grant to Voluntary Aided and Special Agreement Schools

Year	*England £ million*	*Hampshire £ million*
1980-81	28·5	0·369
1981-82	28·7	0·625
1982-83	22·2	0·455
1983-84	19·0	0·205
1984-85	24·7	0·051
1985-86	31·0	0·138

Corporal Punishment

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what he estimates to be the cost of abolition of corporal punishment; for what purposes money will be required; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: For some schools changes in their disciplinary policies may give rise to certain costs, but these cannot be estimated. Many schools have already ceased to use corporal punishment and many others only use it rarely.

Further Education Unit

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what changes he proposes in the nature and work of the Further Education Unit; and what consultations he has had concerning the unit with local education authorities.

Mr. Walden: On 4 September my Department issued, to the local authority associations and to other interested parties, a consultative document on the future of the Further Education Unit. This rehearsed a number of options for the unit's future, in the changed circumstances resulting from the increasing involvement of other bodies, directly and indirectly, in further education curriculum development. Particular attention was drawn to the option of a merger with the Further Education Staff College.

Officials of my Department had some contact with officers of the local authority associations in the process of drafting the consultation document. That, however, in no way pre-empts the consultative process, the outcome of which remains open. My right hon. Friend will take a decision on the unit's future as soon as possible after the end of the consultative process on 30 November.

School Closures

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state the definition of school place he has adopted in relation to his proposals for school closures; and how many square feet are included in this definition for primary and secondary school pupils, respectively.

Mr. Dunn: The Government's current targets for the removal of surplus primary and secondary school places are set out in the January 1986 public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702). Surplus school places are measured by comparing the capacity of school building stock, enhanced by expected basic need additions, with projected pupil numbers in each of the primary and secondary sectors.

Sex Education

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received *(a)* in favour and *(b)* against parents being given the right to opt their children out of any sex education to which they object; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received some 350 representations in support of enabling parents to withdraw their children from sex education lessons to which they object, and six letters opposing this. In response to this concern, the Government have tabled amendments to the Education Bill which would give control over the content and organisation of sex education to the new-style governing bodies provided for under the Bill, which would have the discretion to permit the withdrawal of pupils from sex education lessons at parental request.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received concerning the provision of sex education in school under clause 26 of the Education Bill; if he will break them down into those for and those against; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received about 100 representations expressing support for clause 26 of the Education Bill and for the Government's commitment to appropriate responsible sex education, set within a sound moral context and supportive of family life. Only five letters have been received specifically opposing clause 26.

Religious Education

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children are already receiving religious education; how these figures compare with each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I regret that the information requested is not available. My right hon. Friend looks to all county and voluntary schools, and the local education authorities by which they are maintained, to meet the requirements of the 1944 Act. When he receives complaints that the statutory requirement to give religious instruction is not being met in a particular school, he undertakes a full and careful investigation; but very few such complaints are received each year.

School Transport

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to require local authorities to provide transport for children attending a school outside the official catchment area in which their parents reside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: It would be a retrograde step to provide for the reintroduction of strict catchment areas, which were abolished under the Education Act 1980. In any event, I see no case for increasing local education authorities' school transport obligations in the way proposed.

City Technical Colleges

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what minimum qualifications he will require of teachers of technical subjects in his proposed city technical colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: Staff at city technology colleges will be employed by their governing bodies. My right hon. Friend will generally require governing bodies to employ as teachers those who have "qualified teacher" status. Governing bodies will also be expected to match the qualifications and experience of teachers to the subjects taught.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how he proposes to give statutory effect to his specific proposals for new direct grant city technical colleges; and under what class of estimate he intends to provide for the relevant public expenditure.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend proposes to pay grant in respect of city technology colleges by the exercise of his powers under section 100 of the Education Act 1944. The expenditure will be met from Supply Estimates in class XII.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what status he proposes for the trustees or governing bodies of the planned city technical colleges; who will appoint the persons concerned; and on what criteria he expects them to recruit pupils.

Mrs. Rumbold: City technology colleges will be owned (or leased) by their promoters. I envisage that they will establish trusts for the purpose of operating CTCs, and appoint the trustees. The promoters will have the controlling interest in CTC governing bodies but details concerning the appointment of governors will be for discussion with my right hon. Friend. CTCs will be required to aim at admitting pupils spanning the full range of ability represented in the catchment area. Pupils will be selected by the head and governing body on the basis of their general aptitude, for example as reflected in their progress and achievement at primary school; on their readiness to take advantage of the type of education offered in CTCs; and on their parents' commitment to full-time education or training up to the age of 18, to the distinctive characteristics of the CTC curriculum, and to the ethos of the CTC.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how the governors or trustees of the proposed city technical colleges will be provided with resources to purchase, rent or build, and equip suitable premises and in what age groups he expects them to recruit when first opened.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has made it clear that he expects the promoters of city technology colleges to provide all or a substantial part of the resources needed to purchase, rent, or build, and equip suitable premises. Some assistance may, however, be available to meet repayments on loans raised for this purpose. City technology colleges will normally cater for 11 to 18-year-olds. We hope that they will admit pupils from as broad an age-range as possible when they first open.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consultations he has had with

industrial or other private interests concerning the funding of his proposed city technical colleges; and what minimum proportion of their capital cost and revenue expenditure respectively he expects them to provide.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has had a number of preliminary discussions with prospective promoters. They will be expected to meet all or a substantial part of the capital costs of city technology colleges. The Secretary of State will pay the CTC's running costs in accordance with the number of pupils, at a level of assistance per pupil comparable with what is provided by LEAs for maintained schools serving similar catchment areas.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consultations he has had with current providers of secondary technical education in the cities or areas where he plans to establish his city technical colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has had no formal consultations with current providers of secondary technical education in the localities designated as possible locations for city technology colleges. He has, however, written personally to the chairmen of the education committees of the local authority associations. Details of the proposals have been made available widely to the education service, including to all chief education officers. My right hon. Friend and I would be glad to discuss our proposals with local education authorities and, indeed, anyone who shares our concerns about education in the cities.

Schools (Amalgamation)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state the statistical or mathematical basis for his estimates of the potential savings to be made by amalgamation of schools possessing a notional surplus of school places.

Mr. Dunn: It is estimated that some £170 a year can be saved for every secondary place taken out of use in permanent accommodation and £100 for every primary place. These figures are arrived at by dividing LEAs' annual buildings-related non-teaching costs by the numbers of places for which the school building stock currently provides.

Illiteracy

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of illiterate people in the United Kingdom; and what steps he is taking to eliminate illiteracy.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986, c. *380*]: There is an omission from the text of the first paragraph of my earlier reply. The full text of the reply should read as follows:

"The National Child Development Study survey of 1981 found that 10 per cent. of the 23-year-olds asked said they had had reading problems since leaving school and that 3 per cent. said these problems had made things difficult for them in every day life.

The Government's policy for raising standards of literacy in schools is set out in the White Paper 'Better Schools', published last year. The Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office jointly fund the adult literacy and basic skills unit to develop educational provision to overcome illiteracy amongst adults. Grant has been raised from £360,000 in 1979-80 to £2,170,000 in 1986-87; a sixfold increase.

Policies to combat literacy problems in Scotland and for Northern Ireland are the responsibility of my Right Hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland."

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

"British Overseas Aid"

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the cost of the annual review, "British Overseas Aid", in 1985; and if he will consider production of a less expensive publication.

Mr. Chris Patten: It cost £33,400 to produce the 1985 review. Despite rising costs generally and an increase in the number of pages, we kept production costs this year below the 1983 level.

Whilst keeping such costs carefully under control, we shall continue to provide through the annual review a comprehensive account of how our aid programme is spent. Publication of the review thus responds to a recommendation from the Foreign Affairs Select Committee in 1982 that the ODA should publish an annual report for wide circulation.

FAO Tropical Forest Action Plan

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the statement in the *Official Report*, column *18*, 19 May, what action he has taken as a result of accepting the FAO tropical forest action plan; what response he has had from the president of the World Bank to his representations stressing Her Majesty's Government's belief in the importance of giving proper regard to the environmental factors in respect of other aid programmes; and what discussions he has had with fellow donors on means of donor co-ordination in protecting the rain forest.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have given practical effect to the tropical forestry action plan by joining the World Bank and other bilateral donors for forestry sector reviews in Ghana and Kenya. Similarly, we have supported initiatives of the European Community and the International Union of Forest Research Organisations to establish priority areas for research projects and networks.

The president of the World Bank has indicated that he shares fully the views of the Government on the relation between environmental and development issues. This was reflected in his speech to the annual meeting of the World Bank in September.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for the United Kingdom's overseas development and aid policy of decisions taken at the recent Washington conference of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Mr. Chris Patten: British aid policy is fully consistent with the conclusions reached at the recent IMF/IBRD annual meeting.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will have available the results of the recent fishery survey at St. Helena; and if he will place a copy *(a)* in the Library and *(b)* in the library on St. Helena.

Mr. Chris Patten: The full results are not expected until 1988. They may include commercially valuable information, and we shall have to consider with the St. Helena Government the extent to which it can be made publicly available.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide technical books on fisheries related topics for the library on St. Helena.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall be willing to consider any St. Helena Government request for such books under the ODA's books presentation scheme.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide a dinghy for assisting the ferry service between St. Helena and Ascension Island; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: No.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there is any hall or public building on St. Helena that can be used for public meetings attended by more than 400 people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Paramount cinema in Jamestown is capable of seating over 400 people, but requires considerable structural and other renovation. The new Prince Andrew school, which is currently under construction and should be completed by late 1988, will include a new school and community hall capable of accommodating over 500 people.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to acquire the Commodore cinema in St. Helena; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: There is no Commodore cinema in St. Helena. The only cinema in St. Helena is the Paramount cinema in Jamestown, which was offered for sale to the St. Helena Government earlier this year. I understand that they decided not to purchase it because of the high selling price and cost of necessary renovation.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for the replacement of the RMS St. Helena; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government announced on 21 May, at column 414, their intention to build a new ship for the St. Helena service in a United Kingdom shipyard. The precise details of the type of ship, and of when the present vessel will be replaced, are now being worked out.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the reasons for cutting from five to four days the make-work scheme for workers who returned to St. Helena after working on Ascension Island.

Mr. Chris Patten: The five-day guaranteed employment scheme was introduced by the St. Helena Government in September 1985 as a temporary measure. It took the place of an earlier three-day guaranteed employment scheme. After careful consideration, the St. Helena Government decided earlier this year to provide for a four-day scheme.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in setting up a loans facility on St. Helena; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: We are considering the possibility of establishing a central loans board with the St. Helena authorities, and we expect to receive a formal aid request shortly.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what measures he has taken to safeguard commidendrum spurium on St. Helena;

(2) what measures he has taken to safeguard nesiota elliptica growing on St. Helena.

Mr. Chris Patten: The St. Helena Government, with assistance from the Overseas Development Administration, the botanical gardens at Kew, the World Wildlife Fund and Cambridge university, have taken both legal and practical measures to protect St. Helena's endemic flora. Specimens of these species are being propagated and last year a five-year development aid project began which covers conservation of the nesiota elliptica and commidendrum spurium.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present price of a kilowatt hour of electricity for domestic consumers on St. Helena.

Mr. Chris Patten: The domestic electricity tariff on St Helena is 10p per unit for the the first 35 units and 12p per unit thereafter.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any progress has been made in the provision of an air strip on St. Helena; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Various proposals have been examined, but they would not be cost-effective. We are now concentrating on maintaining suitable sea links to and from the island.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will request the Canadian Government to consider granting aid to St. Helena for the provision of an airstrip on the island; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: No.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Comonwealth Affairs what is the gross pay of St. Helenians employed on make-work schemes; how many hours are worked on average; and how this compares with 1982.

Mr. Chris Patten: Gross pay for a four-day week of 30 hours under the guaranteed minimum work scheme is £26·10. In addition, married men are entitled to benefits which bring their total entitlements to £32·60. In 1982, the guaranteed minimum work scheme was limited to three days and applied mainly to single men. Their basic gross wage was £14·76 for a 22½ hour week.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given

to the sea defences on St. Helena; whether he has any plans to improve the landing facilities and warehousing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: At the request of the St. Helena Government, the European Development Fund is considering allocating funds for improvements to St. Helena's sea wall defences and landing facilities. In co-operation with the EDF, we have financed a feasibility study by a British firm (G. Maunsell and Partners). We received its report last month. It is now under consideration by the St. Helena Government and the EDF. So far, the St. Helena Government have not requested any improvement of warehousing facilities.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for increasing the rate of building dwellings in St. Helena.

Mr. Chris Patten: We shall consider our future policy and possible further assistance in the light of a housing policy paper currently being prepared by the St. Helena Government.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many dwellings were completed on St. Helena for each of the last seven years for which figures are available.

Mr. Chris Patten: The figures are not readily available. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for the production of fresh milk on St. Helena.

Mr. Chris Patten: None.

TRANSPORT

British Airways (Sale)

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will announce details of the offer for sale of British Airways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: As I announced on 11 September the Government have decided to sell their shareholding in British Airways in the early weeks of 1987. The offer will be payable in two instalments. I am delighted that it will now prove possible to free the company from the constraints of Government control and to enable the employees, customers and members of the public to take a real stake in its future.

The flotation will provide a further major opportunity to strengthen the basis of individual share ownership in this country. I therefore intend to build on the success of previous privatisations by publicising details of the offer for sale and of how to apply for shares widely in the press and on television. A share opportunity office has been established to register inquiries and despatch information about the company and the offer for sale. British Airways' senior management will be touring the country extensively to promote the issue, and to assist in this process I have selected regional co-ordinators for the whole of the United Kingdom. To foster the commitment of the new generation of share-holders, a small portion of the equity will be retained to enable a loyalty bonus to be paid to those initial purchasers who retain their holdings continuously for three years. One free share will be offered for ten, up to a maximum value of £5,000 of shares initially purchased.

I recognise and want to pay tribute to the management and staff of British Airways whose efforts have made it possible to look forward to a successful flotation. It is right that they should have a special opportunity to take a stake in the company's future. I have accordingly decided that they should have the opportunity to acquire free, matching and discounted shares on broadly the same terms as British Gas employees.

Finally, British Airways is an international business and it will benefit both its commercial interests, and the Government's as vendor in maximising demand if a limited portion of the equity is allocated to overseas markets. The Government already have an adviser on the United States market. I have decided in addition to appoint advisers on the European, Japanese and Canadian markets. Final decisions on which, if any, of these markets to use and the size of any overseas allocation will not be taken until close to the start of the offer period. I would not, however, envisage that the allocation to overseas markets will exceed 20 per cent.

I am placing details of my announcement on 11 September, the regional co-ordinators selected, the terms of the preferential share offer to employees, and the advisers to overseas markets in the Library.

British Rail (Performance Objectives)

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to give British Rail new performance objectives when the present grant target expires at the end of 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I have written today to the Chairman of British Rail, Sir Robert Reid, setting out the objectives I want the Board to pursue over the next three years. The text of my letter is as follows:

"My predecessor wrote to you in October 1983, setting out objectives on your appointment as Chairman of the British Railways Board. The Government welcomes the substantial progress that has been made in meeting those objectives. We have been glad to support BR by approving important investments to renew and enhance the rail system. Over the last three years we have approved 18 major schemes worth a total of £930 million in today's prices. This expenditure amounts to a significant programme of modernisation. The major programmes under way increase the opportunities of the railway and—even more important—of the regions it serves. The electrification of the East Coast Mainline to the North East and to Edinburgh is a striking example. The building of the Channel Tunnel will be another great opportunity.

You and your Board need to offer your customers an efficient railway providing good value for money. The Government will continue to support your efforts by approving worthwhile investment and by grant for socially necessary services; we are not asking for a programme of major route closures. This letter sets out the specific objectives the Government wishes you to pursue over the next three years (1987/8-1989/90). It supplements the statutory and financial duties of the Board.

Network South East

I particularly welcome the new efforts to ensure that the London commuter services are reliable, attractive and punctual. I attach particular importance to close co-operation between British Rail and London Regional Transport in the provision and marketing of rail services for the capital. You are already examining with LRT how far it will be sensible to establish common measures of the quality of these services.

I shall want to agree with you any revision you make in the standards set out in your last Corporate Plan. I value your assurance that you would consult me if unforseen circumstances should at any time make it necessary to consider measures that would materially undermine quality. I would like you to report annually on your progress.

I want you to keep the pattern of London commuter services under review in order to develop proposals both to improve the service to the customer and to reduce your operating costs through improved efficiency. It is the Board's responsibility to determine fares—but I want to see a lower proportion of the costs met by the taxpayer; and you should increasingly seek to reflect in your fares structure the costs of provision, and improvements in quality of service. In the light of these considerations, I want you to make a significant reduction in the grant requirement for Network South East by 1989/90.

Provincial Services

I shall want to agree with you suitable standards for the quality of services in this sector. Major investments in the rolling stock such as we have approved, and new measures to reduce the cost of lesser used lines, together offer a much improved future for many of the provincial services. I want you to continue to tailor the pattern of services more closely to demand. While these changes should enable you to make modest, but worthwhile, reductions in the Sector's need for support, grant will still be very substantial. It should not of course be used to compete unfairly with newly liberalised local bus services and I understand that you would not envisage setting rail fares generally below the equivalent bus fares.

The new powers which Parliament has provided for you to subsidise guaranteed substitute bus services connecting into the rail network give the opportunity to review those cases where attractive bus services could meet the needs of travellers as conveniently and often at markedly less cost than the present rail services. You will wish to conduct such reviews before proposing re-investment in rolling stock for lines of this character.

The Grant Target

I want you to aim by 1989-90 to reduce to £555 million (in 1986-87 prices) the PSO grant requirement from Central Government for the Provincial Sector and Network South East combined calculated on the present basis.

Non-supported Services

It has long been the policy of successive governments that long distance rail services should operate in fair competition with coach and air services. It is already an established aim that after next year the Inter City services should operate without a grant. I will re-define the Public Service Obligation accordingly later this year, and make provision for a final payment of grant in 1987-8.

This enables us to make a major change in the regime governing the railway, by setting a comprehensive medium term financial target for the major part of your operations. This will cover the Inter City passenger services, Freight, Freightliners and Parcels, together with Travellers Fare.

These sectors will be expected to continue to plan on the basis of a required rate of return of 5 per cent. on their programme of new investment. Your overall target is to improve their performance so as to earn a return of 2·7 per cent. as a current cost operating profit on net assets before interest by 1989-90 on all these businesses taken together. I want you to set demanding targets for each of the businesses and to report each year on their achievement.

Contribution of the Private Sector

I share the Board's desire to see rail businesses that can flourish and prosper far into the future. Their success will be greater if they can harness the widest possible range of resources available in the economy. This points to the need for vigorous measures to broaden the participation of the private sector in the provision of services to the railway to enable you to offer a more cost-effective and competitive service to your customers. We welcome the progress you have made in competitive procurement of railway equipment and rolling stock and in associating the supply industry with your research programme. Further steps to secure that others from outside the nationalised industry can play their part in the upkeep of the railway and its equipment, the supply of its needs, the development of its property, and the exploitation of the commercial potential of stations will all be welcome as ways of improving Railway finances. I would like the Board to establish specific programmes to this end and to report progress each year.

Public Accountability

These clear objectives give you the opportunity to report more fully and clearly on both your financial performance and your progress in achieving your published quality of service standards. I would like you to set this out in your Report and Accounts each year. This should include:

(*a*) the quality of service achieved against the agreed standards;

(*b*) progress towards the grant target, including your own breakdown of the target between NSE and Provincial and the performance of each sector against those targets;

(*c*) the current cost operating profit before interest of each of the non-supported businesses; and of the non-supported businesses as a group compared with the 2·7 per cent. target;

(*d*) progress on your various initiatives to increase the contribution of the private sector."

Meteorological Services

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has held with the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority about the report of the Committee of Public Accounts on financial arrangements for the provision of meteorological services.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority has written to me expressing his concern about the conclusions as they affect civil aviation.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the arrangements for financing meteorological services in other countries and about the extent to which users of such services are required to make a contribution towards the running costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

The arrangements for financing meteorological services in other countries vary very widely. The provision of such services to aviation is virtually the only field in which practices for recovering costs have some international similarity, notably in Europe, where the member states raise air navigation charges (including an element for meteorological information) against EUROCONTROL for flights through controlled airspace. The EUROCONTROL organisation then recovers the charges from the aircraft operators concerned. In the USA, however, the recovery system for meteorological services is quite different, the services being paid for out of a government trust fund financed by taxes on airline tickets, aviation fuel and aircraft tyres.

Rail Investments (London)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria of social cost benefit he currently applies to proposals for further conventional tube or rapid transit rail investments in Greater London.

Mr. David Mitchell: New Underground or rapid transit rail investments in London are normally expected to show a real financial rate of return of at least 7 per cent. But we recognise that some proposed investments which do not satisfy this criterion may have significant non-financial

costs or benefits, for example, to road users. Where such costs and benefits need to be taken into account, the investment would normally have to show at least a 7 per cent. return on a cost-benefit basis.

British Rail (Fares)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state those directions or requirements he has made of British Railways Board since 1979 and 1983, respectively, which they need to take into account when making fare increases.

Mr. David Mitchell: All formal directions are set out in the board's annual report and accounts, copies of which are in the Library. External financing limits are published in the annual Public Expenditure White Paper.

Interim financial targets were set for inter-city and freight operations in March 1980 and published in that year's annual report. On 24 October 1983 the Chairman was set comprehensive objectives, printed in the *Official Report* at column *47*. On 24 July 1984, at column *555*, the Chairmen of BR and LRT were set joint objectives designed to promote closer co-operation in improving transport services for London. On 30 July 1984 at column 75 a specific commercial target was set for the inter-city sector. I am publishing today the latest objectives, which supercede previous ones.

Within the general constraints set by Government, it is for the board to determine the level of fares.

British Rail (London Links)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the proposals of the British Railways Board to link major terminals by short main-line size tube tunnels directly serving the west end of London.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Railways Board has not submitted such proposals to my right hon. Friend.

Heathrow Airport (Noise)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what occasions so far in 1986 aircraft taking off from Heathrow airport have infringed the night noise limits; and which airlines were involved in each case.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Heathrow Airport Ltd.'s records show that up to the end of August 1986, there were 59 infringements of the night noise limit this year, out of a total of 1,837 night departures made by aeroplanes leaving Heathrow during the night period from 2300 to 0700 hours.

The operators involved were as follows:—

	Number of night infringements	*Number of night departures*
Air Portugal—TAP	2	6
British Airways	32	399
Cyprus Airways	1	8
Gulf Air	1	2
Icelandair	4	11
Iran Air	1	2
Iraqi Airways	1	3
Kenya Airways	2	6
Lufthansa	2	149
Nigeria Airways	3	82
Pan American	1	2
Singapore Airlines	4	9
Varig-Brazilian	1	7
Zambia Airways	1	1
Private	3	299
Departures by other airlines with no infringements	—	851
TOTAL	59	1,837

Pedestrian Crossings

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set uniform standards for the intensity and form of audible safe-to-cross signals designed to assist blind persons who use pedestrian crossings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All pelican crossing equipment have a facility for adjusting the audible signal level. This is set to suit site conditions. Because of the wide variations in site conditions, and ambient noise levels, I do not consider it appropriate to set a uniform standard. We are looking at ways of making the adjustment automatic.

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of workers *(a)* killed and *(b)* seriously injured in each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985 in accidents occasioned by motorists disregarding stated maximum speed limits on motorways undergoing repair or maintenance.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I regret that the information requested is not available. Maintenance site workers are not identified and speed limit violations are not recorded in the reports of accidents sent to this department.

Merchant Shipping

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many cargoes were carried on behalf of Government Departments in the last 12 months, and how many were carried on *(a)* foreign-owned vessels and *(b)* British-owned vessels.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Cargoes are carried for Government Departments under a number of arrangements. It is estimated that, in the year to the end of September, about 30 per cent. by weight of the Government cargoes placed by the Government Freight Agent under his agreement with my Department were carried on foreign-registered vessels. Much of these cargoes were placed with British lines and consigned to foreign vessels under conference, pooling, charter or other arrangements.

Oil Spills (Monitoring)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will study schemes for remote monitoring systems for oil spills; and if he will make a statement on the representations from industry on the issue.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department of Transport's marine pollution control unit has airborne remote sensing equipment for the control and direction of counter-pollution operations during a major oil spill incident at

sea. This equipment, which includes sideways looking radar, infra-red and ultra-violet scans, is also being evaluated as a possible detector of ships illegally discharging oil at sea.

I am not aware of any representations from industry in respect of such systems but if the hon. Member will let me have particulars I shall be pleased to consider futher.

Chapelcross Nuclear Power Station

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland by what means radioactive products are transported to and from Chapelcross nuclear power station; what directives or authorisations have been issued by his Department on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 June 1986, c. *314*]: I have been asked to reply.

Spent fuel flasks are transported by road between Chapelcross and British Nuclear Fuel's reprocessing plant at Sellafield. Low level radioactive waste is also moved by road to the disposal site at Drigg.

The containers in which radioactive materials are transported are certified by my Department as meeting the stringent standards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. These require safeguards to be incorporated into the design of the containers, so that even a severe accident would not give rise to any significant risk of leakage.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authorities (Tenders)

Mr. Dover asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to prevent local authorities from inserting irrelevant provisions in tender invitations or contracts.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to the reply*, 20 March 1986, c. *253*]: Councils are increasingly imposing non-commercial conditions in contracts and we have concluded that the law now needs to be strengthened to stop this sort of abuse. We shall, therefore, bring forward legislation as soon as we can.

The legislation will also stop authorities imposing conditions which are designed to make it harder for contractors to compete with direct labour organisations. It would not stop reasonable actions, under legislation such as the Race Relations Act. A special provision will be made to allow the promotion of employment prospects of local labour in the inner cities.

EMPLOYMENT

School Leavers

Mr. Corbyn asked the Paymaster General how many school leavers in Islington, North for the end of the academic year 1985-86 *(a)* have jobs, *(b)* are on training schemes and *(c)* are in full-time further education; and what are the equivalent figures for 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Trippier: Available information from the Inner London education authority careers service relating to school leavers aged 16-19 for the academic years 1983-86 is set out in the table:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*[1]
Number eligible to leave school	2,028	1,971	1,679	1,225
Number remaining in full-time education[2]	934	765	731	543
Number going into jobs	297	321	328	205
Number going into employment and training measures[3]	114	64	53	64

[1] The 1986 figures do not include the Highbury Fields School 6th form.

[2] Includes those remaining at school and those going into Further and Higher Education.

[3] 1983 figures include placings into the youth opportunities programme. Thereafter the majority of placings were into YTS with a small number into community industry.

Notes:

The information was collected at different dates in each year so it is not directly comparable.

Young people placed into YTS may enter either as trainees or employees.

Headstart Scheme

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on his new enterprise training scheme Headstart, detailing the number of people likely to benefit, and the job opportunities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I announced the inner cities "Headstart" scheme on 28 July. The scheme will build on the work of the Industrial Society in training young people in enterprise and business skills training and providing on-going support for potential young entrepreneurs in six inner city areas. Courses are planned to start shortly and around 3,000 young people will be given initial advice and information on self-employment. It is too early to say how many will find employment as a result, but the record to date of Industrial Society enterprise training has been good.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General how much money is being invested in the Headstart scheme; and how much is expected to be received from project sponsors.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department and the Manpower Services Commission are contributing £319,470 in total in 1986-87 to the headstart inner cities scheme. I understand the Industrial Society estimates the total cost at around £750,000 with the balance met by private sector project sponsors.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General how many young people are likely to benefit from the Headstart scheme within the city of Leicester; and if he will detail the response received and the ultimate likely benefits.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The inner cities headstart scheme aims to help around 3,000 young people with initial information and advice on self-employment. I would expect around 500 of these to be from Leicester. The scheme has been welcomed locally. While it is too early to say what the ultimate likely benefits would be, I would expect them to reflect the Industrial Society's successful record in enterprise training.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Sugar Corporation

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the earliest practical date when he expects to receive the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the British Sugar Corporation; and if he will make a statement prior to taking any decision.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend has asked the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to report on the proposed acquisitions of S & W Berisford by Tate and Lyle and Ferruzzi by 19 November. However, the Commission is free to report earlier if it so wishes; it may also request one extension of up to three months.

My right hon. Friend has discretion to take action following a merger report only if the Commission finds that the proposed merger might be expected to operate against the public interest. In this event my right hon. Friend would aim to minimise uncertainty in the market by announcing what action was to be taken at the same time as the report was published and laid before this House.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current situation regarding the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement, the August meeting in Geneva and the actual quota levels envisaged.

Mr. Alan Clark: Negotiations to renew the multi-fibre arrangement were concluded on 1 August. The new protocol provides for an extension of the arrangement for five years. Talks on the renewal of the Community's bilateral agreements are also well advanced: provisional agreement has been reached on 24 bilateral agreements and talks are in progress on the remaining agreements. The terms of the agreements will be published when all the negotiations are completed; they are within the terms of the mandate agreed by Community Ministers last March.

The new protocol and the agreements negotiated so far meet the United Kingdom objectives outlined to the House in May 1985 and in February 1986. The new agreements will provide continued effective protection for the sensitive sectors of our industry, while providing some elements of liberalisation. In the new protocol special treatment is provided for the least developed countries and this has been reflected in the bilateral agreements negotiated by the Community. The protocol states that all participants should contribute towards liberalisation of trade, and the Community has taken positive account in the bilateral negotiations of the degree of openness of the supplier country's own markets. A further new element in the protocol, which was included in the light of problems experienced particularly by the United States, is that restrictions may be introduced on products of certain new fibres (eg ramie, silk blends, linen) where these are directly competitive with MFA products, and are causing or threatening market disruption. The protocol provides that consideration should be given to the removal of consistently under utilised quotas, and the Community has done this. The Community has also provided a degree of liberalisation in respect of children's clothes in the bilateral agreements. I have kept in close and detailed touch with the industry and other interested parties.

Cement (Greece)

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 14 July, *Official Report*, columns *341-42*, what recent steps he has taken to prevent the dumping of Greek concrete.

Mr. Alan Clark: I made formal representations to the European Commission, and also to the Greek Government in September about the potential threat of subsidised imports of Greek cement on the United Kingdom cement and coal industries. These representations are being followed up vigorously.

Chile

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received concerning the sale of radio equipment to Chile for policing purposes; what his response was; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what principles govern the United Kingdom's trade with Chile; if any changes are envisaged following the reimportation of a state of siege by the Pinochet Government on 7 September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The policy of Her Majesty's Government is that civil trade with Chile, as with other countries, should be determined by commercial considerations and not by the character of the Governments of those countries. There are no plans to change this policy.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the percentage increase in imports and exports, respectively, each month since May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information follows:

United Kingdom visible trade
BOP basis—seasonally adjusted
Percentage change: month on previous month

	at current prices		*at 1980 prices*	
	Exports	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Imports*
1979				
May	−1·1	+1·2	−1·4	+1·3
June	−2·5	−5·2	−4·6	−6·1
July	+1·1	+1·4	+1·1	+1·9
August	−2·3	+1·6	−3·5	+2·2
September	+0·0	+1·7	+0·2	−0·8
October	+2·7	+5·8	−1·0	+3·2
November	+5·9	−0·8	+5·7	−2·6
December	−0·0	−1·9	−1·6	−2·2
1980				
January	+9·0	+4·7	+6·5	+4·2
February	−1·8	+3·4	−3·6	+1·6
March	−5·3	−5·2	−7·0	−6·3
April	+3·1	+6·4	+1·5	+5·4
May	+1·6	−7·7	+0·5	−8·4
June	−0·2	+0·6	−1·0	+0·7
July	+1·0	−7·3	+0·3	−6·9

	at current prices		at 1980 prices	
	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports
August	−5·2	+1·2	−5·8	+1·4
September	+0·8	−6·6	+1·4	−6·8
October	+1·2	−0·5	+1·4	−1·1
November	+0·3	+0·5	+0·9	+1·2
December	+0·4	+5·4	−0·3	+4·2
1981				
January	+3·8	−10·7	+2·6	−9·2
February	−5·6	+6·0	−5·7	+5·5
March	+1·2	−3·1	−0·2	−5·0
April	+4·9	+0·9	+4·8	+0·6
May	−0·3	+9·5	−1·8	+8·4
June	+0·4	+5·0	+0·1	+2·9
July	+4·5	+7·0	+3·2	+5·2
August	+5·6	+12·4	+3·1	+11·6
September	−1·8	−7·5	−2·6	−10·5
October	+3·6	−1·8	+3·7	−3·1
November	−1·7	+9·2	−3·0	+8·6
December	−0·0	−5·7	−0·5	−5·5
1982				
January	−1·9	−2·5	−1·7	−2·0
February	+1·7	−1·2	+1·1	−0·8
March	+1·1	+7·1	+3·6	+8·7
April	+3·3	−0·2	+1·8	−1·3
May	−1·7	+2·5	−1·8	+2·2
June	−2·0	−2·9	−2·4	−3·8
July	+1·0	−3·4	−1·0	−2·9
August	−2·2	−0·6	−3·6	−1·6
September	+6·4	+4·2	+7·5	+4·5
October	−1·3	−1·9	−2·3	−2·8
November	+3·6	−0·8	+3·9	−0·2
December	+0·0	+3·6	−2·1	+2·4
1983				
January	−2·3	+7·8	−4·4	+4·6
February	+1·5	−0·4	+2·6	−0·4
March	+6·0	−0·8	+5·4	−2·4
April	−5·0	+2·0	−7·0	+0·6
May	−0·4	+7·7	+1·0	+7·2
June	+4·5	−6·6	+4·5	−3·8
July	−3·2	+3·1	−4·0	+2·3
August	+3·9	−0·3	+3·1	−0·3
September	+4·5	+1·1	+3·4	−0·0
October	−3·2	+7·6	−2·8	+7·4
November	+1·6	−3·4	+1·4	−4·8
December	+8·9	+2·8	+8·0	+2·4
1984				
January	−7·5	−0·3	−8·9	−2·1
February	+10·2	−0·4	+9·3	−0·5
March	−3·2	+5·8	−2·2	+4·4
April	−4·4	+3·1	−5·1	+2·4
May	+5·1	+3·2	+4·2	+1·4
June	+3·6	−2·7	+2·3	−1·8
July	−5·0	−3·3	−4·1	−4·7
August	+9·7	+14·4	+7·4	+11·9
September	−1·3	+1·3	−0·9	+1·2
October	+4·0	+6·2	+2·2	+4·6
November	+2·7	−5·5	+1·9	−6·6
December	+1·6	+3·3	+0·4	+3·1
1985				
January	+1·1	−3·8	−1·2	−6·0
February	+2·2	+6·9	+1·3	+3·8
March	+0·1	+4·9	−1·7	+3·6
April	+2·7	−6·1	+3·5	−2·9
May	−1·8	−5·6	−0·3	−4·0
June	−4·5	+0·3	−3·1	+2·1
July	−1·4	−1·0	+0·0	+1·0
August	−4·6	−5·0	−3·0	−2·8
September	+2·2	+0·9	+1·9	+0·8
October	+1·4	+0·1	+1·8	+1·4
November	−0·4	+3·4	−0·2	+4·0
December	+1·2	−1·8	+0·6	−1·5
1986				
January	−1·4	−4·2	−0·5	−6·4
February	−1·5	+6·6	+1·7	+4·8
March	−7·4	+5·6	−6·3	+5·1
April	+5·0	−9·0	+7·5	−6·8
May	−2·5	+4·0	−1·1	+6·4
June	−0·7	−1·7	+0·4	−1·2
July	+2·8	+2·0	+5·0	+3·4
August	−8·7	+5·8	−7·4	+6·2

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the level, respectively, of private direct manufacturing investment overseas and gross domestic fixed capital formation for each year since 1977.

Mr. Alan Clark: Figures for gross domestic fixed capital formation are given in table 10.6 in the CSO Blue Book (UK National Accounts, 1986). Details covering leased assets are given separately on page 119 of the same publication.

United Kingdom net direct investment overseas in manufacturing industry is given in table 1.4 of Business Monitor MA4 "Overseas Transactions". The latest available data are for 1984 and are given in *British Business*, 6 June 1986 (page 461, table 3).

Net direct investment overseas is a financial concept and is not the same as fixed capital formation. Direct investment covers only the money invested in a related concern by a parent company and that concern will then decide how to use this money, whether, for example, on fixed assets, to increase debtors, to repay borrowing or to increase working capital.

PRIME MINISTER

Sir Robert Armstrong

Q50. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will dismiss Sir Robert Armstrong, secretary of the Cabinet, in the light of the fourth report from the Defence Committee on Westlands.

The Prime Minister: No.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Q127. **Mr. Shersby** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement summarising the benefits that have accrued to the people of Northern Ireland since she signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Prime Minister: Under the terms of the agreement, the people of Northern Ireland have received a further reassurance that Northern Ireland will remain part of the United Kingdom so long as that is the wish of a majority. Progress has been made both in laying the foundations for enhanced cross border security co-operation and in bringing forward measures to recognise and accommodate the rights and identities of both traditions in Northern Ireland.

Commonwealth Summit

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the recent Commonwealth summit.

The Prime Minister: I attended the Commonwealth review meeting from 3 to 5 August which was called to consider the Nassau accord in the light of the report of the Eminent Persons Group. Heads of Government adopted some further measures designed to impress upon the South African Government the urgent need for fundamental change. I have placed a copy of the review meeting communiqué in the Library of the House.

Civil Service (Code of Ethics)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the discussions between Sir Robert Armstrong, Secretary of the Cabinet, and Civil Service unions on the code of ethics Sir Robert Armstrong issued after the Clive Ponting case.

The Prime Minister: The Civil Service unions have indicated that they will be taking up the offer of such discussions in due course.

La Belle Discotheque

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what evidence she now has from the German authorities in their continuing investigation into alleged Libyan involvement in the bombing of La Belle discotheque.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the answer which I gave the hon. Member on 3 July at col *587*.

Hong Kong

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent meeting with the Governor of Hong Kong.

The Prime Minister: I met the Governor and members of the Executive Council of Hong Kong on 10 September. We reviewed developments in Hong Kong since my last visit to the territory in December 1984 and the ratification in May 1985 of the Sino-British joint declaration on the future of Hong Kong. A copy of the communiqué released after the meeting has been placed in the Library of the House.

Northern Region (Ministerial Statement)

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if the statement of the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), on her visit to the northern region on health standards in the region represent Government policy; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government see it as an important part of their task to ensure that individuals are made aware of the effect on health of smoking, unwise diet and excessive alcohol. People in all parts of the country can do a great deal to avoid ill health for themselves and their families by consciously reducing or avoiding these risks to health.

Minister for Merseyside

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to appoint a Minister for Merseyside; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment continues to hold responsibility for the special Merseyside task force and for the Merseyside urban development corporation.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 October.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 21 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with President Soares of Portugal. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

"Sun" Newspaper

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Attorney-General when he expects to reply to the communication addressed to him on 23 May by Professor Musa Mazzawi concerning the *Sun* newspaper.

The Attorney-General: A reply to professor Musa Mazzawi's letter dated 23 May 1986 was sent by my officials on 12 June 1986 and the matter he raised has subsequently been the subject of further correspondence.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Attorney-General if he will prosecute the editor of the *Sun* or the cartoonist who signs his name as Franklin for the offence of incitement to racial hatred under section 5A(1) of the Public Order Act 1936, as amended by section 70 of the Race Relations Act 1970, and section 28 of the Criminal Law Act 1977, in respect of the cartoon published on page 6 of the *Sun* newspaper on 15 May.

The Attorney-General: On 20 August 1986 I decided not to grant my consent to the prosecution of the editor of the *Sun* and the cartoonist who signs his name as Franklin in respect of an allegation that they had committed an offence contrary to section 5A Public Order Act 1936.

Booth Report

Mr. Heddle asked the Attorney-General when he proposes to publish his response to the Booth report on matrimonial causes procedure.

The Attorney-General: In November 1985 the Lord Chancellor's Department invited the views of interested persons and bodies on the detailed recommendations made in the Booth report, and, in particular, on those recommendations which would not require primary legislation. The views received are being analysed. The Government hope to announce their decision concerning these recommendations in the light of those views, as soon as is practicable.

SCOTLAND

Upland Land Use

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the co-ordination of Forestry Commission, DAFS, and local authority policy on the direction of upland land use in the borders region.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received no such representations.

Council Houses

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the locations and numbers of un-tenanted local authority houses and how long they have been vacant.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is as follows. The figures are based on returns from housing authorities which show the numbers of un-tenanted local authority dwellings at 31 March 1986 together with data on the length of vacancy of dwellings available for letting and the status of dwellings not available for letting.

Local authority vacant stock as at 31 March 1986

Districts	Vacant stock		Length of vacancy of Local Authority dwellings available for letting						Vacant Local Authority dwellings not available for letting					
	Available for letting	Not available for letting	Under 1 month	1 to 3 months	4 to 6 months	Over 6 months	Not known	Total	Awaiting or undergoing improvement or repair	Held to decant households during repair etc.	Acquired for demolition	Awaiting demolition	Others	Total not available for letting
Scotland	12,430	10,875	2,121	2,148	635	669	6,857	12,430	6,945	1,690	396	781	1,055	10,875
Borders	71	233	30	23	7	11	0	71	192	41	0	0	0	233
Berwickshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	35	36	21	6	2	6	0	35	12	24	0	0	0	36
Roxburgh	31	194	4	17	5	5	0	31	180	14	0	0	0	194
Tweedale	5	3	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	3	0	0	0	3
Central	492	611	4	11	3	0	474	492	387	202	0	12	10	611
Clackmannan	18	147	4	11	3	0	0	18	124	13	0	0	10	147
Falkirk	250	392	0	0	0	0	250	250	191	189	0	12	0	392
Stirling	224	72	0	0	0	0	224	224	72	0	0	0	0	72
Dumfries and Galloway	37	202	27	10	0	0	0	37	130	24	0	0	48	202
Annandale and Eskdale	35	22	25	10	0	0	0	35	10	12	0	0	0	22
Nithsdale	0	168	0	0	0	0	0	0	120	0	0	0	48	168
Stewartry	2	12	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	12	0	0	0	12
Wigtown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fife	1,118	456	615	386	83	34	0	1,118	111	233	0	73	39	456
Dumfermline	229	65	73	145	8	3	0	229	21	0	0	44	0	65
Kirkcaldy	833	308	509	223	70	31	0	833	58	184	0	29	37	308
North East Fife	56	83	33	18	5	0	0	56	32	49	0	0	2	83
Grampian	847	694	264	455	63	65	0	847	362	69	134	47	74	694
Aberdeen	545	502	170	276	54	45	0	545	236	18	132	43	73	502
Banff and Buchan	171	8	82	82	7	0	0	171	..	..	..	..	8	8
Gordon	20	183	11	8	1	0	0	20	126	51	2	4	0	183
Kincardine and Deeside	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Moray	109	0	0	89	0	20	0	109	0	0	0	0	0	0
Highland	131	252	32	99	0	0	0	131	38	60	0	150	4	252
Badenoch and Strathspey	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Caithness	51	46	5	46	0	0	0	51	23	23	0	0	0	46
Inverness	59	32	17	42	0	0	0	59	0	32	0	0	0	32
Lochaber	0	149	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	149	0	149
Nairn	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Ross and Cromarty	20	18	10	10	0	0	0	20	10	4	0	0	4	18
Skye and Lochalsh	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Sutherland	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Lothian	916	3,561	251	303	155	205	2	916	2,862	595	72	9	23	3,561
East Lothian	56	74	0	56	0	0	0	56	74	0	0	0	0	74
Edinburgh	640	3,481	147	141	148	204	0	640	2,788	595	72	3	23	3,481
Midlothian	83	0	0	83	0	0	0	83	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Lothian	137	6	104	23	7	1	2	137	0	0	0	6	0	6
Strathclyde	8,115	4,150	659	659	229	187	6,381	8,115	2,734	273	190	488	465	4,150
Argyl and Bute	63	27	16	18	5	24	0	63	9	0	0	0	18	27
Bearsden and Milngavie	2	26	2	0	0	0	0	2	25	0	0	0	1	26
Clydebank	141	78	14	53	39	20	15	141	78	0	0	0	0	78
Clydesdale	13	0	8	4	1	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	41	10	17	15	2	7	0	41	8	2	0	0	0	10
Cumnock and Doon Valley	94	41	32	50	6	6	0	94	11	0	0	30	0	41
Cunninghame	83	298	70	8	2	3	0	83	281	17	0	0	0	298
Dumbarton	54	172	3	31	12	8	0	54	153	2	0	0	17	172
East Kilbride	6	6	0	6	0	0	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	6
Eastwood	126	1	51	74	1	0	0	126	1	0	0	0	0	1
Glasgow	6,366	1,166	0	0	0	0	6,366	6,366	693	48	189	72	164	1,166
Hamilton	94	239	39	40	15	0	0	94	217	18	1	1	2	239
Inverclyde	218	126	0	89	61	68	0	218	40	0	0	0	86	126

Districts	Vacant stock		Length of vacancy of Local Authority dwellings available for letting						Vacant Local Authority dwellings not available for letting					
	Available for letting	Not available for letting	Under 1 month	1 to 3 months	4 to 6 months	Over 6 months	Not known	Total	Awaiting or undergoing improvement or repair	Held to decant households during repair etc.	Acquired for demolition	Awaiting demolition	Others	Total not available for letting
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	166	315	50	83	31	2	0	166	68	38	0	84	125	315
Kyle and Carrick	62	130	22	33	5	2	0	62	130	0	0	0	0	130
Monklands	82	112	27	21	3	31	0	82	72	13	0	0	27	112
Motherwell	388	373	293	69	23	3	0	388	74	0	0	299	0	373
Renfrew	96	870	12	50	21	13	0	96	708	135	0	2	25	870
Strathkelvin	20	160	3	15	2	0	0	20	160	0	0	0	0	160
Tayside	658	612	215	188	92	163	0	658	59	161	0	2	390	612
Angus	9	36	6	2	1	0	0	9	11	13	0	2	10	36
Dundee	587	470	171	176	78	162	0	587	23	148	0	0	299	470
Perth and Kinross	62	106	38	10	13	1	0	62	25	0	0	0	81	106
Orkney Islands	16	6	10	3	0	3	0	16	6	0	0	0	0	6
Shetland Islands	24	48	11	10	2	1	0	24	26	22	0	0	0	48
Western Isles	5	50	3	1	1	0	0	5	38	10	0	0	2	50

.. Denotes no split available.

Pollution

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West on 29 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *467*, what steps are being taken to consider chromium poisoning in the differential diagnosis of the morbidity and mortality of the dairy herd belonging to Mr. Taylor who farms in the vicinity of the former Re-Chem International chemical disposal plant at Roughmute, Bonnybridge; what plans are being made to remove from his land the contents of the bordering waste dump; and what plans are being made to compensate Mr. Taylor.

Mr. John MacKay: The problems affecting the dairy herd owned by Mr. Taylor during the period 1978-80 were diagnosed by Glasgow university veterinary school as stemming from ragwort poisoning. This diagnosis was confirmed by the Lenihan review following very careful consideration of the views expressed by Dr. Thornton of the Imperial college regarding possible metal contamination. Chromium and ragwort poisoning present quite different and distinguishable features on histopathological examination. No further investigations into this aspect are therefore planned.

The removal of waste and the question of compensation are matters on which Mr. Taylor should consult his legal adviser.

Dairy Cattle (Ailments)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make ragwort poisoning and fat cow syndrome amongst dairy cattle reportable ailments for inclusion in Government statistics.

Mr. John MacKay: No.

Animal Deaths (St. Ninians)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland pursuant to his written reply to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West on 25 June 1986, *Official Report*, column *202*, what investigation he has made into the relatively high number of unexplained animal deaths in the parish of St. Ninians.

Mr. John MacKay: Having regard to the high density of cattle maintained in the parish of St. Ninians, the number of unexplained animal deaths there is relatively no higher than the numbers elsewhere in Central Scotland. Investigations beyond those described in my reply to the hon. Member on 24 October 1985 at column *236* would not therefore be warranted.

Police (Statistics)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement showing in respect of each police force division in Scotland; *(a)* the total number of offences notified to the police in 1985, and *(b)* the percentage change in the above total compared to the total so notified in 1978.

Mr. Lang: A breakdown of the figures by police force division is not available and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost. The table sets out the figures on crimes and offences recorded by each police force area for the years specified.

Crimes and Offences Recorded, by Police Force Area, Scotland: 1978 and 1985

	1978	1985	Percentage change
Central	28,585	37,634	+31·7
Dumfries and Galloway	16,532	21,301	+28·8
Fife	26,389	44,011	+66·8
Grampian	48,128	71,659	+48·9
Lothian and Borders	108,724	129,573	+19·2
Northern	26,021	31,341	+20·4
Strathclyde	338,373	403,637	+19·3
Tayside	48,007	61,224	+27·5
Scotland Total	640,759	800,380	+24·9

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the number of pupils awarded places under the assisted places scheme at each participating school and for Scotland overall; and what percentage of the total number of pupils at each school they account for;

(2) what has been the total amount of money distributed to each participating school in the assisted places scheme in Scotland since its inception;

(3) how much has been paid out in clothing grants per participating schools under the assisted places scheme in Scotland in the latest available year;

(4) how much has been paid as travel grants under the assisted places scheme in each participating school in Scotland in the latest available year; and at each school what was the number of grants paid;

(5) what is the percentage of pupils in Scotland currently awarded an assisted place who have already attended a fee-paying school; and if he will publish similar figures for each participating school.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

School	*Total number of assisted pupils in school 1985-86[1] (provisional)* (1)	*Number of pupils in column (1) attending a fee-paying school before entry to the scheme* (2)	*Column (2) as a percentage of column (1)* (3)	*Number of assisted pupils as a percentage of school roll* (4)	*Amount paid out in clothing grants in school year 1985-86[1] (£)* (5)	*Amount paid out in travel grants in school year 1985-86[1] (£)* (6)	*Number of travel grants paid in school year 1985-86[1]* (7)	*Total amount allocated to each school up to and including school year 1985-86[2] (£)* (8)
Albyn School for Girls, Aberdeen	10	10	100	2·8	100	859	5	50,400
Belmont House School, Newton Mearns	11	—	—	5·8	202	917	3	35,103
Craigholme School for Girls, Glasgow	26	23	88	6·5	1,008	1,174	9	103,417
Daniel Stewart's and Melville College, Edinburgh								
Mary Erskine School, Edinburgh	554	365	66	17·5	8,539	14,171	114	2,705,544
George Watson's College, Edinburgh								
Dollar Academy	52	28	54	5·8	1,264	1,000	8	203,391
Edinburgh Academy	42	30	71	6.0	932	1,759	9	227,008
Fernhill School, Glasgow	40	11	28	20·6	1,427	4,468	28	135,668
Fettes College, Edinburgh	26	2	8	5·9	941	5,000	20	242,985
Fort Augustus Abbey School	39	11	28	47·6	1,524	2,608	37	261,007
George Heriot's School, Edinburgh	219	105	48	18·9	4,337	2,981	45	883,242
Glasgow Academy	44	28	64	6·3	1,036	3,694	18	211,835
Glenalmond College, Perthshire	34	16	47	8·8	—	—	—	301,028
Gordonstoun School, Morayshire	20	8	40	4·2	644	2,727	18	184,512
The High School of Dundee	160	69	43	8·6	4,428	9,330	59	730,835
The High School of Glasgow	57	8	14	9·9	1,315	1,183	7	235,964
Hutchesons' Grammar School, Glasgow	150	85	57	12·2	2,765	6,120	37	567,144
Keil School, Dumbarton	56	10	18	29·6	1,679	1,929	25	300,934
Kelvinside Academy, Glasgow	50	40	80	9·5	1,220	4,284	24	259,766
Kilgraston School, Perthshire	48	14	29	19·2	2,204	5,600	26	168,804
Kilquhanity House School, Castle Douglas	17	—	—	50	—	2,500	13	70,264
Laurel Bank School, Glasgow	52	28	54	16·3	1,581	4,260	28	310,814
Lomond School, Helensburgh	37	14	38	10·8	800	400	7	170,092
Loretto School, Musselburgh	22	7	32	5·6	577	1,415	13	185,597
Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh	46	20	43	13·4	1,508	2,205	24	341,246
Morrisons Academy, Crieff	166	68	41	22·2	5,620	11,528	90	611,137
The Park School, Glasgow	45	18	40	13·6	1,188	3,423	25	296,313
Rannoch School, Perthshire	26	13	50	9·4	1,036	2,292	25	148,135
Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen	57	22	39	5·7	1,059	2,325	17	177,070
Rudolf Steiner School of Edinburgh	56	37	66	29·6	—	3,256	19	211,965
St. Aloysius' College, Glasgow	141	43	30	15·1	3,484	11,740	79	577,886
St. Columba's, Kilmalcolm Renfrewshire	36	19	53	13·8	1,424	2,055	13	233,158
St. Denis and Cranley School, Edinburgh	18	11	61	8·4	908	826	5	85,768
St. Georges School for Girls, Edinburgh	13	10	77	2·0	490	965	5	51,995
St. Leonard's School, St. Andrews	22	22	100	4·4	364	—	—	116,961
St. Margaret's Convent School, Edinburgh	8	8	100	14·8	160	930	4	55,483
St. Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen	14	6	43	4·7	416	987	7	48,187
St. Margaret's School for Girls, (Edinburgh)	54	34	63	8·1	1,304	3,104	17	[3]242,518
Strathallan School, Perthshire	32	15	47	6·5	901	795	8	197,255
Wellington School, Ayr	39	34	87	9·8	380	2,000	10	115,597
Westbourne School for Girls, Glasgow	88	53	60	33·5	2,680	4,635	34	473,055
TOTAL	2,627	1,345	51	12·2	61,445	131,445	935	12,529,083

[1] Provisional figures.
[2] Total includes £4,258,910 which is the provisional amount due for school year 1985-86.
[3] Includes £4,858 paid to St. Hilary's School, Edinburgh which merged with St. Margaret's in school year 1982-83.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total number of payments made for clothing grants under the assisted places scheme in Scotland in the latest year.

Mr. John MacKay: Eight hundred and ninety nine in school year 1984-85. The provisional figure for 1985-86 school year is 1,097.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland by whom decisions are taken regarding the eligibility for and distribution of clothing grants under the assisted places scheme in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Schools determine eligibility in accordance with the provisions of the Education (Assisted Places) (Scotland) Regulations 1986 and guidance provided by the Scottish Education Department.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he uses to assess eligibility for clothing grants under the assisted places scheme in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Clothing grants are income related and may be made on request where the relevant income does not exceed certain statutory amounts. Currently, in the first assisted year the amount is £7,563 and for any subsequent school year £7,248. The amount of the grant is limited to actual expenditure and shall not exceed—

(a) in the first assisted year
(i) One hundred and fifteen pounds, where the relevant income does not exceed £6,638.
(ii) Eighty seven pounds, where that income exceeds £6,638 but does not exceed £6,949.
(iii) Fifty eight pounds, where that income exceeds £6,949 but does not exceed £7,248.
(iv) Twenty nine pounds, where that income exceeds £7,248 but does not exceed £7,563; and

(b) in any subsequent year
(i) Forty three pounds, where the relevant income does not exceed £6,806.
(ii) Twenty one pounds, where that income exceeds £6,806 but does not exceed £7,248.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland for what individual items clothing grants under the assisted places scheme may be obtained in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Clothing grants may be paid for expenditure on items of uniform and other clothing, including sports clothing, required to be worn at school by an assisted pupil.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much has been paid out in clothing grants under the assisted places scheme in Scotland in each year since the scheme's inception;

(2) how much has been paid as travel grants under the assisted places scheme in Scotland in each year since its inception.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

School year	*Travel grants* £	*Clothing grants* £
1981-82	20,217	19,028
1982-83	54,246	30,457
1983-84	70,969	36,104
1984-85	96,597	49,695
[1]1985-86	131,445	61,445

[1] Provisional figures.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will specify entitlements which pupils may receive under the assisted places scheme in Scotland, other than clothing grants and travel grants.

Mr. John MacKay: In addition to fee remission, clothing grants and travel grants, an assisted pupil may be eligible for remission of charges for school meals and field study courses.

School Milk Subsidy Scheme

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total amount of subsidy awarded to fee-paying and independent schools in Scotland in the past two years under the European Economic Community school milk subsidy scheme; and if he will publish the figures for each school.

Mr. John MacKay: The figures relate to milk and milk products supplied during the period of the academic years (September to August) and are as follows:

1984-85 £	[1]*1985-86* £
214,258	197,284

[1] Provisional.

Figures for each school are not held centrally and cannot be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many instances in the past five years convicted prisoners, whose country of residence is not the United Kingdom, have requested that they be transferred to their own country; in how many cases these requests have been turned down; and in how many cases requests have been approved.

Mr. Mellor: The United Kingdom was not party to any international arrangements for the transfer of prisoners out of the United Kingdom before 1 August 1985, when the Council of Europe convention on the transfer of sentenced persons came into effect. The information requested in respect of prisoners in England and Wales who are nationals of countries with which the United Kingdom has the necessary arrangements is given in the table for the period 1 August 1985 to 31 July 1986. In addition, 21 petitions were received in the same period from prisoners in England and Wales who were ineligible because they are not nationals of countries with which there is a repatriation arrangement.

Requests from eligible nationals[1] for transfer out of prisons in England and Wales, 1 August 1985 to 31 July 1986

	Numbers
Total received from 1 August 1985 to 31 July 1986[2]	30
of which position on 20 October 1986:	
Approved by both governments[2 3]	15
Refused by other government[2]	4
Refused by United Kingdom	0
Withdrawn by prisoner[4]	7
Under consideration	4

[1] For the period in the table, the other countries for which the convention was in force were France, Spain, Sweden, Canada and the United States.

[2] Counting as one approved request a case which was initially refused but subsequently reconsidered and approved by the other government following a further petition.

[3] Includes cases where the transfer has yet to take place.

[4] Includes cases where the prisoner was discharged before all parties had agreed to the transfer.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently being held in custody whose country of residence is other than the United Kingdom; and for what crimes they are being held showing those held on remand and those convicted.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information relates to the nationality of sentenced prisoners and is given in the table. However, the usual country of residence of some of the foreign nationals is likely to be the United Kingdom. The recording of nationality for citizens of Commonwealth countries, Pakistan and Eire is not sufficiently reliable for estimates of their numbers to be given.

Estimated sentenced population[1] of foreign nationality (excluding citizens of Commonwealth countries, Pakistan and Eire) in Prison Department establishments on 31 August 1986: by offence group.

Offence group	Estimated number[2]
Violence against the person	130
Rape	15
Other sexual offences	20
Burglary	55
Robbery	30
Theft, handling, fraud and forgery	110
Drugs offences	230
Other offences	70
Court martial prisoners	—
Not recorded	10
Fine Defaulters	15
Non-criminal	25
TOTAL	700

[1] Based on records held centrally which are approximate; detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

[2] Rounded estimates; the components do not add to the total, because they have been rounded independently.

Television Licences

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now bring forward proposals for a system of refunds of television licences similar to that existing for vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Mellor: We are looking again at the arrangements for refunds as part of our general consideration of the television licensing requirements in the light of the recommendations of the Committee on Financing the BBC.

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek changes in the Wireless Telegraphy (Broadcast Licence Charges and Exemptions) Regulation 1984 so that all pensioners without any other source of income than their pension are required to pay only a fee of 5p a year for the television licence.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend has not yet reached any conclusions on the recommendations made by the Committee on Financing the BBC for changes to the television licensing requirements, including the arrangements for licences at reduced cost.

National Marriage Guidance Council

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what amount the grant awarded to the National Marriage Guidance Council has changed since 1981-82 in real terms.

Mr. Mellor: Grants to the National Marriage Guidance Council for the years 1981-82 to 1986-87 were:

	(a) Grant (cash terms) £	(b) Grant (real terms)[1] £
1981-82	704,000	704,000
1982-83	750,000	701,250
1983-84	788,000	704,472
1984-85	827,460	704,961
1985-86	864,570	699,437
1986-87	890,500	694,590

[1] Real terms figures are the cash figures adjusted to 1981-82 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator.

The cash terms increase in each year has been in accordance with the standard revaluation factor applied to all cash limited votes as required by the Government's cash planning.

Visas

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the total number of persons in possession of visas for entry into the United Kingdom in 1985-86 who were subjected to examinations by immigration officers.

Mr. Waddington: All passengers seeking entry to the United Kingdom are examined by an immigration officer. No separate record is kept either of the number of passengers holding visas who seek entry or of the number of such passengers who are required to submit to further examination.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the countries whose nationals require visas to visit the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: The "Statement of Change in the Immigration Rules" (Cmnd. 9914) sets out a revised appendix to the immigration rules (HC 169 as amended) specifying the overseas nationals who need visas for the United Kingdom. I have today announced that further changes will be made to the immigration rules to add Ghana to the appendix with effect from 23 October 1986, and in due course Nigeria.

Immigration

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will tabulate the numbers of persons subject to immigration procedures at London airport (Heathrow) in the years 1984, 1985 and the estimate for 1986, together with the numbers of related civil servants employed each year.

Mr. Waddington: The number of passengers subject to immigration control, excluding European Community nationals, admitted to the United Kingdom at Heathrow airport was about 4·4 million in 1984 and 4·9 million in 1985. In addition, about 7·2 million in 1984 and 7·3 million in 1985 British and other European Community nationals were admitted. Corresponding estimates for 1986 are not available. The number of immigration service personnel in post at Heathrow on 31 August was 575 in 1984, 587 in 1985 and 654 in 1986.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence is normally required by his Department to establish proof that a person is a resident of the United Kingdom for purposes of paragraph 56 of the immigration rules, HC 169 of 1983.

Mr. Waddington: Most passengers who are settled in the United Kingdom are able to produce to the immigration officer on return from a visit abroad a passport which confirms that the holder has previously been given indefinite leave to enter or remain and has not been away for more than two years. In the absence of such evidence the immigration officer would seek to satisfy himself by questioning the passenger about his previous residence, by examining any documentary evidence produced or by referring to the Home Office file.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what instructions his Department has issued to immigration officers in connection with nationals of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka returning to the United Kingdom as residents after visits overseas, in cases where the journey overseas was undertaken before 15 October.

Mr. Waddington: Immigration officers have been instructed that citizens of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka who return to the United Kingdom after 15 October 1986 do not require a visa if either:

(i) they are settled in the United Kingdom and are returning within two years of departure; or

(ii) they are returning within a period of limited leave which has been granted with an endorsement which applies section 3(3)(*b*) of the Immigration Act 1971. (These will generally be people in the United Kingdom for a long term purpose such as work or study.)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice in connection with the statement of change in Immigration Rule, Cmnd. 9914, has been issued by his Department to nationals of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka intending to return to the United Kingdom as residents after visits overseas.

Mr. Waddington: I have placed in the Library a copy of a comprehensive information leaflet about the extension of visa requirements to citizens of Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Nigeria and Pakistan, which also covers the changes in the visa arrangements for citizens of Sri Lanka. The leaflet includes an explanation of the exemptions from the visa requirement when people who are settled in the United Kingdom, or who are here for a long-term purpose such as work or study, make trips abroad; and advises how people who are exempt may obtain a passport endorsement confirming this. The leaflet has been sent to a number of organisations which represent and offer advice in the minority communities and copies can be obtained from the immigration and nationality department of the Home Office.

EC (Interior Ministers Meeting)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of European Community Interior Ministers on 20 October.

Mr. Hurd: The conclusions of the meeting were set out in the Presidency statement which I made at the end of the meeting, the text of which is as follows:

Community Ministers responsible for immigration, counter-terrorism and drugs and a Vice-President of the Commission met today to study new measures designed to maitain and strengthen safeguards against terrorists, drug traffickers and others involved in serious crime and against illegal immigration, in the light of the progress being made towards freer movement within the Community.

Immigration

We all want the minimum of inconvenience to travellers within the Community. Convenient travel, reduced delays at frontiers, is good for people and for business. But we also have a duty to protect the citizens of the Community. So we have all agreed to work towards a system of easier frontier formalities for Community citizens that is not open to abuse. We set up a working group to consider urgently:

(i) stronger checks at external Community frontiers;
(ii) the contribution which internal checks can make;
(iii) the role of co-ordination of visa policies of member states in improving controls;
(iv) the role and effectiveness of frontier controls at internal frontiers in the fight against terrorism, drugs, crime and illegal immigration;
(v) exchange of information about the operation of spot check systems;
(vi) close co-operation to avoid the abuse of passports;
(vii) measures to achieve a common policy to eliminate the abuse of the right of asylum;
(viii) examination of ways in which the convenience of Community travellers can be improved without adding to the terrorist threat or the risks of illegal immigration, drug trafficking and other crime.

Terrorism

The meeting noted the progress made on implementing the decisions taken on 25 September.

Procurement of the equipment for the secure communications link between police forces is being urgently pursued.

Work continues on intensifying liaison between counter terrorist experts.

Arrangements have been set in place for the mutual exchange of information about people excluded from the territory of one member state so that others can have advance warning of possible risk.

Drugs

We agreed that the Community and its member states have a major role to play in stepping up the fight against drug abuse. We have agreed a seven point plan to cover:

measures to reduce demand for drugs especially among young people;

measures to improve the treatment of addicts and rehabilitation services;

ensuring that bilateral and Community aid supports as appropriate a recipient country's efforts to combat drug abuse;

steps to ensure that legislation takes account of the need to maintain effective control over illicit drug trafficking, particularly at the Community's external frontiers;

mutual enforcement of confiscation orders relating to drug traffickers' assets;

enhanced co-operation between law enforcement agencies involving exchange of drug liaison officers between member states, the posting of drug liaison officers to other countries and the establishment of a world-wide directory of those involved in the fight against drug abuse: this would be achieved by inviting Trevi to examine the scope for creating a co-ordinated network of drug liaison officers to monitor developments in producer countries;

preparation of joint assessment by Community ambassadors in drug producing countries in order to ensure a steady flow of recommendations for action by the Twelve.

Drink-Driving

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* full figures for each year as to the number of people *(a)* breathalysed and *(b)* breathalysed positively (i) during 1985 and (ii) during the 1985 Christmas period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Statistics on breath tests carried out in 1985, including separate figures for the Christmas period, are published in Home Office statistical bulletin 19/86, "Statistics of Breath Tests, England and Wales 1985". (Tables 1, 6 and 7.)

Fixed Penalty Offences

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any additional or bonus payments to police officers have been introduced in consequence of the new system of operation of fixed penalty offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No such payments have been introduced.

Football Hooliganism

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of recent incidents of football hooliganism, he has any plans to review the current penalties available to the courts to deal with such offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Adequate maximum penalties are in our view available to the courts, under the existing law or the Public Order Bill, for the wide range of offences of which football hooligans may be convicted.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to withdraw the passport of any person convicted of an offence relating to football hooliganism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what resources are employed by the Metropolitan police to deal with crowd violence at football matches in London.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This depends on the teams involved and the police assessment of the likelihood of disorder. For example, on Saturday 11 October, 944 officers were deployed on duties in connection with six matches in London, whereas on Saturday 18 October, 611 officers were deployed to five matches.

Passports

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards the circumstances in which a British passport or British visitor's passport is withdrawn.

Mr. Waddington: Withdrawal of a passport would be considered on the same basis as would refusal of an application, that is in the case of:

(a) a minor whose journey was known to be contrary to a court order, to the wishes of a parent or other person or authority to whom a court had awarded custody, care and control or to the provisions of section 25(1) of the Children and young Persons Act 1933, as amended, or section 52 of the Adoption Act 1958, as amended;

(b) a person for whose arrest a warrant had been issued in the United Kingdom or who was wanted by the police on suspicion of a serious crime;

(c) in very rare cases a person whose past or proposed activities were so demonstrably undesirable that the grant or continued enjoyment of passport facilities would be contrary to the public interest;

(d) a person repatriated at public expense until the debt had been repaid.

While a British Visitor's passport could be refused and withdrawal considered on these grounds, it is not practicable to link post offices which issue them with the index on which the controls depend.

Mr. Stuart Holmes

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Dorset to establish the motives for, duration of, and outcome of the detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act of Mr. Stuart Holmes of Manchester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mr Holmes was arrested at 9.30 am on 6 October on suspicion of an offence under the Theft Act. After questioning by the police he was released at 5.35 pm without being charged. He was not detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement showing in respect of each police force division in England and Wales *(a)* the total number of offences notified to the police in 1985 and *(b)* the percentage change in the above total compared to the total so notified in 1978.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information that is collected centrally relates to entire police force areas. Numbers of notifiable offences recorded by each police force in 1985 have been published in Home Office statistical bulletin issue No. 4/86 (table 6), and corresponding figures for 1978 were published in the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" for that year. (Cmnd. 7670, table 32). A revised set of counting rules was introduced at the beginning of 1980 so that figures for 1980 onwards are not precisely comparable with those for earlier years.

Visitors

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent, under his proposed regulations requiring prior entry clearance for certain

visitors to the United Kingdom, the entry clearance officer will be expected to make a decision without reference to his Department; what extra work will be involved for his Department if such references are made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Entry clearance officers will in the normal way resolve visit visa applications from the new visa nationals without referral wherever possible. The extent to which that is achieved will determine the amount of extra work in the Home Office.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many visitors arrived at Heathrow terminal 3 on 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 October; and how many arrived in October 1985;

(2) how many visitors to the United Kingdom who arrived on 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 October were obliged to wait for more than six hours before being examined by the Immigration Service; and how many who arrived on the corresponding dates in October 1985 were so obliged.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many nationals of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh arrived in the United Kingdom on 15 and 16 October *(a)* in possession of visas, *(b)* in possession of a visa exemption stamp and *(c)* without a visa or visa exemption stamp.

Mr. Waddington: This information is not available.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what suggestions his Department has received to improve the flow of information about visitors detained for examination by the immigration service to persons waiting for them at airports; and what response his Department has made.

Mr. Waddington: Suggestions made include:

(i) Displaying the names of persons detained on closed circuit television screens in the public areas.

(ii) Installing extra emergency telephones in the immigration office and broadcasting the numbers over the national radio network.

(iii) Installing extra telephones in the public arrivals concourse, at Heathrow, terminal 3, to enable persons to contact the Immigration Service direct.

(iv) Providing the British Airports Authority information section with a list of all persons detained awaiting examination.

The very large numbers of passengers who arrived at Heathrow, terminal 3, during the period immediately preceding 15 October and were detained pending examination made the implementation of these suggestions at short notice impracticable. Terminal 3 is at present undergoing extensive rebuilding and this will provide an opportunity to consider the various suggestions received and the scope for improving information facilities.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost to public funds of accommodation and other expenses for visitors arriving in the United Kingdom on 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 October and obliged to wait for examination by the Immigration Service.

Mr. Waddington: It is not possible at this stage to calculate what proportion of the costs will fall to public funds. This will not be known until all decisions have been made in respect of applications from persons who sought leave to enter as visitors during the period quoted. The costs of providing accommodation for persons awaiting examination or further examination by an Immigration Officer fall to the carrying companies where the final decision is to refuse leave to enter.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inquiries were received by his Department to ascertain the whereabouts of visitors to the United Kingdom who arrived on 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 October.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors to the United Kingdom who arrived on 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 October were accommodated overnight pending examination by the Immigration Service, and how many were so accommodated on the corresponding dates in October 1985.

Mr. Waddington: The number of passengers, including those seeking leave to enter as visitors, who were required to submit to further examination and either detained or granted temporary admission to reside at accommodation arranged by the Immigration Service for the dates in question was as follows:

	Number
11 October	86 (9)
12 October	75 (7)
13 October	148 (2)
14 October	646 (9)
15 October	527 (13)
16 October	312 (4)
17 October	284 (11)

The figures in brackets refer to the corresponding dates in October 1985. Some passengers were accommodated on more than one of the dates listed. Some had already been refused leave to enter.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of temporary visitors in 1985-86 from *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* Canada, *(c)* Australia, *(d)* New Zealand and *(e)* South Africa, and in each case, the numbers who are not known to have returned to the country of origin within the time limit specified in their original admission; and if he will express the figures of each country as a percentage of the total number granted admission as visitors.

Mr. Waddington: In 1985 and the first five months of 1986 the number of passengers who were admitted as visitors was:

	1985	*1986 (to end of May)*
USA	2,627,200	580,400
Canada	417,100	111,200
Australia	281,100	89,900
New Zealand	51,000	16,700
South Africa	79,900	22,200

Recording of landings and embarkations for these, as for other nationalities, is selective and information is not available as to numbers or proportions within those totals not known to have left at the end of their permitted stay.

We have no reason to believe that the overwhelming majority of visitors to this country do not leave at the end of their stay.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many visitors from *(a)* India, *(b)* Pakistan, *(c)* Bangladesh, *(d)* Nigeria, and *(e)* Ghana were the subject of intervention by right hon. or hon. Members in 1984, 1985 and the current year to date.

(2) how many visitors from *(a)* India, *(b)* Pakistan, *(c)* Bangladesh, *(d)* Nigeria, and *(e)* Ghana were refused entry and returned to the country of origin without the involvement of a right hon. or hon. Members in 1984, 1985 and 1986 to date.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not available. It is not possible to state how many passengers refused entry were seeking entry as visitors, and no record is kept of the nationality of passengers in whose cases right hon. and hon. Members made representations against refusal of entry.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the flight numbers of the aircraft which were unable to land passengers at Heathrow airport on 14 October.

Mr. Waddington: No aircraft were unable to land passengers at Heathrow airport on 14 October. There was a delay of approximately one hour in completing the disembarkation of the passengers who arrived on flight No. BG 001 from Dhaka.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers awaiting examination by his Department since 13 October have sought or required medical attention, and, what medical attention was offered.

Mr. Waddington: The information is immediately available in respect of Heathrow airport and for arrivals since 10 October. 108 passengers who arrived at Heathrow airport since 10 October have sought or required medical attention, either during the period they were waiting examination by the Immigration Service or in some cases after refusal of leave to enter. All were examined by a qualified medical practitioner. At terminal 1, one passenger was diagnosed as suffering from malaria and was taken to hospital. At terminal 3, three passengers were referred to hospitals for further examination, of whom one is still in hospital receiving treatment for dysentry. Another passenger was diagnosed as suffering from non-infective hepatitis and is receiving appropriate treatment.

All other passengers who were medically examined were diagnosed as suffering from minor ailments such as headaches and stomach upsets for which appropriate treatment was administered.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the locations which have been used by his Department since 13 October to accommodate passengers awaiting examination, with, in each case, the numbers so accommodated on each night.

Mr. Waddington: The information is as follows:

Location	*13 October*	*14 October*	*15 October*	*16 October*	*17 October*	*18 October*	*19 October*
Customs Building Heathrow	9	9	13	0	14	4	3
Immigration Service Detention Centre, Harmondsworth	0	0	0	4	5	0	3
Immigration Service Detention Centre, Queens Building (Heathrow)	1	2	2	1	5	1	0
Immigration Service Detention Centre, Gatwick Airport	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
Her Majesty's Remand Centre, Latchmere House	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Fire Service College, Moreton-in-Marsh	0	0	0	0	200	156	0
Her Majesty's Detention Centre, Blantyre House Cranbrook	0	0	0	0	59	58	43
Metropolitan Police Training Centre, Hounslow Heath	0	0	0	150	0	0	0
Gaterooms at Heathrow Airport	60	336	453	156	0	0	0
Immigration Service Control Accommodation, Heathrow Airport	54	25	28	0	0	0	0
Hotels (7 were used)	24	274	26	0	0	8	16
Erlestoke Youth Custody Centre, Lavington, Devizes	0	0	0	0	0	0	43
Her Majesty's Prison, Canterbury	0	0	0	0	0	7	7

Some passengers were accommodated for more than one night and at more than one location. Some had already been refused leave to enter.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will cause inquiries to be made as to why a sponsor of a visitor was, through error by officials of his Department, placed on an aircraft for Bangladesh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I have no knowledge of any sponsor being placed on board any aircraft for Bangladesh by the Immigration Service or its agents at terminal 3, Heathrow airport.

Single European Market

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how United Kingdom frontier controls against terrorism and the import of illegal drugs will be affected by the proposed single European market in the European Economic Community;

(2) what changes are envisaged in British frontier controls over the movement of people and goods, during the transition to a single European market in the European Economic Community.

Mr. Waddington: Community discussions on possible changes in frontier controls are at an early stage. As it is

not clear what measures will be adopted at Community level, it is not possible to say what consequential changes may be made in British frontier controls. However, the general declaration on the articles of the Single European Act dealing with the Community's internal market makes clear that the right of member states to take any measures considered necesary to deal with terrorism and the traffic in drugs will not be affected.

Football Clubs (Police Services)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much was *(a)* charged and *(b)* paid, by each football club in London for police services in the 1985-86 season and in the 1986-87 season to date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are told by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the information requested is as follows:

Club	*1985-86 season*		*1986-87 season (to 17 October)*	
	Charged £	*Paid* £	*Charged* £	*Paid* £
Arsenal	141,636·43	141,636·43	31,022·73	21,112·13
Brentford	33,351·45	33,351·45	6,316·52	3,233·23
Charlton	41,572·66	41,572·66	9,091·72	6,336·87
Chelsea	167,815·67	167,815·67	30,869·28	15,160·98
Crystal Palace	39,918·13	39,918·13	9,153·53	2,428·16
Fulham	42,351·03	42,351·03	9,282·82	4,117·92
Millwall	50,093·27	50,093·27	6,427·20	6,427·20
Orient	14,947·57	14,947·57	3,045·43	1,143·06
Queen's Park Rangers	96,304·41	96,304·41	16,064·71	16,064·71
Tottenham Hotspur	195,159·92	195,159·92	40,190·69	12,384·11
West Ham United	119,049·89	119,049·89	29,748·74	13,052·58
Wimbledon	22,718·80	22,718·80	11,685·45	6,114·30
Total	964,919·23	964,919·23	202,898·82	107,575·25

Chilean Police Officers

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many senior Chilean police officers have been admitted to the United Kingdom during the current year; what was the purpose of their visit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not available, but the Department has arranged no such visits.

Women Prisoners

Ms Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women in custody in England were pregnant during each month in the current year.

Mr. Mellor: The information is not kept centrally in the form requested and could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Basmati Rice

Mr. Janner asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make representations to the appropriate directorate-general of the European Economic Community Commission concerning the proposed reduction in the levy for imports of 15,000 tons of basmati rice.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have already made very clear to the Commission their opposition to the proposal in its present form.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the first management agreement to be made in environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Our objective is to enable farmers to begin to participate in the scheme for environmentally sensitive areas from the 1987 farming year. To this end we expect to invite applications early next spring.

Straw Burning

Mr. Dalyell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the efficacy of byelaws and the Highways Act in limiting the abuse of straw burning by farmers in 1986; and if he has any conveniently available figures for the impending number of prosecutions of persons for alleged offences in relation to straw burning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The indications are that there has been less careless or inconsiderate burning of straw during this year's harvest season. A combination of strengthened byelaws, and the Highways (Amendment) Act 1986, the publicity campaign mounted by my Department, and the code of practice issued by the National Farmers' Union have contributed greatly to this improvement in the situation.

From 1986 onwards, the Home Office will be recording separately the number of prosecutions under straw burning byelaws, but it will be some time before a complete picture is available.

Rabies

Sir David Price asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of his disinfestation programme to prevent rabies from crossing the channel through a Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement on how secure such arrangements will be.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In discussions with Eurotunnel, the promoters of the Channel fixed link, Ministry officials have set out the requirements to prevent rabies entering the country through a Channel tunnel.

In addition to the use of sealed trains, Eurotunnel have agreed to the installation of physical barriers and grids at entry points, regular inspections, rigorous cleaning programmes and the continuous deployment of baited traps in both tunnel and terminal areas. Obviously discussions are still in progress. However the Government will insist on diligent application of these safeguards to ensure that they are fully effective.

Grain (Moisture Content)

Mr. Speller asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will revise the maximum moisture content for grain going into intervention from the United Kingdom 14½ per cent. limit to the 15 per cent. permitted in other European Economic Community states.

Mr. Gummer: No. This measure forms part of the process of making the cereals market more responsive to real market forces.

Food (Contaminants)

Mr. Canavan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is satisfied that his Department has sufficient resources to ensure the adequate supervision of the levels of PCBs, PCTs, PCDs, and PCDFs in food, including milk for human consumption.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I am satisfied that the resources available within my Department are sufficient to carry out adequate scientific work on residues of polycholorinated biphenyls, polychlorinated terphenyls, polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and polychlorinated dibenzofurans in foodstuffs. The resources available are part of those used for the monitoring of contaminants in the general food supply, including milk, under the auspices of the steering group on food surveillance. This interdepartmental committee keeps under review the possibilities of contamination of the national food supply.

Mr. Canavan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which laboratories in the United Kingdom are conducting the supervision of the levels of PCBs, PCTs, PCDs and PCDFs; what levels they are working to; and how the standards were obtained to set the levels.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Monitoring for residues of PCBs in foods and human tissues is carried out by the steering group on food surveillance through its working party on pesticide residues since, if present, these compounds are detected by the same analytical procedure as that used for organochlorine pesticides. The following Government laboratories participate in this surveillance:

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) Slough Laboratory.
MAFF, Central Veterinary Laboratory
MAFF, Fisheries Laboratory, Burnham-on-Crouch
MAFF, Food Science Laboratory
Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Laboratory of the Government Chemist
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland (DAFS) Agricultural Scientific Services
DAFS Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory, Pitlochry
Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland, Agricultural and Food Chemistry Division

The limit of determination employed in food surveillance for PCBs depends on the commodity being analysed but in the above surveillance, it is generally less than 0·01 mg/kg on a whole product basis. Residues of PCBs detected by the above laboratories are quantified by comparison with the appropriate commercial PCBs product, either Aroclor 1254 or Aroclor 1260.

The nature of scientific work to be carried out on PCTs is currently being considered by my Department.

Five organisations in the UK are involved in relevant Government work on PCDDs and PCDFs, although I understand that other laboratories may offer analytical services for these compounds. The organisations involved in this Government work are as follows:

MAFF, Food Science Laboratory
DTI, Laboratory of the Government Chemist
Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Harwell
University of East Anglia
Strathclyde Regional Chemist and Public Analyst

Detection limits of at least 0·02 μg/kg are currently achievable with existing analytical techniques and developments in methodology are in hand attempting to reduce the detection limit to 0·001 μg/kg. The limits vary according to a number of factors including the particular isomer under investigation and the nature of the sample. Reference standards for all the groups of isomers of PCDDs and PCDFs have been obtained from the USA for use in this monitoring.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Deakins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the United Kingdom's net farm income as a proportion of the total income of farmers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In the 1983-84 tax year, for which provisional data are now available, the income of self-employed farmers in the United Kingdom from agriculture and horticulture amounted to almost three-fifths of their total income as assessed for tax. Corresponding estimates that include farming companies are not available. The information is derived from an anonymised sample of tax records and is not directly comparable with the established sources of farm income data, for example, the farm business survey and the departmental net income calculation.

Intervention Stores

Mr. Deakins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provision exists within the European Economic Community budget arrangements for depreciating the value of agricultural commodities in store pending their disposal.

Mr. Jopling: Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1883/78 enables the Commission subject to the views of Member States to depreciate the value of intervention stocks if their estimated selling price is below the book value. The 1986 Community budget provides 471 mecu for the depreciation of beef and butter in store.

Soil Erosion

Mr. Spearing asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reports he has received and what

steps he has taken to ascertain the extent of and trends in soil erosion in England and Wales; and if he will state the geological formations where related soils are currently at greatest risk.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department's Agricultural Development and Advisory Service has this year completed a five-year study of soil erosion in collaboration with the Soil Survey of England and Wales. This study covered 16 areas known to be at risk from soil erosion by water, with a variety of soil types and climates. The final report will be available early next year.

University Departments and other organisations also conduct studies on soil erosion, and publish reports on these in scientific journals from time to time.

Sandy and silty soils are more susceptible to erosion than heavier soils, but the soil texture is not always closely related to the underlying geological formation. Many other factors also influence the risk of erosion. Among the most important are the steepness and length of slopes, the amount of crop cover and the intensity of rainfall. The risk of erosion on susceptible sites can be minimised by careful soil and crop management, and my Department advises farmers on the appropriate techniques.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Drugs

Mr. Mudd asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list by date, location, substance, quantity and value, all quantities of proscribed drugs and illicit drugs seized in United Kingdom ports, or in British waters, by officers of Her Majesty's Customs in each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Brooke: I regret that this information is not readily available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Moreover, it would not be in the public interest for information about locations to be disclosed.

Personal Incomes

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate the gain or loss to those with incomes under £5,000, £5,000 to £10,000, £10,000 to £15,000, £15,000 to £20,000, £20,000 to £30,000, £30,000 to £50,000 and over £50,000 a year in each Budget separately since 1979, including the 1986 Budget, including both aggregate changes for those in each category and the average change per taxpayer in each category and in every case indicating how much is due to indexation and how much is a real gain.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is in the tables. For each financial year shown, the tables compare the yield from the tax regime in that year with the 1978-79 tax regime. All estimates are calculated on the 1986-87 tax base and all tax regimes have been indexed to 1986-87 levels by reference to the statutory formula. The comparisons therefore allow for budgetary changes in income tax rates and allowances, but not for any changes since 1978-79 in the definition of the income tax base.

The first table shows the total reduction (−) or increase (+) in tax yield from each income range; and the second table shows the average change for individual tax units.

As child tax allowances were being phased out in 1978-79 they have been excluded from the comparison.

It is not possible to provide useful estimates of the liabilities in 1986-87 for the 1978-79 regime without indexation since Inland Revenue records do not cover many of the people who would be brought into tax by such low levels of personal allowances. A partial analysis with incomplete coverage would be misleading.

Reductions (+)/increases (−) in income tax compared with 1978-79 indexed regime

£ million

Range of total income in 1986-87[1] £	*Number units paying tax in 1986-87 (million)*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Under 5,000	3·8	250	110	−310	−270	−30	110	240	280
5,000 to 10,000	7·8	1,220	740	−240	−140	420	810	1,130	1,420
10,000 to 15,000	4·9	1,330	950	200	290	710	1,110	1,370	1,720
15,000 to 20,000	2·2	880	670	270	320	540	790	930	1,160
20,000 to 30,000	1·3	990	810	320	390	660	900	1,010	1,210
30,000 to 50,000	0·4	920	810	470	510	690	910	960	1,030
Over 50,000	0·1	1,150	1,100	940	960	1,040	1,250	1,270	1,280
Total	20·5	6,740	5,190	1,650	2,060	4,030	5,880	6,910	8,100

[1] All information is in terms of tax units—that is married couples are counted as one and their incomes combined.

Average gain (+)/loss (−) per tax unit

£ per annum

Range of total income in 1986-87[1] £	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Under 5,000[2]	60	30	−70	−60	−10	30	60	60
5,000 to 10,000[2]	150	90	−30	−20	50	100	140	180
10,000 to 15,000	270	190	40	60	140	230	280	350
15,000 to 20,000	400	300	120	150	250	360	420	530
20,000 to 30,000	760	630	250	300	510	700	780	930
30,000 to 50,000	2,080	1,830	1,060	1,160	1,570	2,060	2,170	2,320

Range of total income in 1986-87[1] £	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Over 50,000	10,500	9,990	8,530	8,720	9,480	11,420	11,560	11,640
Total	320	250	80	100	190	280	330	380

[1] All information is in terms of tax units—that is married couples are counted as one and their incomes combined.
[2] Average gains and losses are calculated by reference to the estimated number who would be liable to pay tax under the indexed 1978-79 regime; this number is some 900,000 greater than the numbers paying tax in 1986-87, some 750,000 in the income range below £5,000 and 150,000 in the range £5,000 to £10,000.

Economic Growth

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if there is any correlation between the rate of economic growth and *(a)* the balance of payments, *(b)* the public sector borrowing requirement, *(c)* productivity, *(d)* earned incomes, *(e)* the standard rate of income tax, *(f)* the rate of corporation tax and *(g)* the rate of inflation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what are the main economic factors which are correlated with the rate of economic growth.

Mr. John MacGregor: Economic variables are normally correlated with each other to some extent, though not necessarily at a statistically significant level. No conclusion can be drawn from such correlation, as in itself it gives no information about causal relationships in the economy.

EC (Commitment Appropriations)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reforms in European Economic Community budgetary procedures he will propose as President to ensure that commitment appropriations are not agreed unless there is revenue to meet them.

Mr. Brooke: The United Kingdom and other member states have repeatedly insisted in the Council that decisions on commitment appropriations must be taken in accordance with the budget discipline conclusions and in full knowledge of their implications for payment obligations in future years. We have also supported the Commission's initiative in preparing four-year rolling projections of expenditure and revenue. I do not think that the United Kingdom Presidency could usefully propose procedural reforms at this stage.

EC (Own Resources)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the European Economic Community Commission's view that the maximum value added rate for own resources will need to increase to 1·6 per cent. in January 1988.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) at column *1* on 21 April 1986.

Customs and Excise (Heathrow)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise were on duty in Heathrow terminal 3 on 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 October; and how many were on duty on the corresponding dates in 1985, and on each of the first six days of October of the current year.

Mr. Lawson: For operational reasons it is not policy to disclose the number of Customs staff on duty at specific locations. The number of staff on duty at Terminal 3 Heathrow varies according to management's assessment of the risks. Resident staff are supported by mobile teams and specialist investigators who move between terminals as the need arises.

Personal Incomes (Budget Effects)

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the gain per individual arising from each relevant component of the 1986 Budget, both at current prices and net of indexation for those at one half and three-quarters of average earnings, average earnings, and one and a half, two, five and 10 times average earnings; and if he will provide comparable figures for each budget since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Inflation

Mr. Wareing asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his expectations now are for the rate of inflation during the course of 1987.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend will be publishing a forecast of inflation prospects for 1987 in the "Autumn Statement".

IMF and World Bank Meeting

Mr. Wareing asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the recent annual meeting in Washington DC of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Mr. Ian Stewart: At the annual meetings of the IMF/IBRD, the interim and development committees noted that prospects for world growth were better in 1987, while recognising that the debt problem remains severe for many countries. They stressed the importance of determined implementation of growth-orientated adjustment along the lines proposed in 1985 by United States Treasury Secretary Baker and reaffirmed their commitment to ensure adequate funding for the World Bank.

For details, I refer the hon. Member to the communiqués of the interim and development committees, copies of which are being made available in the House of Commons Library.

Fuel and Power (VAT)

Mr. Spearing asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the actual and percentage increase in the cost of fuel and power by the imposition of value added tax on the basis sought by the Commission of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

CIVIL SERVICE

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Mates asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by the Management and Personnel Office in 1985, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Luce: The contracts awarded to management consultancy and accounting firms during the calendar year 1985 are as follows:

Consultancy firm and contract

Chinal Management Services Ltd.
Specialised training

Communication Audit
Review of written guidance to promotion boards

Coopers & Lybrand Associates
(i) Management/staff communications
(ii) Policy work and the Financial Management Initiative[1]

Diane Bailey Associates
(i) Training material on staff appraisal; training workshops
(ii) Trainers' resource pack on equal opportunities
(iii) Specialised training

Hay-MSL Management Consultants
(i) Evaluation of Performance Bonus Experiment
(ii) Means of assessing the potential and management development needs of staff at junior levels[1]

Imitax Ltd.
Workshops on job satisfaction/employee involvement

Imitax Ltd./Christine Howarth
Local Office Network Conference

IMS
Use of information technology in personnel work

Inbucon Management Consultants Ltd.
Case study on personnel and financial management linkages[1]

Industrial Training Services Ltd.
(i) Measuring training activity
(ii) Specialised training

Intra Systems Ltd.
Pilot study on the use of interactive video[1]

KMG Thomson McLintock
Review of office automation pilot programme in a government department

OD (Management Consultancy) Ltd.
Review of a productivity scheme

PA Personnel Services Ltd.
Study of the provision of information, advice and guidance on matters of employment law within the Civil Service

Peter Saunders Associates
Self instruction package on Government Accounting

Transform
Specialised training

[1] Costs for these studies were shared with other government departments.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress achieved by the Anglo-Irish conference.

Mr. Tom King: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if security co-operation between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland has improved since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Since the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement welcome progress has been made under article 9(a) of the agreement in developing measures to improve cross-border security co-operation. The three joint working parties established by the RUC and the Garda have now reported and the implementation of their recommendations will increase significantly the ability of the security forces to combat cross-border terrorism. We shall continue to press for the timely implementation of those recommendations and to seek additional ways of promoting still closer and more effective co-operation with the Irish authorities.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in what ways the level of violence in Northern Ireland has altered since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Scott: The level of Republican terrorism is much the same as it was in the immediate aftermath of the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement. During this period the security forces have had to contend with serious public disorder associated with Loyalist protests against the Anglo-Irish Agreement which has diverted police resources away from other vital duties especially the fight against terrorist crime. There has been a substantial increase in sectarian violence and vicious campaigns of intimidation against ordinary members of the public by Loyalist and Republican terrorist and paramilitary groups. Despite these great difficulties, and despite disgraceful attacks on its members and their homes and families, the RUC, ably supported by the regular Army and UDR, has continued to uphold the law with great courage and distinction.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing, on a monthly basis, whether there has been a change in civil disorder since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985.

Mr. Scott: The following table details the main categories of civil disorder on a monthly basis from 1 November 1984 to 30 September 1986:

	Deaths	Injuries	Shootings	Bombings (including devices defused)
1984				
November	6	42	19	6
December	2	74	14	9
1985				
January	1	34	19	9
February	20	70	19	13
March	3	25	11	11
April	4	52	21	20
May	6	53	14	9
June	3	105	17	23
July	—	182	9	13
August	5	116	21	32
September	3	86	15	44
October	1	91	18	12
Totals	54	930	197	201
1985				
November	6	31	11	10
December	2	71	21	20
1986				
January	4	71	12	16
February	5	44	23	7
March	3	186	18	14
April	4	110	46	17
May	10	91	23	20
June	1	78	9	9
July	12	354	31	17
August	5	204	33	40
September	6	52	16	14
Totals	58	1,292	243	184

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table detailing the acts of intimidation that have been reported to the police in Northern Ireland on a monthly basis since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985.

Mr. Scott: Statistics on incidents of an intimidatory or sectarian nature were not collated centrally until the beginning of March 1986. Since then they have been kept by four or five-week periods roughly equivalent to calendar months and are as follows:

Period beginning	Total
3 March	247
31 March	319
28 April	37
2 June	42
30 June	241
28 July	163
1 September[1]	99

[1] To 30 September

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what improvements the closer co-operation between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Republic of Ireland, since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, has produced in the situation in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Herbert George Kernaghan in Fermanagh on 15 October 1979; and if he will give details;

(2) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Fred Irwin in South Tyrone on 30 October 1979; and if he will give details;

(3) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Keith C. Richards in South Tyrone on 16 December 1979; and if he will give details;

(4) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Alan D. Ayrton in South Tyrone on 16 December 1979; and if he will give details;

(5) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of William John Beck in South Tyrone on 16 December 1979; and if he will give details;

(6) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Simon P. Evans in South Tyrone on 16 December 1979; and if he will give details;

(7) what information he has as to whether anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Stanley Hazelton, a constituent of South Tyrone shot in the Irish Republic on 22 December 1979 and as to details;

(8) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Robert James Crilly in Fermanagh on 3 January 1980; and if he will give details;

(9) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Aubrey A. Abercrombie in Fermanagh on 5 February 1980; and if he will give details;

(10) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Repbulican Army of Winston Howe in Fermanagh on 11 February 1980; and if he will give details;

(11) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Joseph Rose in Fermanagh on 11 February 1980; and if he will give details;

(12) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Victor Morrow in Fermanagh on 17 April 1980; and if he will give details;

(13) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Robert Landmer in Fermanagh on 7 July 1980; and if he will give details;

(14) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Robert Thompson in South Tyrone on 27 July 1980; and if he will give details;

(15) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Ernest Johnston in Fermanagh on 23 September 1980; and if he will give details;

(16) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Norman H. Donaldson in Fermanagh on 24 November 1980; and if he will give details;

(17) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Jack Donnelly in South Tyrone on 16 April 1981; and if he will give details;

(18) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Ronald Graham in Fermanagh on 5 June 1981; and if he will give details;

(19) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Stuart Montgomery in South Tyrone on 7 September 1981; and if he will give details;

(20) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Mark Evans in South Tyrone on 7 September 1981; and if he will give details.

Mr. Scott: There have been convictions in relation to three of these murders. One person was convicted of the murder of Mr. Aubrey Abercrombie and another of the murder of Mr. Ernest Johnston. The third conviction was connected with the murder of Ronald Graham where one person was convicted of possession of firearms.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to when the inquiry conducted by Mr. Colin Sampson into allegations concerning the Royal Ulster Constabulary will be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Mr. Sampson is expected shortly to complete the report requested by the Chief Constable of the RUC into allegations of misconduct by members of the RUC. It will then be submitted to the Chief Constable of the RUC; the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland will also receive a copy and will consider what directions to give as to criminal prosecutions.

It would be wrong to comment on specific allegations against any individual until after any criminal or disciplinary proceedings have been completed. However, I shall, at the earliest opportunity make a statement on matters of more general interest in Northern Ireland arising from the report.

DEFENCE

Military Bases

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what action he proposes to pursue in the light of the decision by Mildenhall magistrates to declare unlawful 27 byelaws made by his Department in relation to the United States air force base at Mildenhall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The decision of the Mildenhall magistrates has been referred by the Director of Public Prosecutions to the Divisional Court for a ruling,. I am not in a position to make further comment.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for the byelaws applying to other military bases in the United Kingdom, of the decision by Mildenhall magistrates to declare unlawful 27 byelaws made by his Department in relation to Mildenhall United States air force base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Ministry of Defence police will continue to take action under the byelaws at Mildenhall and other bases where there are similar byelaws.

Bon Ami

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Defence how, and based on what operational requirements, officials of RAF Strike Command calculated, at the conclusion of the inquiry into the loss of the Bon Ami off Kinlochbervie, Sutherland, that the cost of locating a search and rescue service helicopter in north-west Scotland would amount to £20 million; how this figure compares with the most recent establishment costs incurred in the United Kingdom for such a service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I wrote to the hon. Member on 5 September, and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Horses

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost to his Department of the services' involvement with horses, excluding the Household Cavalry, but including assistance at displays and shows.

Mr. Freeman: The annual cost of Army horses, excluding those in the Household Cavalry, is about £172,000.

Royal Ordnance Factories

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from the board of Royal Ordnance factories about the sale of Royal Ordnance factory, Leeds.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence had discussions with the chairman of Royal Ordnance plc prior to the announcement of the sale and exchanged correspondence with him. The chairman confirmed that the board of Royal Ordnance agreed in principle to the sale.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what terms the board of the Royal Ordnance factories has agreed to the sale of Royal Ordnance factory, Leeds to Vickers; and how this compares with its asset value.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Royal Ordnance plc and Vickers have signed a sale and purchase agreement, the details of which are subject to usual commercial confidentiality. The price is as described by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 24 July 1986, at column 618, and will not emerge finally until the audit of the net asset valuation has been completed.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what factors were taken into account in the decision to sell Royal Ordnance factory, Leeds to Vickers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There was no single overriding factor in our decision. We took the view that the sale was

the course which best satisfied the needs of the Ministry of Defence as a purchaser of tanks on the most economic basis possible; the longer term future of tank design and manufacture in the United Kingdom; and the aspirations of the work force to a secure and prosperous future in the business.

Procurement Executive

Mr. Dover asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the regulations regarding the length of time that should elapse between a member of his Procurement Executive leaving the Department and joining a private sector company which has recently been awarded a contract by his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All members of the Ministry of Defence, civilian and military are required to seek formal approval prior to accepting any appointment with a defence-related business. This requirement extends for a period of two years after either retirement or resignation. This process provides the Department with the opportunity to examine the circumstances of the proposed appointment, the individual's past official contact with the company and it's competitors. Waiting periods, when imposed, may vary depending on the relevant circumstances. Approval of an application may be withheld for a period of up to two years following an individual's retirement or resignation.

Meteorological Services

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what consultations his Department held with representatives of the aviation industry before evidence was given to the Committee on Public Accounts on the financial arrangements for the provision of meteorological services;

(2) what consultations his Department held with representatives of the Civil Aviation Authority before evidence was given to the Committee on Public Accounts on the financial arrangements for the provision of meteorological services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No special consultations were held with the Civil Aviation Authority or the aviation industry regarding either the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on financial arrangements for meteorological services or the evidence to be given to the Committee by Ministry of Defence witnesses. However, there are regular dicussions between the CAA and the Met Office which allow the former to represent the interests of the civil aviation industry, in addition to frequent informal contacts the Met Office has with individual air operators.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements are made by his Department to ensure that the provision of meteorological services takes account of the interests of the civil aviation industry.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since, for the purposes of international civil aviation, the Civil Aviation Authority is designated as the responsible meteorological authority for the United Kingdom, the Meteorological Office has to meet the essential requirements for meteorological services as specified by the CAA.

Defence-related Work (Scotland)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are employed in defence-related work in Scotland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I shall answer shortly.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are employed in places in Scotland at which work related to the strategic nuclear deterrent is carried out.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I shall answer shortly.

7th Gurkha Rifles

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the incident in Hawaii in May, which resulted in a number of soldiers from the 1st Battalion Duke of Edinburgh's Own 7th Gurkha Rifles being dismissed, the number dismissed, the number that appealed, and the number re-instated; and what is his policy regarding the continued employment of Gurkhas within the British Army.

Mr. Freeman: One hundred and thirty six soldiers of support company, 1st Battalion 7th Duke of Edinburgh's own Gurkha Rifles (1/7 GR) took part in Exercise UNION PACIFIC in Hawaii between 13 April and 28 May 1986. The exercise involved company level field training, some of it in conjunction with United States marines and army units. The company was commanded by acting Major Corin Pearce, 31, a non-Gurkhali-speaking officer seconded from the Royal Anglian Regiment.

On 25 May, after the company had returned to camp following an organised off-duty party to mark the end of the exercise, an apparently spontaneous disturbance erupted during which first a Queen's Gurkha officer, Captain Chandra Kumar Pradhan, and subsequently the company commander were violently assaulted and injured. Each sustained two broken ribs, and Major Pearce also suffered head wounds requiring 15 stitches. The violence continued for some time, only two or three Gurkha soldiers or NCOs seeking to intervene or assist. Order was eventually restored with the assistance of two young British officers.

On the return of support company to Hong Kong, a full official inquiry by the special investigation branch of the Royal Military Police was set in train, the normal investigative procedure following such a serious episode. At the initial stages of the investigation, 18 suspects were held under arrest, but they were subsequently released because of the lack of corroborated evidence. Many of the company are known to have been involved in the incident to a greater or lesser extent, and it is certain that most witnessed it, but positive identification again proved difficult, both because of the confusion in the sudden fracas itself and because of the refusal of the soldiers present to give evidence about individuals involved in the assault. The available evidence of identification from various officers was insufficient to frame court martial proceedings against all the ringleaders, nor could this evidence be corroborated.

It was explained to the men that it is a military duty —as indeed it is a civil one—for witnesses to tell an official inquiry all that they know, and that failure to do so was in itself a further offence. Further opportunities were offered for the soldiers to come forward with

evidence to the investigators: none did so. The inquiry was therefore closed, and the report referred upwards through the chain of command.

The attack on the two officers and the subsequent refusal of the men fully to co-operate in the inquiry were both serious offences. Together they led to a complete breakdown of trust between the men and their officers, rendering the soldiers militarily ineffective. I should emphasise that only relatively minor grievances emerged from the inquiry, and certainly nothing which in any way justified the major breach of discipline. In particular, I would mention that the allegations—made much of in media comment—that the company commander made remarks of a racist nature have been fully investigated, and no evidence found to support them. All the soldiers well knew, from their service in the Army, of the procedures for redress of complaint, which include direct access to more senior officers than their company commander should they believe it necessary.

Faced with a very serious disciplinary offence which could not be ignored or condoned and with which it was not possible to deal by court martial proceedings, the Army authorities had no alternative but to recommend the administrative discharge of all the 123 members of support company. In identical circumstances, exactly the same action would have been taken in a company of British soldiers, the key issue being that without the bond of trust a soldier is militarily ineffective.

The discharges were recommended unanimously right up the chain of command by the battalion, itself, by the Brigade of Gurkhas, by the Commander British Forces Hong Kong and by senior Army authorities in London. The recommendation was then referred to and approved by Ministers, including the Secretary of State for Defence.

The men of support company were told that administrative discharge was being considered, and advised of their right to make representations. In only 36 cases, approximately one third, were representations submitted. Each was carefully considered and discharge was subsequently rescinded in 12 cases. All those who have been discharged, a total of 110 men to date, have been advised that they have the right of appeal. The continuing availability of impartial advice and the procedures for submitting appeals on an individual basis have also been explained to them. To date two such appeals have been submitted and these are still being considered up the chain of command. At the time of this statement therefore no one has been reinstated. As the men have been administratively discharged, they retain in full their eligibility for pension or gratuity earned by their service up to the date of discharge.

We regard this unhappy incident as an isolated and wholly untypical one which in no way detracts from the very high esteem in which the Brigade of Gurkhas is held. The brigade has a long tradition of gallant and loyal service, and both this Government and the Army are determined to ensure that this episode damages neither our very close and friendly relations with Nepal nor the future role of the Gurkhas in the British Army. As my right honourable Friend the former Secretary of State for Defence made clear in a press statement on 27 September 1985, this role will continue beyond our withdrawal from Hong Kong in 1997. (The text of the statement, which is headed "Hong Kong Stability Permits Force Reductions", is in the Library).

Departmental Land

Sir Richard Body asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many acres of land are owned by his Department to which there is no right of public access at all; and how many such areas there were in 1976.

Mr. Freeman: Records are not maintained in a way that would enable this information to be provided. It is, however, Ministry of Defence policy to allow access for recreational purposes where such use is consistent with operational activity, security, safety and the activities of tenant farmers.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the establishment of, and land owned by, or leased by, or in which an interest is held by *(a)* the Territorial Army, *(b)* the Home Service Force, *(c)* the Royal Observer Corps, *(d)* recruitment offices of the armed forces and *(e)* the cadet Forces in Wales.

Mr. Freeman [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1986, c. *163*]: The following are the main locations which either the Ministry of Defence, which takes responsibility for the armed forces recruiting offices, or the Wales Territorial Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserve Association, which is responsible for providing accommodation for the Territorial Army, Home Service Force, the Combined Cadet Force, the Army Cadet Force and the Air Training Corps, owns, leases or holds an interest in Wales. Provision of accommodation and facilities for the Royal Observer Corps and the Sea Cadet Corps are not a matter for this Department.

	Freehold/ Leasehold
a. Territorial Army	
MID GLAMORGAN	
TA Centre Quarella Road, Bridgend	Freehold
TA Centre, Pentre	Freehold
TA Centre, The Broadway, Pontypridd	Freehold
TA Centre, Smith Street, Maesteg	Freehold
SOUTH GLAMORGAN	
TA Centre, Llandaff North, Station Road, Cardiff	Leasehold
Maindy Barracks, Cardiff	[1]Freehold
TA Centre, Park Street, Cardiff	Leasehold
University Officers Training Corps, 14 St. Andrews Crescent, Cardiff	Freehold
WEST GLAMORGAN	
TA Centre, Gorseinon	Freehold
TA Centre, Rugby Road, Neath	Leasehold
TA Centre, The Grange, West Cross, Swansea	Freehold
Morfa, Swansea	Leasehold
TA Centre, Richardson Street, Swansea	Leasehold
CLWYD	
TA Centre, Drill Hall, Connah's Quay	Freehold
TA Centre, Bryn Eirias Groes, Colwyn Bay	Freehold
TA Centre, High Street, Mold	Freehold
TA Centre, Marine Road, Prestatyn	Freehold
Hightown Barracks, Wrexham	[1]Freehold
TA Centre, John Street, Rhyl	Freehold
Earl Road, Mold	Freehold
DYFED	
TA Centre, Glyndwr Road, Aberystwyth	Leasehold
Picton Barracks, Carmarthen	Freehold
TA Centre, Margaret Street, Ammanford	Freehold
TA Centre, Carlett Road, Haverfordwest	Leasehold
Garages, Picton Playing Fields, Haverfordwest	Leasehold
TA Centre, Murray Street, Llanelli	Leasehold

	Freehold/ Leasehold
Garage, North Dock, Llanelli	Freehold
GWENT	
Ty Coch Way Cwmbran	Freehold
Bryn Road, Cefn Forest Estate, Blackwood	Freehold
TA Centre, Alexander Road, Abertillery	Freehold
TA Centre, High Street, Blackwood	Freehold
TA Centre, Cwmcarn	Freehold
TA Centre, Beaufort Road, Ebbw Vale	Freehold
The Castle, Monmouth	Free from DOE
Vauxhall Camp, Monmouth	[1]Freehold
TAC Malpas, Newport	Freehold
Raglan Barracks, Newport	Leasehold
TAC Osborne Road, Pontypool	Freehold
GWYNEDD	
TA Centre, Glynne Road, Bangor	Freehold
TA Centre, The Barracks, Llanberis Road, Caernarvon	Freehold
TA Centre, Victoria Road, Caernarvon	Freehold
TA Centre, Maeshyfryd Road, Holyhead	Freehold
TA Centre, Argyle Road, Llandudno	Freehold
b. Home Service Force	
TAC Carlett Road, Haverfordwest, Dyfed	Leasehold
Hightown Barracks, Wrexham, Clwyd	[1]Freehold
TAC Bryn Eirias Groes, Colwyn Bay, Clwyd	Freehold
The Barracks, Brecon, Powys	Freehold
TAC Drill Hall, Connah's Quay	Freehold
TAC Quarella Road, Bridgend, Mid-Glam	Freehold
Maindy Barracks, Cardiff, South-Glam	[1]Freehold
TAC Richardson Street, Swansea, West-Glam	Leasehold
TAC Rugby Road, Neath	Leasehold
TAC Murray Street, Llanelli, Dyfed	Leasehold

c. Recruitment Offices

All leasehold sites

Clwyd	Wrexham (2)
Dyfed	Llanelli
Gwent	Newport
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil
South Glamorgan	Cardiff (2)
West Glamorgan	Swansea (2)

Cadet forces

d. Wales TAVR Association provides accommodation for 153 Army and Combined Cadet Force detachments, 88 Air Training Corps Squadrons. The Sea Cadet Association provides accommodation for 22 Sea Cadet units, two of which are on sites leased from the Ministry of defence. Principal army cadet training centres are as follows:

Clwyd, Kinmell Park Camp, St. Asaph	Freehold
Dyfed, Bryn Road, Lampeter	Freehold
Glamorgan, Bethesda Street, Merthyr Tydfil	Leasehold
Gwynedd, Bethesda	[1]Freehold
Powys, Gypsy Castle, Hay on Wye	Freehold
Gwent, Raglan Barracks, Newport	Leasehold

[1] MOD Freehold.

Amphibious Shipping

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now announce his decision on the future of amphibious shipping.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As has been made clear to the house, it is our intention to make an announcement on this subject before the end of the year.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the nature of the work carried out so far by the Property Services Agency's directorate of defence on item 1148; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Property Services Agency provided at HMS Warrior a new underground area together with a diesel generator building and associated interior and exterior utilities.

Education Costs

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what has been the total amount of money spent in allowances to his Department's personnel and certain ranks of the armed forces posted overseas to have their children educated privately in each year since 1981 in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* in England and Wales;

(2) what financial assistance his Department offered to Ministry of Defence personnel or various ranks of the armed forces posted overseas to have their children educated as boarders in private schools in the United Kingdom; and if he will publish a table showing since 1984 *(a)* the schools involved and the area of the education authority they are located in, *(b)* the amount of money involved at each school and *(c)* the number of pupils involved for Scotland, England and Wales.

Mr. Freeman: Boarding school allowance is available to service parents, regardless of rank, to assist them in providing continuity of education for their children in spite of their own liability to posting moves both at home and overseas. The allowance is currently being paid in respect of about 21,500 service children, attending several hundred schools throughout the United Kingdom; information in the form requested could therefore not be provided without disproportionate effort. It is estimated that about one fifth of the children concerned are attending schools run by local education authorities rather than independent schools.

The overall cost of the allowance in each year since 1981 was as follows:

	£ million (final outturn)
1981-82	60·00
1982-83	66·30
1983-84	76·50
1984-85	78·00
1985-86	85·00

Over the same period a similar allowance has also been paid to a small number of MOD officials serving overseas. Expenditure in each year has been approximately £0·5 million.

Chile (Warships)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the warships sold by the United Kingdom to Chile since September 1973 giving warship type and date of delivery in each case.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since September 1973 the following warships have been sold by the United Kingdom to Chile:

New Construction Ships

Name	*Type*	*Commissioned*
CNS Condell	Leander Class Frigate	December 1973
CNS Almirante Lynch	Leander Class Frigate	May 1974
CNS O'Brien	Oberon Class Submarine	April 1976
CNS Hyatt	Oberon Class Submarine	September 1976

Former Royal Navy Ships

Name	*Type*	*Handed over*
CNS Prat (ex HMS Norfolk)	County Class Destroyer	April 1982
CNS Cochrane (ex HMS Antrim)	County Class Destroyer	June 1984
CNS Almirante Latorre (ex HMS Glamorgan)	County Class Destroyer	October 1986

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Associations

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his replies to the right hon. Member for Brent, East on 4 July, *Official Report*, column *675*, how much was provided for housing associations to build new homes by his Department in each of the last three years; and how much finance was provided by the private sector.

Mr. Tracey: Development finance for registered housing associations' projects for fair rent and low cost home ownership is provided either by the Housing Corporation within the approved development programme agreed by this Department, or by local authorities within their housing investment programmes, or by the private sector. The Department then pays housing association grant on completion of the projects. The Department does not hold information on private sector funding. The figures for Housing Corporation and local authority investment in providing homes either by newbuild or rehabilitation are as follows:

Gross lending to Housing Association (England) for fair rent and low cost home ownership

	Housing Corporation £ million	*Local authorities £ million*
1983-84	734	138
1984-85	697	149
1985-86	711	130

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his replies to the right hon. Member for Brent, East on 4 July, *Official Report*, column *675*, how many homes for sale or shared ownership housing associations applied to his Department for finance to build; and what proportion of these bids were actually granted in each of the last three years.

Mr. Tracey: Housing associations make their applications for such finance either to the Housing Corporation or to local authorities. We do not hold information on the number made or the proportion granted.

Housing Market

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply of 14 July, *Official Report*, column *322*, what assumptions the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State had in mind concerning the relationships between different sectors of the housing market in order to prepare estimates of the current shortfall between demand for and the supply of public rented accommodation to meet both general and special needs which cannot be met by other means; and what evidence his Department has concerning the extent to which such assumptions may or may not hold true over time.

Mr. Tracey: This Government have brought about fundamental changes in the housing market by making it possible for almost three quarters of a million council tenants in England to buy their own homes, and by encouraging the private sector to cater for a much wider range of housing needs. For the future, we are aiming for further, equally fundamental, changes through further increases in owner-occupation and the creation of a healthy and diversified private rented sector. Because of the changing interplay of all these factors, it would be inappropriate at the present time to make detailed assessments of the balance of supply and demand for public rented housing.

Homelessness

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homeless households were recorded by local authorities in bed and breakfast accommodation *(a)* at the end of December 1985 and *(b)* at the end of March 1986; what is his Department's assessment of the reasons for the difference between these figures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patten: In England there were 4,270 households in bed and breakfast accommodation at the end of December 1985 and 4,940 at the end of March 1986. This increase will reflect such factors as those referred to in my reply on 30 January, at column 610, to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). We do not know how many of the households concerned were placed in bed and breakfast accommodation pending inquiries into their circumstances.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his Department's estimate of the number of homeless households accepted by London boroughs who were placed in bed and breakfast accommodation at the end of the first quarter of the current year; what figure has been supplied to his Department by Shelter based on returns from London boroughs concerning the number of homeless households they placed in bed and breakfast accommodation on the same date; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list those local authorities failing to provide his Department with information *(a)* within the last quarter, *(b)* within the last half year, *(c)* within the last year and *(d)* within the last two years on (i) the number of homeless households accepted in their area and (ii) the number of homeless households placed in bed and breakfast accommodation at the end of the quarter as requested on his Department's quarterly PIE forms; what steps his Department is taking to improve local authorities' response rate to his Department's PIE forms; and what steps his Department is taking to revise its grossing-up procedure to take account of non-returns in the publication of the quarterly homelessness statistics.

Mr. John Patten: It is important that we have an accurate picture of the extent of homelessness and therefore that local authorities respond promptly to our regular requests for information on the subject. Most local authorities do so, but regrettably a number do not. The table sets out those authorities which have yet to respond in respect of the last published quarterly statistics—the second quarter of 1986—and those who did not respond to earlier requests for information.

Given the lack of response from certain local authorities, the Department's aggregate figures on homelessness have necessarily involved some estimation.

We are continually seeking to improve the response from local authorities. In addition we are considering possible adjustments to our methods of estimation.

Homelessness: Local authorities failing to respond to the quarterly P1(E) in respect of the second quarter of 1986

	(1) In respect of last quarter	*(2) In respect of last half year*	*(3) In respect of last year*	*(4) In respect of last 2 years*
Camden	X	X	X	X
Newham	X	X	X	X
North Bedfordshire	X	X	X	X
Oswestry	X	X	X	
Tower Hamlets	X	X	X	
Hinkley and Bosworth	X	X	X	
Stockton-on-Tees	X	X	X	
Manchester	X	X	X	
Sefton	X	X	X	
Hackney	X	X		
Lambeth	X	X		
Christchurch	X	X		
Daventry	X	X		
Hackney	X	X		
Hillingdon	X	X		
Lewisham	X	X		
Purbeck	X	X		
Salford	X	X		
Sandwell	X	X		
South Herefordshire	X	X		
South Oxfordshire	X	X		
Watford	X	X		
Adur	X			
Barking	X			
Basingstoke	X			
Bexley	X			
Brent	X			
Burnley	X			
Bury	X			
Carrick	X			
Craven	X			
Eastbourne	X			
Epsom and Ewell	X			
Gloucester	X			
Haringey	X			
Havering	X			
Hertsmere	X			
Hyndburn	X			
Kingston-upon-Hull	X			
Kirklees	X			
Loughborough	X			
Lichfield	X			
Lincoln	X			
Luton	X			
Mansfield	X			
Medina	X			
Mendip	X			
Merton	X			
Mole Valley	X			
North Shropshire	X			
Portsmouth	X			
Preston	X			
Purbeck	X			
Reading	X			
Rother	X			
Selby	X			
Sheffield	X			
South Hams	X			
Stockport	X			
Three Rivers	X			
Thurrock	X			
Torbay	X			
Walsall	X			
Waltham Forest	X			
Warrington	X			
West Lancashire	X			
West Lindsey	X			
Wirral	X			
Worthing	X			
Wycombe	X			
Wyre Forest	X			
York	X			

Ronan Point

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken subsequent to the discovery of further faults in the construction of Ronan Point, Canning town.

Mr. Tracey: The Building Research Establishment began a detailed appraisal of Ronan Point in 1984 and identified faults in its construction. We therefore published a report of that appraisal in May 1985, and advised every local authority in England which owned similar blocks on the action they ought to take. The evidence uncovered by the demolition process reinforces the advice we then gave, but it does not give any grounds for modifying it.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has approved for a study to be commissioned by the London Docklands Development Corporation on the social impact of its activities; and if he will state the expenditure approved by the corporation for this study.

Mr. John Patten: The London Docklands Development Corporation has commissioned a study to examine the social impact of its housing, employment and

other programmes on local communities in the Isle of Dogs. The study will cost just under £50,000, and no departmental approval was required.

Housing and Planning Bill

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received from local authority tenants' organisations and from individual local authority tenants concerning clause 5 of the Housing and Planning Bill; what proportions have expressed support for or opposition to the clause as it stands; what specific issues have been raised; and whether he intends either to withdraw clause 5 from the Bill or to bring forward further amendments to the clause in the light of these representations.

Mr. John Patten: We have received over 500 written representations about clause 5 (now clause 9) of the Housing and Planning Bill from people who are local authority tenants or from tenants' organisations. Two per cent. specifically opposed it and 98 per cent. asked questions or expressed concern.

The main concerns appear to stem from a fundamental misunderstanding of the purpose and effect of the clause. The worries were that the clause would remove the statutory security of tenure we gave council tenants for the first time in 1980; that despite the obligation the clause would impose on councils to consult tenants and to obtain the Secretary of State's approval before disposing of property for redevelopment and improvement and to offer alternative accommodation, it would afford inadequate safeguards; that, despite the enhanced opportunities it would give to bring in extra resources from the private sector for repair and improvement, the housing stock would somehow be diminished; that the chance of getting more homes repaired by private contractors would remove existing means of redress against poor workmanship and would reduce employment; and that the opportunity to harness the resources from private sector to bring empty houses back into use would add to homelessness.

The Government have no intentions of withdrawing or further amending the clause into which we have already built exceptional safeguards for the secure tenants (and which will extend their eligibility for home-loss payments).

Written Answers

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average cost of answering a written parliamentary question to his Department; and at what level he considers the cost to be disportionate.

Mr. Ridley: Comprehensive information on the costs of answering parliamentary questions to my Department is not available. A Civil Service wide survey, based on staff by grade, estimates the average cost of answering a written question to be £43.

An advisory figure of £200 is used throughout Government as the level at which consideration might be given to whether the cost of a full reply in a particular case is justified. Individual cases are considered on their merits, and there is no maximum level of costs which automatically disqualifies a question from answer.

Toxic Wastes

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list those laboratories to which the Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate refer samples for the monitoring of PCBs, PCDs, PCDDs, PCDFs and other toxic wastes in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: Samples taken by the industrial air pollution inspectorate are analysed at the Health and Safety Executive's laboratories at Cricklewood, north London. Additionally they have commissioned the school of chemical sciences, university of East Anglia, to analyse soil and herbage for PCBs, PCDDs and PCDFs.

Honorary Aldermen

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to which local authorities have made use of their powers under the Local Government Act to appoint honorary aldermen.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has no information. The appointment of honorary aldermen is entirely at the discretion of the local authorities, and they do not have to notify him.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when his inspector's decision in respect of the planning appeal held on 1 July in respect of appeal reference No. APP/DO325/A/85/034973 will be known.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend's decision on the apeal was issued on 16 October 1986.

LPG Storage Tanks

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to take to issue guidance to local planning authorities on the installation of liquified petroleum gas storage tanks on domestic premises.

Mr. Tracey: The Health and Safety Executive's guidance note CS5 "The Storage of Liquid Petroleum Gas at Fixed Installations", which is available from HMSO, is currently being revised to include more specific guidance relating to liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) on domestic premises. Local planning authorities are required to consult HSE on the safety aspects of planning applications which involve the presence of 25 tonnes or more of LPG. HSE are ready to provide advice on other applications if the planning authority considers that there are special circumstances which make advice on safety aspects necessary.

GLC (Seaside and Country Homes)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the current state of negotiations with Anchor Housing Association regarding the Greater London Council's seaside and country homes.

Mr. Chope: Negotiations are in progress but not yet finalised.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have taken place between

his Department and the London Residuary Body regarding a takeover of all or any of the Greater London Council's seaside and country homes by private concerns.

Mr. Chope: My Department is being kept informed by the London Residuary Body of developments.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue a direction to the London Residuary Body to guarantee 100 per cent. nomination rights for Londoners to the Greater London Council's seaside and country homes scheme in the event of any sale or transfer to private concerns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The London Residuary Body is aware of the statement on 20 February 1986 by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) that the homes will be reserved for London's elderly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, pursuant to the reply of 25 July, *Official Report*, column *559*, he will give the date of the letter from the London Residuary Body referring to support from the Association of London Authorities for the transfer of the Greater London Council's seaside and country homes to a housing association where fair rents apply.

Mr. Chope: The letter which referred to support from the ALA was from the Greater London Council, dated 5 November 1985.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish all directions issued to the London Residuary Body under section 78 of the Local Government Act 1985 concerning the form of its statement of accounts for 1985-86; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has formalised directions regarding the drawing up and presentation of the accounts of the London Residuary Body for 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: A formal direction regarding the presentation of statements of accounts for 1985-86 was issued to all residuary bodies on 26 July. There is no legislative requirement for the Secretary of State to publish such directions, but I am placing copies in the Library for information.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total amount of borrowing requested by the London Residuary Body in 1986-87;

(2) what capital payments are the subject of a request for consent by the London Residuary Body in its letter of 8 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) on 25 July at column *559*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have been held between his Department and the London Residuary Body concerning the non-payment by the London Residuary Body of pensions to a number of former Greater London Council staff in April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The London Residuary Body has kept my Department informed of progress on the payment of pensions.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether discussions have been held with his Department concerning procedures for approval of disposal of property by the London Residuary Body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My Department issued guidance on property rights and liabilities last August after consultation with interested parties.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make an order under section 77 of the Local Government Act 1985 to direct the London Residuary Body to distribute all capital receipts to the London boroughs for the purposes of capital expenditure.

Mr. Chope: The Department is considering representations made in response to the revised draft order circulated for comment on 19 September 1986.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what items of expenditure by the London Residuary Body have been the subject of discussion with his Department since August 1985.

Mr. Chope: The Department has from time to time discussed with the LRB items of expenditure relevant to its functions under the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the matters which have formed the subject of informal advice by Ministers in his Department to the London Residuary Body in the course of discussions held since 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Matters relevant to the LRB's functions under the Local Government Act 1985 are the subject of informal discussions between Ministers and the LRB from time to time.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue a direction under section 65 of the Local Government Act 1985 to the London Residuary Body to require it to hold regular consultation with the London boroughs on matters of mutual concern.

Mr. Chope: No. The conduct of the day-to-day affairs of the London Residuary Body is a matter for it to decide. The London Residuary Body consults London boroughs as and when necessary.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have taken place between his Department and the London Residuary Body concerning the shortfall in the income of the London Residuary Body between 1 April and 31 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: There have been no such discussions, and I am not aware of any such shortfall.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to lay before the House the annual report of the London Residuary Body; and if all the residuary bodies' reports will be laid together.

Mr. Chope: We expect that the annual reports of all the residuary bodies will be laid at the same time, early next Session.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has received the final formal submission of the accounts of the London Residuary Body for 1985-86 as required under section 78(5) of the Local Government Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements are being made for inspection of the London Residuary Body's accounts by London ratepayers.

Mr. Chope: This is a matter for the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 25 July, *Official Report*, column *559*, and to correspondence from the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary dated 14 August, whether a response has now been sent to the London Residuary Body concerning its request for borrowing dated 8 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Department's officials have discussed the possible borrowing needs of the London Residuary Body with officers of the body on a number of occasions since 8 July. In the light of those discussions a direct response to the letter is not now appropriate.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply of 25 July, *Official Report*, column *559*, what representations have been considered by his Department from interested parties in relation to borrowing by the London Residuary Body in 1986-87.

Mr. Chope: The Department has received no such representations, other than those from the London Residuary Body itself, about which I am answering other questions from the hon. Member today.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Newham, North-West can expect a response from the chairman of the London Residuary Body to points raised in the debate on 23 May as promised in that debate and subsequently in letters from Ministers on 6 June and 6 August; and in the written answer of 25 July, *Official Report*, column *562*.

Mr. Chope: I understand that the London Residuary Body will respond this week to the points raised.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply on 21 April, *Official Report*, column *65-6*, if he is satisfied that right hon. and hon. Members are able to gain adequate information regarding the activities of the London Residuary Body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I am confident that the residuary bodies are providing information in response to all reasonable querries.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a breakdown of the moneys spent by the London Residuary Body on entertainment in respect of board members and employees in 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: This is a matter for the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by the London Residuary Body on salaries and expenses for board members since 31 March.

Mr. Chope: Board members' salaries are paid in accordance with their annual remuneration. Expenses are a matter for the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, pursuant to the reply of 25 July 1986, *Official Report*, column *561*, any discussions were held between his Department and the London Residuary Body concerning the decision of the London Residuary Board to award special payments to employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the hon. Member by my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) on 25 July at column *561*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether, pursuant to the reply dated 25 July, *Official Report*, column *560*, he will publish the guidance issued to the London Residuary Body by his Department relating to financial rights and liabilities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether, pursuant to the reply dated 25 July, *Official Report*, column *560*, he will publish guidance issued to the London Residuary Body concerning property rights and liabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Consolidated guidance to residuary bodies on property and financial rights and liabilities was issued on 7 August. Copies were sent simultaneously to successors and to other interested parties. A copy has been placed in the House of Commons Library. A personal copy was sent to the hon. Member on 19 August.

Hampstead Heath

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether any discussions have been held between his Department and the London Residuary Body concerning further consultation on the future of Hampstead Heath;

(2) by what date he expects Hampstead Heath to pass from the London Residuary Body to a successor body;

(3) if he will publish the name of each respondent to the consultation exercise on the future of Hampstead Heath;

(4) what was the number of responses received to the consultation exercise into the future of Hampstead Heath; and what was the total number of responses in favour of each of the options proposed, and of the option proposed separately by the London borough of Camden;

(5) if he will direct the London Residuary Body to publish responses received to the recent consultation exercise on the future of Hampstead Heath.

Mr. Chope: The London Residuary Body's consultation exercise finished on 30 September. No future consultations of a similar nature on Hampstead Heath are envisaged. LRB's recommendations to my right hon. Friend will be submitted in due course. A decision on the date of transfer will be made in the light of those recommendations and any subsequent discussions with the LRB or other bodies.

The publication of responses received by the LRB, or an analysis of those responses, is a matter for the LRB.

GLC (Balances)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what discussions have been held with his Department covering the distribution of balances of the former Greater London Council to all London boroughs in monthly instalments from 1 May; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions with his Department concerning the timing of the release of Greater London Council's balances by the London Residuary Board to the London boroughs were held between 1 April and 19 May.

Mr. Chope: The distribution of GLC balances has been discussed with the London Residuary Body on a number of occasions. Under section 77(4) of the Local Government Act 1985 the timing and method of such distribution is at the discretion of the residuary body.

GLC Staff (Detriment Payments)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have been held between his Department and the London Residuary Body over delays in the payment of detriment to former Greater London Council staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The payment of detriment is one of the matters about which the London Residuary Body has kept the Department informed.

Thames Barrier

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether discussions have been held by his Department with the London Residuary Body over outstanding payments of contracts relating to the Thames barrier; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The London Residuary Body has kept the Department informed of progress on these payments.

Thamesmead

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether discussions have been held by his Department with the London Residuary Body or Thamesmead Town Ltd. concerning the numbers, and the terms and conditions of staff employed at Thamesmead, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Staffing issues at Thamesmead are primarily a matter for the London Residuary Body and Thamesmead town, but my Department is being kept informed of progress.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the terms of transfer of Thamesmead from the London Residuary Body to Thamesmead Town Ltd. have been decided; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Negotiations are currently taking place between the London Residuary Body and Thamesmead town.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue a direction to prevent the sale of development land in Thamesmead following any transfer from the London Residuary Body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No. That will be a matter for Thamesmead town to decide.

GLC (Industrial and Commercial Assets)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the reason for the withdrawal by his Department of a consultative document on the transfer to the London boroughs of the Greater London Council's industrial and commercial assets by the London Residuary Body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Draft guidance to all residuary bodies on property and financial rights and liabilities was revised in the light of my Departments' consultations with residuary bodies, successors, and other interested parties, and was issued on 7 August. There is no question of any consultative document having been withdrawn by my Department.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue a direction to the London Residuary Body to require it to transfer the Greater London Council's industrial and commercial assets to the London boroughs.

Mr. Chope: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue a direction to the London Residuary Body to require it to make available to the London boroughs the option of transfer of the Greater London Council's industrial and commercial assets to them in advance of disposal to private bodies.

Mr. Chope: No.

Football Matches

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what football matches *(a)* he and *(b)* the Minister for Sport have attended in the current season in an official capacity.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has attended no football matches during the current season. I attended the Football League match between Everton and Manchester United on 21 September.

Football Hooliganism

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants are employed in his Department on the specific problem of combating football hooliganism.

Mr. Tracey: There are six civil servants in the Department's sport and recreation division who devote a portion of their time to football-related issues, including combating hooliganism.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources he has made available to the Football League to assist in the campaign against hooliganism.

Mr. Tracey £3 million of public funding has been provided through the Sports Council since 1978 for schemes creating stronger links between football clubs and their communities. The longer term aim has been to discourage hooliganism by bringing fans, particularly

younger ones, into closer association with clubs. The council works with the Football Trust. The trust's contribution has exceeded £1 million.

Schemes of this type also receive support from the community programme. A recent new pilot project involves the funding of 61 participants, at a cost of about £250,000, at six League clubs in the north-west. These clubs are operating pilot projects for the "Football in the Community" scheme developed by the Footballers Further Education and Vocational Training Society which is a joint Football League and Professional Footballers Association body. The Manpower Service Commission also funds, at a cost of about £2·5 million, 700 youth training scheme places at Football League clubs.

London (Strategic Guidance)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the public arrangements and the scale of consultation undertaken by his Department in connection with strategic guidance for London; how many civil servants are involved in his Department; and what is the total budget.

Mr. Tracey: The Department is currently consulting the London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) and other interested bodies on the timing and content of the guidance proposed in my noble Friend, Lord Elton's letter of 24 July to the chairman of LPAC. The Department expects to discuss these proposals with LPAC shortly. There will be wide public consultation on a draft of the guidance in due course.

On staffing, I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 21 October 1985 at column *105*. Currently four posts in the unit are filled and a fifth will be filled shortly. The remaining two posts will be taken up as and when the need arises.

GLC (Scientific Services)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans for the national funding of the Greater London Council's scientific services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

GLC (Research and Intelligence Service)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have been held between his Department and the London Residuary Body on the future of the Greater London Council's research and intelligence service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: This is one of the matters about which the London Residuary Body has kept the Department informed.

GLC (Welfare Rights Service)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have been held between his Department and the London Residuary Body on the future of the Greater London Council's welfare rights service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: This is one of the matters about which the London Residuary Body has kept the Department informed.

Correspondence

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Newham, North-West can expect to receive a reply to his letter sent to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 26 August regarding the future of Thamesmead and the seaside and country homes.

Mr. Chope: I replied to the hon. Member on 20 October.

Croxteth Hall and Country Park, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made with the setting up of a trust to administer Croxteth hall and country park, Liverpool; and when he expects to be able to name the chairman and members of the trust.

Mr. Waldegrave: I hope to make an announcement shortly.

Trust for London

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations have been held with voluntary organisations in London concerning the operations of the Trust for London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The operation of the Trust for London is the responsibility of its trustees.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment by what date he expects the Trust for London to begin its operations.

Mr. Chope: The operation of the Trust for London is the responsibility of its trustees. My right hon. Friend intends that £10 million should be made available to the trust by 31 March 1987.

International Garden Festival Site, Liverpool

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of the former Liverpool international garden festival site.

Mr. John Patten: Following the unfortunate collapse of Transworld Leisure plc the garden festival site is now back under the control of the Merseyside development corporation. Whilst the corporation considers the future of the site, it will continue to maintain the gardens to their customary high standard.

I can assure the people of Merseyside that at least the 45 acres of Riverside park will be open for them to enjoy next summer.

Hainault Forest

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to make proposals relating to the current management of Hainault forest by the London Residuary Body, following the statement of the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the hon.

Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) on 23 July, *Official Report*, column *339*; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Hainault forest passed on abolition to the London boroughs of Redbridge and Havering and to Essex county council. It is being managed by Redbridge on behalf of all the councils. My hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) has written to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) correcting the statement she made on 23 July at column *339*.

London (Computer Services)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply of 25 July, *Official Report*, column *561*. what matters covering the future of computer services in London currently provided by the London Residuary Body have been discussed with his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Discussions are continuing between my Department and the London Residuary Body on matters for which the LRB is responsible under the Local Government Act 1985.

Residuary Bodies

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the salaries of chairmen and members of each of the residuary bodies *(a)* currently and *(b)* on appointment.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Member	*Days worked per week*	*Remuneration on appointment (£ per annum)*	*Current remuneration (from 1 July 1986) (£ per annum)*
London Residuary Body			
Sir Godfrey Taylor (Chairman)	Full time	50,000	51,700
A. Blakemore, CBE	2	12,000	12,492
J. Esling	4	24,000	24,984
W. J. M. Mackenzie, OBE	2	12,000	12,492
M. C. Roberts	3	18,000	18,738
J. Wolkind, CBE	2	12,000	12,492
Councillor P. Bowness	1	6,000	6,246
Greater Manchester Residuary Body			
P. Hadfield, JP (Chairman)	2	17,600	18,198
K. J. Alford, OBE	1	5,600	5,830
Councillor A. B. Coyle, JP	1	5,600	5,830
B. H. Scholes, OBE	1	5,600	5,830
C. H. Singleton, OBE	1	5,600	5,830
R. M. Willan	1	5,600	5,830
Merseyside Residuary Body			
N. G. Brodrick (Chairman)	2	[1]5,600	18,198
D. Forbes	1	5,600	5,830
J. Hill	1	5,600	5,830
W. C. W. Hughes	1	5,600	5,830
L. O. Jones	1	5,600	5,830
Councillor J. R. Lloyd	1	5,600	5,830
G. B. Marsh	1	5,600	5,830
K. Medlock	1	5,600	5,830
South Yorkshire Residuary Body			
B. E. Cotton, CBE (Chairman)	2	16,000	16,544
Councillor C. I. Patnick, OBE (Deputy Chairman)	2	13,200	13,742
Councillor R. Rigby	1	5,600	5,830
M. C. Simpson	1	5,600	5,830
The Hon. Neil Turner	1	5,600	5,830
P. I. Wolf	1	5,600	5,830
Tyne and Wear Residuary Body			
A. S. Robertson (Chairman)	2	16,000	16,544
K. Douglas	1	5,600	5,830
W. H. Foakes	1	5,600	5,830
Councillor V. Fitzpatrick	1	5,600	5,830
R. A. Sisterton	1	5,600	5,830
R. C. Spoor	1	5,600	5,830
West Midlands Residuary Body			
Dr. M. D. Skillicorn (Chairman)	2	17,600	18,198
Councillor J. Adams	1	5,600	5,830
G. N. Jackson, CBE, JP	1	5,600	5,830
J. P. Meering, JP	1	5,600	5,830
W. S. Page, CBE	1	5,600	5,830
K. Williams	1	5,600	5,830

Member	Days worked per week	Remuneration on appointment (£ per annum)	Current remuneration (from 1 July 1986) (£ per annum)
West Yorkshire Residuary Body			
T. MacDonald, OBE (Chairman)	2	16,000	16,544
K. Bridge	1	5,600	5,830
D. Hanson	1	5,600	5,830
F. A. Mallet, CBE	1	5,600	5,830
R. W. Suddards	1	5,600	5,830
Councillor G. E. Mudie	1	Daily fee	

[1] Originally appointed as an ordinary member.

County Hall, London

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 25 July, *Official Report*, column *563*, when his Department received a copy of the report by Messrs. Richard Ellis, chartered surveyors, and property consultants, on the disposal of county hall; and if he will now place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Chope: My Department recently received a copy of the consultants' report.

The report was commissioned by the London Residuary Body and is confidential.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, (1) what discussions have taken place between his Department and the London Residuary Body about possible purchases of county hall since receipt by the London Residuary Body of the consultants' report;

(2) if his Department was made aware of the contents of the first draft of the consultants' report by Messrs. Richard Ellis on the disposal of county hall;

(3) what discussions have been held between his Department and the London Residuary Body in the light of the report by Messrs. Richard Ellis on the future of county hall concerning *(a)* the structural condition of the complex, *(b)* possible disposal as accommodation for the private sector, *(c)* the separate disposal of buildings in the complex, *(d)* uses for the complex other than offices, *(e)* use of the main building as an hostel and *(f)* the marketing of the complex by Messrs. Richard Ellis, and the cost of such marketing;

(4) if his Department has been consulted about alterations, or adaption to the interior of county hall by the London Residuary Body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The London Residuary Body has kept us informed in general terms about county hall.

ILEA (County Hall)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the continued occupation by the Inner London Education Authority of county hall.

Mr. Chope: The Government's policy is reflected in the abolition legislation, which gives the London Residuary Body the power to dispose of property it considers surplus. It is also empowered to terminate the occupation of any successor authority. The exercise of these powers is a matter for the LRB's discretion.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the increase in cost in money and percentage, respectively, of applying value added tax to sewerage services and water, on the basis sought by the Commission of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Peter Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the increase in cost in money and percentage terms to private and public funds, respectively, of the application of value added tax to all new building and construction work, on the basis sought by the Commission of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Museums and Galleries, Merseyside

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with the board of trustees of the national museums and galleries on Merseyside since its inception indicating which subjects were discussed.

Mr. Luce: I have been asked to reply.

I have formal or informal discussions from time to time with trustees of the national museums and galleries funded from the arts budget. Such discussions cover a wide range of subjects.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the names and occupations of the members of the board of trustees of the national museums and galleries on Merseyside.

Mr. Luce: I have been asked to reply.

The present members of the Board of Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, with their occupations, are as follows:

Board of Trustees	Occupation
Sir L. Young *(Chairman)*	Chairman, British Waterways Board

Board of Trustees	*Occupation*
The Duke of Westminster	Chairman, North West Industrialists' Council
Mr. N. Barber	Group Managing Director: Ocean Transport & Trading
Professor R. Berry	Professor of Genetics, London University
Professor A. D. Bradshaw	Professor of Botany, Liverpool University
Mr. G. Holt	Formerly of Ocean Transport & Trading
Professor M. Kauffman	Director, Courtauld Institute
Mr. J. W. Last	Special Duties Executive, Littlewood Organisation
Mr. B. Redhead	Broadcaster, Journalist
Mr. B. Shaw	Chairman, North West Area Museum Service
Mr. G. Thomson	President, International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works
Lady Marina Vaizey	Art Critic, Sunday Times
Sir D. Wilson	Director, British Museum
Mrs. G. Ayres	Artist
A. Swerdlow	Director, Modern Kitchens Equipment Ltd.
J. M. Grundy	Barrister

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any discussions have been held by his Department concerning disruption to the ferry service at Woolwich since 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

As our agent for this ferry the London borough of Greenwich has had extensive discussions with the work force. The outcome of these discussions is reflected in normal working since mid-August.

Merseyside

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to make Merseyside a special development area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have been asked to reply.

The category of special development area was abolished as a result of the major review of regional industrial policy which culminated in the statement in the House by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), the then Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, on 28 November 1984. I have no plans to reintroduce it. But Merseyside will continue to enjoy maximum benefits available under its present status of a development area.

Golf Course (Occombe, Devon)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider calling in the application to construct a golf course at Occombe, Devon.

Mr. Tracey [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1986, c. *625*]: Planning permission for the development had not in fact been given at that time. Accordingly, consideration was given as to whether my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should call in the applications, but it was decided that such action was not justified. I apologise for misleading the House.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Prisoners (International Agreements)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries with which the United Kingdom has international agreements for the transfer of prisoners; and how many prisoners were transferred under these agreements showing which countries they were transferred to and of what crimes they had been convicted.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom is currently party to one international agreement for the transfer of prisoners, the Council of Europe convention on the transfer of sentenced persons, which came into force for the United Kingdom on 1 August 1985. Other states which have ratified the convention are Austria, Cyprus, France, Spain, Sweden, Canada and the United States. At present 13 other States have signed the Convention with the intention of ratifying it in due course.

Between 1 August 1985 and 31 July 1986 there have been 12 transfers comprising two prisoners transferred from Sweden to the United Kingdom, nine from the United Kingdom to the United States and one from the United Kingdom to Canada. There have been none since. Of the 10 outward transfers, seven convictions were under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, one under the Official Secrets Act 1911 and two under the Theft Act 1968. The two inward transfers were of persons convicted of drugs offences.

British Overseas Prisoners

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what visits to British prisoners in prisons in Thailand have been undertaken by diplomatic representatives in Bangkok in the last year.

Mr. Eggar: From 15 October 1985 to 14 October 1986 the staff of Her Majesty's embassy Bangkok made 70 consular visits to prisons. These entailed 125 meetings with individual British citizens and 499 meetings with individual British dependent territories citizens. Not included in the totals are visits to police stations to see citizens before they are committed to prison.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice and assistance is given to friends and relatives visiting prisoners abroad when they arrive at Her Majesty's diplomatic posts.

Mr. Eggar: Friends and relatives who wish to visit prisoners abroad should preferably give the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Consular Department advance notice of their plans. Current prison regulations could then be confirmed with Posts overseas and, if necessary, applications made for visits. Posts can also advise visitors on the best means of reaching the prison, whether and if so what prison comforts are allowed, timing and length of permitted visits and so on, and provide letters of introduction if required.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British prisoners are currently held in foreign prisons, analysed by country.

Mr. Eggar: According to the most recent survey there were, on 11 September 1986, to the best of our knowledge, 1,290 British citizens detained in prisons in the following countries:

	Number
Argentina	1
Australia	10
Austria	10
Belgium	31
Bulgaria	3
Canada	3
Chile	1
Colombia	1
Cyprus	5
Denmark	31
East Germany	1
Ecuador	1
Egypt	1
France	201
Germany (West)	146
Greece	30
India	15
Indonesia	1
Iraq	5
Iran	2
Israel	8
Italy	29
Jamaica	1
Japan	34
Kenya	2
Kuwait	2
Libya	3
Luxembourg	2
Malaysia	12
Mexico	5
Morocco	4
Mozambique	1
Nepal	1
Netherlands	22
New Zealand	2
Norway	37
Oman	3
Pakistan	2
Paraguay	1
Peru	2
Philippines	3
Portugal	29
Qatar	3
Saudi Arabia	18
Singapore	9
South Africa	61
South Korea	23
Spain	193
Sri Lanka	1
Sweden	38
Switzerland	27
Syria	1
Taiwan	2
Thailand	76
Turkey	5
United Arab Emirates	11
United States of America	105
Zaire	2
Zambia	2
Zimbabwe	9

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice is given to Her Majesty's diplomatic representatives about contacting British prisoners in foreign gaols; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Standing instructions for British consular officers overseas are that British nationals, under arrest or detention, should be visited as soon as possible after their arrest or detention. Thereafter they should be visited at reasonable intervals, whether awaiting trial or serving a sentence (unless it has been made clear by the prisoner that visits are not required).

Chile

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has made any representations to the Government of Chile concerning the release of the organiser of the national days of protest in July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We made representations on behalf of the European Community at the time of the July demonstrations concerning the deaths and injuries associated with them, and about the detentions of National Civic Assembly leaders. We welcome their release; and that of Ricardo Lagos and Andrea Palma, who were detained in September. We regret, however, the continued detention of German Correa and Rafael Maroto.

Visas

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign an Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about British passport holders transitting United States airports without a visa; and what advice his Department gives to airline passengers about obtaining a transit visa or tourist visa for use on such occasions.

Mr. Eggar: We are aware of complaints from members of the public who have run into difficulties transitting United States airports without a visa. Although it is not for us to advise on the visa requirements of other countries, we have discussed this problem with the United States Embassy in London. Their advice is that while British passport holders may transit the United States without a visa, they can be certain of avoiding any obstacles by obtaining either a transit or a tourist visa in advance, both of which are free of charge.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state for each country concerned the average duration of a visa issued to visitors to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not available. However, single entry visas now being issued are normally valid for presentation at a United Kingdom port within six months. Where a multiple entry visa is issued, this is now normally valid for up to two years.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries which require visas for visitors from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: On the latest information available the following foreign and Commonwealth countries require British citizens to obtain an entry visa before making a visit:

Visa requirements for British citizens—foreign countries

Visa required

Afghanistan
Albania
Angola
Argentina
Benin
Bhutan
Bulgaria

Burkina Faso
Burma
Burundi
Cameroon
Cape Verde Islands
Central African Republic
Chad
Chile
China (Peoples Republic)
Comores Islands
Congo (Peoples Republic)
Cuba
Czechoslovakia
Djibouti
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Egypt (issued on arrival)
El Salvador
Equatorial Guinea
Ethiopia (issued on arrival)
Gabon (issued on arrival)
Germany (Democratic Republic)
Guatemala
Guinea-Bissau
Guinea (Republic of)
Haiti
Hungary
Iran
Iraq
Jordan
Korea (Democratic Peoples Republic)
Kuwait
Laos
Lebanon
Liberia
Libya
Macao
Madagascar
Mali
Mauritania
Mozambique
Nepal (issued on arrival)
New Caledonia
Nicaragua
Niue
Oman
Poland
Puerto Rico
Qatar
Romania
Rwanda
Sao Tome and Principe
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Somalia
South Africa
Sudan
Syria
Taiwan (Formosa)
Uruguay
United States of America
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Venezuela
Vietnam (Socialist Republic)
Virgin Islands (USA)
Yemen Arab Republic
Yemen (Peoples Democratic Republic)
Zaire

Visa requirements for British citizens — Commonwealth countries

Visa required

Australia
Bangladesh
Ghana
India
Maldives (issued on arrival)
Nauru (issued on arrival)
Nigeria
Sierra Leone

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state *(a)* the total number of applications for visas received by his Department in 1985 from intending visitors to the United Kingdom, from each country concerned and *(b)* the total number of such applications refused, from each country concerned.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested about applications and refusals is not readily available and can only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the total cost to his Department in 1985 of processing applications for visas from intending visitors to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: The total cost to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office budget for entry clearance work worldwide in 1985 was £19 million. It is estimated that of this figure £7 million was for processing long-term entry clearances and £12 million for short-term entry clearances, which includes all visitors.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state, in respect of each country concerned, the average length of time taken by his Department in 1985 to process an application for a visa from an intending visitor to Britain.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department requires nationals of countries who require visas to visit the United Kingdom to make personal applications for such visas.

Mr. Eggar: Not in the great majority of cases. Many visas are issued as a result of postal applications.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he had with Commonwealth Governments prior to the decision to introduce new visa procedures for some Commonwealth states.

Mr. Eggar: No prior consultation took place. I informed diplomatic representatives in London of the Governments concerned of the new requirements on the day the decision was taken. At the same time Governments were informed by our missions in those countries. Subsequent discussions have taken place both in London and other capitals.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate, for each of the Commonwealth nations subject to new visa procedures, the number of applications for visas he expects in the year 1987 together with an estimate of the extra number of staff and costs incurred in each country.

Mr. Eggar: The estimated number of extra applications and extra entry clearance officers for the four Commonwealth countries is contained in the following table:

	Estimated number of extra applications for 1987	Estimated extra number of entry clearance officers
Nigeria	132,000	27
Ghana	25,000	4
India	149,000	22
Bangladesh	7,700	4

Start-up costs in these four countries is expected to be £6·3 million spread over financial years 1986-87 to 1988-89. Recurrent costs are estimated to be:

Nigeria	£8·3 million
Ghana	£0·6 million
India	£3·1 million
Bangladesh	£0·5 million

for the 1987-88 financial year, making a total of £12·5 million.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many additional staff were on duty in Her Majesty's diplomatic missions in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh on 6 October to process applications for visas from intending visitors to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: None. Additional staff began arriving at posts shortly before visa requirement began on 15 October.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state *(a)* the number of applications received by his Department since 6 October for visas from nationals of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, listing separately the number from each country, *(b)* the number of such applications from each country which were (i) granted, (ii) refused and (iii) still outstanding on 17 October and *(c)* in relation to each country the average length of time taken from application to grant of a visa.

Mr. Eggar: Information relating to applications made in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh is given in the following table. (Details of applications received outside those countries are not available centrally.)

Visit Visa Applications

	Received (6 October onwards)	Granted	Refused	Outstanding (as at 17 October)	Average time: application to issue
India	3,500	3,338	19	143	same day
Pakistan	1,218	1,166	25	27	same day
Bangladesh	195	172	23	—	same day

These figures discount the possibility that a very small number of nationals of one country may have applied in another.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff in addition to normal complement were in post on 14 October at Her Majesty's diplomatic missions in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, to process applications for visitors' visas.

Mr. Eggar: On 14 October additional entry clearance staff in post were as follows: India, none; Pakistan, two; Bangladesh, one.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the hours at which Her Majesty's diplomatic missions have been open since 6 October to receive applications for visas from visitors from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh.

Mr. Eggar: Missions in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have been open since 6 October to receive applications for visit visas from nationals of those countries, as shown on the table.

Post	Hours open to Public	Office Hours
New Delhi	09.00—12.30	09.00—17.00
Bombay	08.00—11.30	08.00—16.00
Calcutta	09.00—12.30	09.00—17.00
Madras	09.00—12.30	09.00—17.00
Islamabad	08.00—12.30	Sunday/Monday 07.30—17.00 Tuesday/Thursday 07.30—14.10
Karachi	08.00—12.30	Sunday/Wednesday 08.00—13.30 Monday, Tuesday & Thursday 08.00—17.00
Dhaka	07.30—14.00	07.30—14.00

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement as to why the additional staff necessary for the administration of visas for visitors from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh were not available in Her Majesty's diplomatic missions in the days immediately preceding 15 October; and if he will state when they will be available.

Mr. Eggar: Intolerable pressures at Heathrow necessitated early implementation of the visa regimes. For logistical reasons it was not possible to deploy the extra staff allocated by 15 October. All but one will have arrived by the end of October.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement in relation to the conditions faced by applicants for visitors' visas at Her Majesty's high commission in New Delhi as a result of shortage of staff since 6 October.

Mr. Eggar: Up to 9 October numbers of applicants were easily manageable but on 13-14 October the immigration section was under pressure as applications rose to 166 and 157 respectively. On 15 October the new applicants' waiting area came into operation and conditions have now improved. Those applying for visit visas have on average been issued within 90 minutes.

Single European Act

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he now has concerning the establishment of courts of first instance under the Single European Act and in particular the locations of any such courts sitting in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Chalker: It will, in accordance with the Single European Act, be for the European Court of Justice to make detailed proposals to the Council about the work of

the Court of First Instance. No proposals have yet been received. The Court of First Instance will not sit in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when and by what means Her Majesty's Government published and distributed the text of the decisions taken by representatives of member states of the European Services Community on the occasions of the signing of the Single European Act.

Mrs. Chalker: The Decision adopted by Ministers, meeting in the framework of European Political Co-operation, on the occasion of the signing of the Single European Act was placed in the Libraries of both Houses on 25 April 1986. It was published in the minutes of evidence that I gave to the Foreign Affairs Committee on 7 May 1986.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the proceedings of the new Courts of first instance of the European Communities, as authorised by the single European Act, will be open to the public.

Mrs. Chalker: Article 28 of the protocol on the statute of the Court of Justice provides that hearings before the court shall normally be in public. I would expect oral proceedings, of the new Court to be similarly open to the public.

Mr. James Abra

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to obtain the release of Mr. James Abra from a Libyan jail.

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Abra's lawyer has lodged an appeal for a review of his trial and sentence. We are concerned about the prison sentence passed on Mr. Abra but we cannot intervene while the appeal remains pending. In spite of almost daily requests, both orally and in writing, no consular visit to Mr. Abra has yet been authorised.

USSR (Jewish Emigration)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the number of Jews who have been permitted to emigrate from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in each month of 1986.

Mr. Renton: The number of Jews who have left the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in each month of 1986 are:

	Numbers
January	79
February	51
March	47
April	72
May	42
June	55
July	31
August	88
September	126

We regard these figures as unacceptably low.

British Overseas Visitors

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funds are disbursed on the welfare of British prisoners abroad.

Mr. Eggar: No official funds are provided but families and friends of prisoners abroad are welcome to deposit funds for prison comforts with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Consular Department which are made available to prisoners through our posts abroad. Some consulates are also able to call on funds from local charities to provide prisoners with basic necessities if required.

Diplomats (Children's Education)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what form assistance is given to diplomatic service members posted overseas to have their children educated at private schools in the United Kingdom; and what is the current maximum and minimum allowance given.

Mr. Eggar: All members of the Diplomatic Service who serve at posts overseas are eligible to apply for an allowance towards the costs of their children's boarding school education. The current maximum allowance is £1,695·19 per term for a boy at senior school. There are separate and lower allowances for girls' senior and boys' and girls' junior schools. The minimum allowance is £1,464·64 per term.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will publish a table showing the amount of financial assistance given to members of the Diplomatic Service towards their children's education at private schools in England and Wales since 1984, indicating *(a)* the names of the schools involved and the local education authority area they are situated in, *(b)* the amount of allowance spent on this education scheme at each of these schools and *(c)* the number of pupils involved in each school;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the amount of financial assistance given to members of the Diplomatic Service towards their children's education at private schools in Scotland since 1984, indicating *(a)* the schools involved and the region of Scotland they are situated in, *(b)* the amount of allowance spent on the education scheme at each of these schools and *(c)* the number of pupils involved at each school;

(3) how much has been spent in total on assistance to members of the Diplomatic Service to have their children educated at private schools in Scotland, while they are posted overseas in each year since 1981;

(4) how much has been spent in total on assistance to members of the Diplomatic Service posted overseas to have their children educated at private schools in England and Wales in each year since 1981.

Mr. Eggar: The detailed information is not available in the form requested and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost. I refer the hon. Member to the following six answers on the same subject:

Official Report:	
28 October 1985	Cols 357-358
12 November 1985	Cols 144-145
10 March 1986	Col 362

19 May 1986 Cols 17-18
3 June 1986 Col 414
23 July 1986 Col 252

Visitors

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any efforts were made through Her Majesty's diplomatic missions abroad to warn intending visitors to Britain of the likelihood of congestion at Heathrow airport on the days immediately preceding 15 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The degree of congestion at Heathrow airport immediately preceding 15 October was not anticipated.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he can make of the cost of living on St. Helena compared with the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: Living conditions on a small and remote island such as St. Helena are very different from those in the United Kingdom. A comparison between the costs of living in St. Helena and the United Kingdom could not therefore be achieved without a calculation of a new United Kingdom index based on the cost of living in St. Helena.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he can make of the percentage increase in the cost of household goods after they have been transported to St. Helena from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: Informal estimates suggest that goods overall are 30 per cent. more expensive after transport. However, within this average a number of high volume household items, such as canned and paper goods, are markedly more expensive. St. Helena has no value added tax; but import duties and mark-up on non-food items offset this.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he can make of the present percentage of electors on St. Helena able to stand for election to the Legislative Council.

Mr. Eggar: Local estimates indicate that about 40 per cent. of the present registered electors would be eligible to stand for election.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to lower the voting age to 18 years on St. Helena.

Mr. Eggar: The matter is being considered by St. Helenians in the context of the need for constitutional reform.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many St. Helenians are on the electoral roll at present on St. Helena; how this compares with three years ago; and what estimate he can make of the total population eligible for inclusion on the roll.

Mr. Eggar: The number of St. Helenians currently on the electoral roll is 1,644. The figure for 1982 was 1,704. The estimate of the total population eligible for inclusion on the roll is 3,345.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether asbestos is still used in the construction of dwellings in St. Helena.

Mr. Eggar: After careful consideration of the report produced in 1984 by the hon. Member and my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed), the St. Helena Government continue to use asbestos cement corrugated roofing sheets on Government built dwellings. The introduction of stringent safety precautions and work practices has reduced the health danger to a level judged by the island's chief medical officer as minimal. The use of alternative roofing materials has been discounted on technical, financial and suitability grounds.

Ascension Island

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in limiting the numbers of feral cats on Ascension Island.

Mr. Eggar: Ascension Island services are currently undertaking a second cat cull for 1986. Additional cat traps were obtained this year and to date number of feral cats destroyed are:

	Number
1st cull (February—May)	173
2nd cull (1st half October)	58
	231

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mental Health

4. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the operation of the present legislation governing the treatment of mental health patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Mental Health Act has been in operation for just three years and, in general terms, it is working well. My right hon. Friends, the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Social Services, are currently seeking views on options for amending the present legislation as regards the treatment of psychopathically disordered offenders and on proposals for procedural changes within the existing statutory provisions. Other amendments have been suggested, and will be considered, but the 1983-84 changes are still very recent.

Hospital Patients

12. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients were treated in National Health Service hospitals in the most recent year for which figures are available; and how this compares with the figure for 1978-79.

Mr. Fowler: In 1985, National Health Service hospitals in England treated some six and a third million in-patient cases, 960,000 day cases, and 37·4 million out-patient cases. That is nearly one million more in-patient cases, 400,000 more day cases, and almost three and a half million more out-patient cases than in 1978.

Health Authorities (Services)

13. **Sir Reginald Eyre** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about health authorities' plans for developing and improving services to patients in the coming year.

Mrs. Currie: Regional health authorities' programmes for 1986-87, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State approved last March, set out plans for a significant expansion and improvement of patient services. As my hon. Friend knows, in 1985 health authorities treated 6,350,000 in-patient cases — an increase of nearly a million since 1978, and 960,000 day cases—an increase of 400,000. They are planning a further increase of 180,000 in-patient and day cases in 1986-87. The number of out-patient attendances in 1985 stood at 37,400,000, an increase of no less than 3,300,000 since 1978, and health authorities are planning a further increase of 370,000 in 1986-87.

Limited List Prescribing

14. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to amend the operation of the selected list of medicines available on prescription.

Mr. Newton: No.

NHS Finance

15. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much more money, in real terms, is being spent on the National Health Service in the current year than in 1978-79; if he will provide a breakdown of where this additional money is being spent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Spending on the National Health Service in England has increased from £6·4 billion in 1978-79 to £15·6 billion in 1986-87. That is an increase in real terms of 24 per cent. Patients ad staff in all parts of the service and in all areas of the country are benefiting. The additional resources have contributed to the employment of more doctors and nurses in the hospitals, more general practitioners, to major increases in the number of patients treated and to the greatest sustained hospital building programme ever.

22. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is yet able to make any estimate of the outturn expenditure of the social security budget for the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: An estimate of outturn on the social security programme in this financial year will be included in the autumn statement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

25. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about funding of the National Health Service in London, with particular reference to the resource allocation working party formula.

Mr. Newton: The resource allocation working party formula seeks to ensure equal access to services for people in equal need by reducing historical disparities in provision between regions as far as possible, and also responding to population movements. The RAWP formula itself is currently under review to ensure that it does measure relative need for services as fairly as possible. Wide-ranging consultation ended on 30 June and we are expecting an interim report later this year.

29. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the review of the resource allocation working party system.

Mr. Newton: Wide-ranging consultation on the review ended on 30 June. We are expecting an interim report later this year.

30. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a further statement on resources available to the Leicestershire district health authority under the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: I am glad to confirm that the Leicestershire district health authority's revenue allocation has increased by over one-third in real terms since 1978-79. I would expect further increases as a result of continued progress towards the Government's aim of ensuring an equitable distribution of National Health Service resources across the country.

Liverpool

16. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the level of provision for the National Health Service care and facilities in inner Liverpool.

Mrs. Currie: There is a good story to tell. While the population has declined substantially from 527,000 in 1978

to 494,000 in 1985, revenue cash allocations to the Liverpool health authority have increased each year to the present level of £140·5 million. As a result, the number of patients treated has increased from 100,000 in 1978-79 to 108,000 in 1985/86. Additionally, more than £30 million in capital is currently being invested in the city. The waiting list has fallen from 11,951 in 1978 to 8,147 in 1986.

Hospital Waiting Lists

18. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he is taking to reduce hospital waiting times in Yorkshire.

Mr. Newton: We are determined that the Health Service will not only continue to treat increasing numbers of patients but that it will also treat them with the promptness which they have the right to expect. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently announced a three-year drive to reduce the time people have to wait for diagnosis and treatment. All regional health authorities, including Yorkshire, have been asked to prepare plans for action and to report back by the end of this month.

Supplementary Benefit

19. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for supplementary benefit have been made in the past 12 months.

Mr. Lyell: The latest available figures are for the year ending April 1986. In that period there were nearly 6 million claims for supplementary pensions or allowances.

21. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were claiming supplementary benefit in the north-west of England at the latest available date; and how this compares with the figure for October 1979.

Mr. Lyell: A total of 781,573 people were receiving supplementary benefit in the Department's north-west region on 13 August this year (the latest figure available). The present region did not exist in 1979 but the comparable figure for August 1979 was 494,277.

31. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are now in receipt of supplementary benefit in Coventry.

Mr. Lyell: Coventry is covered for social security purposes by the Department's offices at Coventry (east) and Coventry (west). The total number of people receiving supplemenatry benefit from those two offices on 13 August 1986—the latest available figures—was 41,603.

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

40. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest figures for the average length of time taken to deal with claims for supplementary benefit.

Mr. Lyell: During the four weeks ending on 26 August this year, the average time taken to deal with a fresh claim for supplementary benefit was seven working days.

NHS Land and Property

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money will be released from the sales of health authority land and property: and to what extent health authorities will be able to benefit from this directly.

Mrs. Currie: It is estimated that in the current financial year £130 million will be received from the sale of surplus National Health Service land and property. All of this money will be retained by health authorities for the direct benefit of the Health Service.

Severe Weather Payments

23. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to change the eligibility rules for the payment of exceptionally severe weather payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Proposals for a new system of severe weather payments have been referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee. Final decisions on new regulations will be taken in the light of its report.

Warnock Report

24. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further repreentations he has received about the implementation of the Warnock report.

Mr. Newton: I am fully aware of both continuing concern and widely differing views about the issues dealt with in the Warnock report.

General Managers (Pay)

26. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the proposed salary increases for general managers within the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: As has already been announced, general managers in the National Health Service are to receive pay increases averaging 5·9 per cent. from 1 September 1986. This followed a review of the general managers' pay rates in the light of general pay movements in the National Health Service, and the increases are in line with those movements. Authorities in the National Health Service have been informed.

North-West Regional Health Authority

27. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the north west regional health authority about the future funding of the authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have frequent discussions with chairmen and general managers of all regional health authorities on funding for the National Health Service, including the Northern regional health authority. We are firmly committed to the principle of equitable distribution of resources and, as regions approach their targets, it is important that these reflect relative need as fairly as possible. The review of the RAWP formula, which is currently under way, is looking at the scope for improving measurement of need and has included wide-ranging

consultations with health authorities and other interested parties. It is too soon to speculate on the outcome of the review but we expect an interim report later this year.

Wrightington Hospital

28. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be in a position to make a statement about the proposed closure of the children's ward at Wrightington hospital, Lancashire.

Mr. Newton: I hope to make an announcement shortly.

Rents

32. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from organisations representing rent officers regarding issues arising when rents are paid by housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: None. However the Institute of Rent Officers submitted evidence to the independent housing benefit review in 1984.

Day Nurseries

33. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many new day nursery places have been provided by social services departments since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: It is estimated that between 1979 and 1986 the number of day nursery places provided by Social Services Departments in England increased by over 500. The numbers for each year are given in the table.

Day nursery places provided by Social Services Departments in England 1979 to 1986

As at 31 March	*Number (thousands)*
1979	28·3
1980	28·4
1981	28·3
1982	28·4
1983	28·6
1984	28·9
1985	28·9
[1]1986	28·8

[1] The figure given for 1986 is a provisional estimate based on returns from 83 per cent. of local authorities.

NHS Waiting Lists

34. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest information about regional variations in National Health Service waiting lists.

Mr. Newton: Copies of the national and regional summaries of in-patient waiting list statistics at 30 September 1985, the latest available, have been placed in the Library. Corresponding figures for 31 March 1986 will be available shortly.

AIDS

35. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what reactions he has so far received to his Department's public information campaign on acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Newton: Detailed research is being conducted to measure both the effectiveness and the public acceptability of the campaign. The results so far are generally very encouraging. There is almost unanimous support for the Government's campaign. The advertisements have been widely read and understood and only a very small percentage of people have found them in any way offensive or distasteful.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the monthly figures for the number of acquired immune deficiency syndrome patients and the number of deaths from acquired immune deficiency syndrome notified to his Department over the last three years.

Mr. Newton: Monthly cases and deaths from acquired immune deficiency syndrome by date of reporting to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre over the last three years are as follows:

Month	*United Kingdom*	
	Number of cases	*Number of deaths*
1983		
October	0	0
November	3	2
December	4	0
1984		
January	5	9
February	2	0
March	2	2
April	2	1
May	5	3
June	4	1
July	3	2
August	15	2
September	12	5
October	7	1
November	14	8
December	6	1
1985		
January	10	3
February	14	7
March	8	5
April	19	14
May	10	3
June	7	10
July	20	22
August	10	4
September	19	6
October	16	13
November	16	6
December	18	0
1986		
January	12	4
February	18	13
March	23	10
April	7	3
May	27	14
June	27	18
July	76	32
August	25	11
September	22	4

In addition there were 24 cases including 11 deaths reported between the introduction of the surveillance system in 1982 and October 1983.

Disabled and Long-Term Sick Persons

36. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by what percentage in real terms spending has increased since 1978-79 on cash benefits for the disabled and long-term sick.

Mr. Major: A total of 55 per cent., on the basis of the latest estimate of expenditure for 1985-86.

Benefits

37. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the latest figures for the take-up of benefits by people aged 16 to 25 years.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Single Payments

38. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest figures for the average length of time taken to deal with claims for single payments.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that this information is not available. However, claims are determined as soon as possible after all the information required has been collected, urgent claims being given priority.

Mortgage Interest Payments

39. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has had any further representations on the proposal not to meet mortgage interest payments in full in the first six months of unemployment.

Mr. Lyell: We have now received the Social Security Advisory Committee's report on the proposals. Its comments and recommendations are being considered, and we shall announce the final decision in due course.

Benefits (Non-householder Addition)

41. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has had any further representations on the effect of the removal of the non-householder addition.

Mr. Lyell: We have had no representations on the effect of the removal of the non-householder addition from supplementary benefit for new claimants aged under 25 since the provision was introduced on 28 July 1986.

Urgent Needs Payments

42. **Mr. Ewing** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest figures for the average length of time taken to deal with claims for urgent needs payments.

Mr. Lyell: These claims are almost invariably determined on the day they are made.

Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985

43. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the operation to date of the Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the statement in the *Official Report*, columns 806-807, 1 July if he will make a statement on his review of the case for amending legislation to the Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985.

Mr. Newton: I am unable to add to the reply my predecessor gave my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 1 July at column 806. If it is shown that the act is ineffective the need to amend it will be considered.

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

44. **Mrs. Shields** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any representations concerning accommodation with three beds for elderly people which is also being used as bed and breakfast accommodation.

Mrs. Currie: No; but 13 representations have been made about the fact that residential care homes with fewer than four residents in all do not have to be registered with local authorities under the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has to increase the availability of matching tissue for kidney transplants.

Mrs. Currie: Increasing the number of cadaveric organs becoming available for transplantation is a major priority. A study is being undertaken which seeks to provide a more accurate estimate of organs potentially available for donation and to identify the reasons why a proportion of them are not in practice made available; the findings will enable us to devise better strategies for increasing the supply.

The Royal College of Physicians has now agreed to establish a working party to consider the introduction of a voluntary code of practice under which doctors would agree to ensure that, whenever a patient died who was clinically suitable as an organ donor, the relatives were asked for their permission for the organs to be removed. We are continuing to promote the donor card scheme and to support national and local initiatives. We are also monitoring developments, in consultation with representatives of professional and voluntary bodies, and considering with them how matters might best be taken forward.

Irradiated Food

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce regulations to ensure the clear labelling of irradiated food; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have no plans at present for further amendments to the Food (Control of Irradiation) Regulations, 1967, which in effect prohibit the process and the importation and marketing of irradiated foods for general use. In due course, we will consider the "Report on the Safety and Wholesomeness of Irradiated Foods" by the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods which has advised that food irradiated up to an overall average dose of 10 kilogray is safe for human consumption. The report included a recommendation by the Food Advisory Committee that irradiated foods and

food containing irradiated ingredients should be clearly indicated as such throughout manufacture and at the point of sale.

Measles and Whooping Cough Vaccine

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans his Department have to improve the uptake of measles and whooping cough vaccine.

Mrs. Currie: I am glad to say that the uptake rate in England and Wales for vaccination against measles improved from 63 per cent. in 1984 to 68 per cent. in 1985 but further improvement is essential if children are to be spared the avoidable distress and disability arising from this disease. A meeting of experts will be held next month under the aegis of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation to consider afresh what steps might best be taken to achieve this.

On whooping cough, the chief medical officer and chief nursing officer wrote to all doctors and nurses on 21 July 1986 urging them to take what further steps they could to increase uptake levels. They pointed out that epidemics of this disease need not recur if an adequate level of immunity in the population could be attained.

The incidence of both diseases is kept under constant review, and we shall be considering what further action needs to be taken in the light of advice from the JCVI and others.

Students (Hull)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the total number of students registered at the Oriel and Brittania House branches of his Department in Hull seeking supplementary benefit in the months of July, August and September, respectively;

(2) how long it took to process each student applicant of supplementary benefit at the Hull branch of his Department for the months of July, August and September, respectively;

(3) whether he will assign further staff to work on student applications for supplementary benefit at the two Hull offices of his Department;

(4) what was the average number of staff employed by his Department in assessing student applications for supplementary benefit at the Hull offices of his Department for the months of July, August and September, respectively.

Mr. Lyell: The table sets out the total number of supplementary benefit claims received from students at the Oriel and Brittania house local offices in the months of July, August and September. Records are not kept of the time taken to process each claim. However, the estimated average processing times for student claims during the months concerned were 12 working days at Brittania house and 13·5 working days at Oriel house.

Student claims received

	Hull (Oriel house)	*Hull (Brittania house)*
July	400	1,091
August	46	221
September	70	184
Total	516	1,496

The staff resources allocated to the Department's Hull offices include an element for assessing students' claims but no records are kept of the number of staff employed on the work. There are no specific plans to increase the number of staff dealing with these claims which is largely of a seasonal nature.

Doctors (Conduct)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what statements he has made since 1 July concerning the remedies available to the General Medical Council in respect of conduct of registered medical practitioners which they find unacceptable; what action he has taken; and what further steps he intends to take.

Mr. Newton: Since 1 July my right hon. Friend has not had occasion to make a statement on this matter. We continue to keep in touch with the General Medical Council on the effect of its revised guidance issued last year which effectively widened the scope of what constitutes serious professional misconduct.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce legislation to provide the General Medical Council with statutory powers to take remedial action in respect of registered medical practitioners whose conduct their professional conduct committee has judged unacceptable.

Mrs. Currie: The General Medical Council has statutory powers to take remedial action in respect of registered medical practitioners whose conduct its professional conduct committee has judged serious professional misconduct. In exercising those powers in 1985 the committee, according to the General Medical Council's annual report, considered 53 cases. The names of 13 doctors were erased from the medical register; eight doctors were suspended from the register; conditions were imposed on the continued right to practise of two doctors; three cases were adjourned to 1986 and a further 12 doctors were found guilty of serious professional misconduct and were admonished or the cases otherwise concluded. We have no present plans to extend the council's disciplinary powers but we will continue to discuss with the council any possible problems in this area.

Asylum Seekers (Benefits)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of asylum seekers in receipt of supplementary benefits and single payments for each year since 1982.

Mr. Lyell: No separate records are kept of claims to benefit from asylum seekers.

Cervical Screening

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, for each district health authority, the number of smear tests for cervical cancer screening which are currently delayed and the number of weeks' work which this backlog represents in each case.

Mrs. Currie: All health authorities were told in January this year to give priority to ensuring that laboratories can meet demand and avoid backlogs which should not regularly exceed one month's work. Regions were asked

to report the number of districts that, as at 31 March 1986, were served by laboratories that were not meeting this requirement and the action being taken to improve matters.

The information supplied is set out as follows. Regional health authorities will be ensuring that remedial action is taken before they report to us again. Information on the number of smears at individual laboratories is not collected centrally.

District health authorities served by laboratories in which the backlog of cervical smears was reported by exceeding one month's work as at 31 March 1986

Regional Health Authority	*District Health Authority*	*Backlog*
East Anglian	East Suffolk	6 weeks
	Peterborough	8 weeks
	West Norfolk and Wisbech	8 weeks
Mersey	Wirral	5 weeks
Oxford	Wycombe	6 weeks
	East Berkshire	5 weeks
	Oxfordshire	5 weeks
Northern	South Tees	6 weeks
	Durham	6 weeks
	Northumberland, Newcastle, North Tyneside	13 weeks
	Gateshead, South Tyneside	5 weeks
North Western	Regional Cytology Laboratory	More than 4 weeks
South Western	Somerset	4 to 6 weeks
	North Devon, Exeter	4 to 6 weeks
	Torbay	6 weeks
North East Thames	Bloomsbury, Hampstead	6 to 8 weeks
	Barking, Haringey and Brentwood	More than 4 weeks
North West Thames	Barnet	More than a month
	East Hertfordsire, North West Hertfordshire	More than a month
South East Thames	Bromley, Maidstone (part)	16 weeks
	Dartford and Gravesham	7 weeks
	Tunbridge Wells	9 weeks
South West Thames	South West Surrey	6 weeks
Trent	Nottingham	5½ months
	Doncaster	3 months
	Rotherham	6 weeks
Wessex	Bath	5 weeks
West Midlands	Herefordshire	8 weeks
	South Warwickshire	8 weeks
Yorkshire	Airedale	6 weeks
	Leeds Western	6 weeks
	Northallerton	7 to 8 weeks
	Scunthorpe	14 weeks

Prescription Charges

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the total administrative costs involved in prescription charges and the exemption certificate system, with a full breakdown of the total.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information on which to base a reliable estimate is not available.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in the light of paragraph 3.2.5 of the MRC 1986 corporate plan, he will establish at least one new centre for the study of and care of patients who have Alzheimer's disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: It is for the Medical Research Council, which receives a grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science, to decide whether a centre for research into Alzheimer's disease should be established. The recognition of this need in its 1986 corporate plan is welcomed, as is the council's known attachment of some priority to meeting it. The care of people suffering from Alzheimer's disease, and the provision of support for relatives and other carers, are important matters for health and social services authorities to consider when planning and providing a comprehensive range of local mental health services in accordance with Government policy.

Dental Research Projects

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* in tabular form details of all dental research projects currently supported by his Department together with the name of the researcher, the location at which the work is being carried out and the total cost of each project.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is in the following table:

Researcher	*Location*	*Title of project*	*Period of award*	*Estimated total cost £*
Professor W. C. Shaw	Welsh National School of Medicine	The dental and social effects of malocclusion and the effectiveness of orthodontic treatment	1980—1987	148,000
Mrs. M. Seward	London Hospital Medical College	The provision of dental health care by women in England and Wales—10 year review	1985—1986	15,600
Professor P. J. Holloway	University of Manchester	A trial of a capitation payment system for children under 16 years of age treated in the general dental service of the NHS	1984—1989	450,000
Professor N. W. Johnson	Royal College of Surgeons	Development of dental caries vaccine	1970—1987	1,746,000
Dr. A. Wilson	Laboratory of the Government Chemist	A study in the absorption of polyelectrolytes on hydroxyapatite	1983—1986	67,000

Researcher	*Location*	*Title of project*	*Period of award*	*Estimated total cost £*
Professor J. Shearer Mr. P. P. Munro	Southampton University	Research into the use of cam cultured chick femurs to investigate implants used in dentistry and orthopaedics	1984—1988	68,000
Professor D. Williams Mr. J. Cunningham	Liverpool University	A programme of assessment of dental materials	1984—1987	250,000
Dr. M. J. Barsby Mr. W. N. Schwarz	London Hospital Medical College	Quality assessment of cobalt-chromium castings for partial dentures	1985—1986	1,000
Professor R. Browne	Dental School University of Birmingham	Development of an in vitro test system for the Bio-compatability of dental restorative materials	1986—1988	16,500
Dr. I. Waites	Dental School University College Hospital	Quantatitive assessment of periodontitis by computer analysis of dental radiographs	1986—1989	50,000
Professor Braden Professor I. Ward Professor Sullivan	London Hospital Medical College	High modulus polyethylenes for the production of reinforced dental materials	1986—1988	60,000
Mr. N. Potter	Building Services Research Information Association	The control of anaesthetic gas pollution in dental surgeries	1984—ongoing	30,000
Mr. Clifton Dr. Linney Professor Moss Mr. James	University College London	A system for predictive modelling of surgical procedures.	1984—1987	230,000

Health Authorities (Staff Accommodation)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his reply, *Official Report*, column *527*, 12 March, he will now state the names of any district health authority in England which has taken legal action to require staff to quit accommodation owned by them, or which has withdrawn any such application.

Mr. Newton: On 23 May 1986 at columns 693-696, my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe) repeated the assurance that nobody would be made homeless as a result of the rationalisation of National Health Service residential accommodation. He went on to say that if other circumstances arose which made it necessary for an authority to consider giving notice to quit, it must first seek the Department's approval. A circular adivsing health authorities of these arrangements was issued in June 1986.

In the four months since these arrangements were introduced, the Department has agreed eviction in 11 cases, in the following health authorities: Hounslow and Spelthorne, Barking Havering and Brentwood, Bloomsbury (three cases), Kingston and Esher, North-West Surrey (three cases), Winchester and Solihull.

Over the same period, the Department has agreed that notices to quit may be issued in 63 cases as a means of assisting the tenant to secure local authority housing, on condition that eviction should not proceed unless and until that alternative accommodation is available. The health authorities concerned were: Hampstead, Barnet, North-West Hertfordshire, Riverside (four cases), Brent, Paddington and North Kensington (14 cases), Bloomsbury (five cases), Enfield, North-East Essex, Croydon, Mid Surrey (three cases), North-West Surrey (10 cases), Kingston and Esher, South-West Surrey, East Surrey (two cases), Southampton and South-West Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Basingstoke and North Hampshire, Rugby and Stockport.

Drug Abuse

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress he has made with his advertising campaign to warn young people of the dangers of drug abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The campaign of education and information on drug misuse which has been running since February 1985 has been carefully evaluated. The reports of the campaign evaluation have been placed in the Library. The results indicate that the campaign has been achieving its aims of improving levels of information and hardening attitudes towards heroin. In particular evaluation shows:

—that the campaign has been widely noticed by young people
—that a greater proportion of young people were aware of the physical and social consequences of heroin misuse
—that fewer young people saw heroin as attractive or glamorous
—that a greater proportion (94 per cent. after the first year of the campaign compared with 83 per cent. before) of young people said that they would refuse an offer of heroin.

We are continuing to monitor the effects of the campaign.

Earnings Rule

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons over the age of 65 years have the earnings rule applied to them.

Mr. Lyell: The rule applies to women aged 60-64 and men aged 65-69. An estimated 3,500-4,000 people are affected. A further 100,000 people are estimated to be deferring retirement, probably because they would be affected by the earnings rule.

These figures are based on 1982-83 survey data. Up-to-date information should be available in early 1987.

Azidothymidine

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Azidothymidine has been approved for clinical trials on acquired immune deficiency syndrome patients in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: All information provided to the licensing authority in connection with applications made under the Medicines Act 1968, including clinical trial applications, is, under the Act, treated as confidential by the Department. But in this case, the company concerned has agreed that the Department should indicate that it had already applied to carry out trials under the clinical trials exemption scheme set up under the Act and that the licensing authority had agreed.

In addition, section 9 of the Medicines Act 1968 provides exemption from the licensing requirements to enable a doctor to administer an unlicensed medicinal product to a particular patient of his. Information on the availability of this drug for such use would be a matter for the supplier.

Hospital Building Programme

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services of the £3 million hospital building programme, what proportions are represented by *(a)* planning, *(b)* design and *(c)* construction; how many projects at the construction stage will be completed in each of the next 15 years, what is the value of the construction to be completed in each of these years; how many of these projects in each year are hospitals and how many are smaller projects; and how many of the planning and design projects, respectively, are expected to start in each of the next 15 years.

Mr. Newton: Infromation held centrally on the 380 schemes in the programme, which totals almost £3,000 million, shows that 54 per cent. are at the planning stage, 23 per cent. are being designed and 23 per cent. are under construction. Information on the 88 schemes currently under construction is set out in the table:

Year Due for Completion	*Number of Schemes*	*Estimated—Total Cost (building and engineering works and estimated fees and equipment) (£ million)*	*Hospitals or [1]Phases of Hospitals*	*Smaller Projects*
1986	16	70	5	11
1987	50	289	23	27
1988	21	230	15	6
1989	—	—	—	—
1990	1	23	1	—

[1] New hospital developments are usually accomplished in phases.

Detailed information on the anticipated dates for the start of construction of schemes at the planning and design stages is not held centrally, but it is estimated that about 75 per cent. of these schemes will start on site by 1990 and the remainder by 1994.

Health Districts (Performance)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the 70 indicators of performance used to compare health districts since 1983; and if he will set out a table illustrating the performance of each health district in accordance with each indicator.

Mr. Newton: The Department first published performance indicators (PIs) in book form in 1983. A national summary plus 14 regional books provided values and ranks for 145 PIs for every district health authority in England. Copies of these booklets are held in the Library. The indicators covered activity, finance, manpower and estate management and were based on 1981-82 data. A list of these indicators was given in the reply from my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe, (Mr. Clarke) to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) on 9 July 1984 at columns *408-411*. This initial set of PIs was revised and expanded and in July 1985 a new package of PIs based on 1983-84 data was issued to every health authority in England. There are 421 PIs in this new package which cover acute services, services for children, the elderly, the mentally ill, mentally handicapped, support services, manpower and estate management. A table listing them has been placed in the Library.

The values and ranks for these indicators for every district health authority and many hospitals are contained on floppy discs to run on microcomputers. In December 1985 PIs based on 1984-85 data were issued; 1985-86 PIs will be issued this December. Presentation of the indicators on microcomputers allows easy access to the values for any district health authority. Full advantage is taken of graphical displays to facilitate comparisons between health authorities.

Copies of the computer-based PI package are held in the statistics section of the Library.

ENT Treatment (Barnsley)

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will itemise in the *Official Report* the number of patients within the Barnsley health authority awaiting ear nose and throat treatment, specifying urgent and non-urgent cases, *(a)* all cases, *(b)* cases on the list for more than one month and *(c)* cases on the list for more than one year.

Mr. Newton: A copy of the most recent publications of waiting list statistics is in the Library. It shows that at September 1985 there were no urgent cases on the waiting list for admissions to ear, nose and throat beds in Barnsley. There were 295 non-urgent cases, none of which had been waiting for more than a year.

Disabled People

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many representations about cases of alleged discrimination against disabled people he has received in each of the years 1980 to 1985 and in the first nine months of the current year; how many such allegations were proved; and what action he took in each case;

(2) if he will list those organisations of disabled people he has consulted during the current parliamentary Session; and what subjects were discussed in each case.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received

concerning discrimination against disabled people in employment; what plans he has for combating it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have been asked to reply.

I have received no such representations recently.

We are continuing to promote vigorously to employers the code of good practice on the employment of disabled people. Over the next year, the Manpower Services Commission will undertake research into the numbers and characteristics of disabled people in the working population which will help us to decide whether the quota scheme can be made more effective.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the expenditure level of family practitioner services each year since 1970; what has been the percentage change each year; and what percentage of total National Health Service expenditure is represented by general medical services for each of these years.

Mr. Newton: The figures requested are given in the table.

	Family practitioner services gross expenditure [2] (£ cash)	*Percentage change*	*Percentage of total NHS expenditure (gross) on general medical services*
	million	*per cent.*	*per cent.*
1970-71	441	Base	8·4
1971-72	484	9·6	8·0
1972-73	534	10·4	7·6
1973-74	585	9·4	7·2
1974-75	697	19·2	6·2
1975-76	925	32·7	6·2
1976-77	1,078	16·6	6·1
1977-78	1,220	13·2	5·9
1978-79	1,434	17·5	5·9
1979-80	1,684	17·4	6·1
1980-81	2,114	25·5	6·2
1981-82	2,440	15·4	6·4
1982-83	2,827	15·8	6·6
1983-84	3,037	7·4	6·7
1984-85	3,342	10·0	7·1
1985-86 [1]	3,519	5·3	7·3

[1] Provisional
[2] Expenditure on contractors' services, excluding administration.

Radiotherapy Department (Southend)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when he expects to announce his decision on the proposal of the North-East Thames regional health authority to close the radiotherapy department in Southend; and what criteria he takes into account in making decisions on such proposals;

(2) how many letters he has received from the general public on the proposal to close Southend's radiotherapy cancer unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Regional Health Authorities (Gifts)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue guidance to regional health authorities on the propriety of their receiving gifts from district health authorities conditional on specialist facilities being located within their district; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Southend Health Authority

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to require the North-East Thames regional health authority to make good the underfunding of the Southend health authority on the basis of the resources allocation working party formula; and what has been the total of this underfunding over the past five years.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Radiotherapy Facilities

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he has provided to regional health authorities about the minimum numbers of new patients requiring radiotherapy treatment which should be the basis of an area radiotherapy unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 22 October 1986

ENVIRONMENT

Tree Planting

37. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what initiatives his Department is taking to encourage tree planting and the success of National Tree Week from 29 November to 7 December.

Mr. Waldegrave: We welcome National Tree Week and fully support the Tree Council's efforts to promote the planting, care and maintenance of amenity trees throughout the country. To that end we are making the council a grant of nearly £16,000 in 1986-87. The Countryside Commission has its own grant-aid scheme and expects that nearly 2 million trees will be planted with its financial assistance this year. The Department's own planting programme by the Property Services Agency and within the royal parks will continue. We have also in hand several arboricultural research projects.

Dangerous Wild Animals Act

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now list in the *Official Report* the fees charged by each local authority in England and Wales for the issuing of a licence under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976.

Mr. Waldegrave: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on Wednesday 21 November 1985, at column 259.

Community Charge

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his estimate of the number of tax units gaining and losing in the first year of transition from domestic rates to the community charge as set out in figure J5 and the number of tax units gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge as set out in figure J8 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" when these numbers are recalculated on the basis of existing social security arrangements;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of households gaining and losing in the first year of transition from domestic rates to the community charge as set out in figure J4 and the number of households gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge as set out in figure J7 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" when these numbers are recalculated on the basis of existing social security arrangements.

Mr. Chope: The recalculated estimates of the numbers of households and tax units in Great Britain gaining and losing from the introduction of the community charge, assuming existing social security arrangements, are set out in the following tables:

Table 1: number of households gaining and losing in the first year of transition from domestic rates to the community charge (comparable to figure J4 in the Green Paper Cmnd. 9714 "Paying for Local Government");

Table 2: as for table 1 but for tax units (comparable to figure J5);

Table 3: number of households gaining and losing with the full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge (comparable to figure J7);

Table 4: as for table 3 but for tax units (comparable to figure J8).

(Note: in Annex J of the Green Paper, the numbers in figures J4, J5, J7, and J8 were rounded to the nearest 25,000. The numbers in these tables have not been rounded but should not be taken to imply a higher standard of accuracy).

The tables incorporate the assumptions set out in paras. J7-J11 of "Paying for Local Government" except that under both the present rating system and with the community charge it has been assumed that the present social security arrangements are in existence. The benefit rates used were those as at November 1985, deflated to a 1984-85 price level.

The tables illustrate what the impact of replacing domestic rates by the community charge might have been in a past year — 1984-85 — under the existing social security arrangements. In future years, both the pattern of local authority spending and household characteristics will have changed so that the gains and losses may be rather different from those illustrated here. In addition, the proposals contained in "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691) will have been implemented. The tables in annex J are therefore a fairer reflection of the likely impact of our proposals.

Table 1
First year of transition from domestic rates to the community charge with present social security arrangements throughout

(Great Britain: thousand households)

	Single pensioner	*Other single adult*	*Two adults*	*Three+ adults*	*All households*
Pounds per week					
Losers					
10+	—	—	—	—	—
5-10	—	—	—	1	—
2-5	—	—	—	206	206
1-2	—	—	504	810	1,315
0-1	198	357	5,318	1,182	7,053
Total losers	198	357	5,821	2,199	8,574
Gainers					
0-1	1,061	1,019	4,372	425	6,878

	Single pensioner	Other single adult	Two adults	Three+ adults	All households
1-2	161	294	878	86	1,420
2-5	58	46	279	29	414
5-10	1	1	8	1	10
10+	—	—	—	—	—
Total gainers	1,280	1,361	5,537	541	8,722
No change	1,328	604	1,330	45	3,309
Percentage of net income					
Losers					
10+	—	—	—	—	—
5-10	—	—	—	—	—
2-5	—	—	—	—	—
1-2	3	7	132	62	204
0-1	195	349	5,689	2,137	8,370
Total losers	198	357	5,821	2,198	8,574
Gainers					
0-1	974	1,141	5,350	523	7,589
1-2	274	195	181	18	670
2-5	32	24	5	1	62
5-10	—	—	—	—	—
10+	—	—	—	—	—
Total gainers	1,280	1,361	5,537	542	8,720
No change	1,328	604	1,330	45	3,309

Table 2
First year of transition from domestic rates to the community charge
—present social security arrangements throughout—

(Great Britain: thousand tax units)

	Single pensioner	Single Adults One parent family	Other single adult	Other Couples Pensioner couple	no children	1 child	2 children	3+ children	All tax units
Pounds per week									
Losers									
10+	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5-10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2-5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1-2	—	—	—	87	354	153	98	36	728
0-1	509	51	3,540	1,034	2,272	1,066	1,105	472	10,049
Total losers	509	51	3,540	1,121	2,625	1,219	1,204	508	10,778
Gainers									
0-1	1,250	291	1,278	567	1,707	904	1,255	437	7,689
1-2	176	94	358	107	319	190	288	92	1,624
2-5	60	12	52	26	108	62	83	42	445
5-10	1	—	2	1	2	1	1	3	11
10+	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total gainers	1,487	396	1,691	702	2,136	1,158	1,627	573	9,769
No change	1,886	446	2,249	485	262	186	226	199	5,941
Percentage of net income									
Losers									
10+	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5-10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2-5	7	—	1	6	7	1	—	—	24
1-2	72	2	1,550	60	113	43	15	1	1,857
0-1	429	49	1,989	1,055	2,506	1,174	1,189	507	8,900
Total losers	509	51	3,540	1,121	2,625	1,219	1,204	508	10,781
Gainers									
0-1	1,131	323	1,316	655	2,009	1,102	1,574	551	8,662
1-2	314	62	289	45	110	48	49	20	938
2-5	42	11	81	1	16	7	4	2	164
5-10	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	3
10+	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	3

	Single pensioner	Single Adults One parent family	Single Adults Other single adult	Pensioner couple	Other Couples no children	Other Couples 1 child	Other Couples 2 children	Other Couples 3+ children	All tax units
Total gainers	1,487	396	1,691	702	2,136	1,158	1,627	573	9,769
No change	1,886	446	2,249	485	262	186	226	199	5,941

Table 3
Full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge
present social security arrangements throughout

(Great Britain: thousand households)

	Single pensioner	Other single adult	Two adults	Three+ adults	All households
Pounds per week					
Losers					
10+	—	—	3	48	49
5-10	—	—	79	321	400
2-5	3	61	1,195	1,001	2,260
1-2	25	97	1,604	415	2,141
0-1	165	200	2,909	347	3,622
Total losers	193	357	5,789	2,133	8,473
Gainers					
0-1	540	350	2,474	241	3,606
1-2	344	378	1,289	162	2,174
2-5	324	520	1,432	158	2,436
5-10	68	104	349	43	565
10+	13	13	58	7	93
Total gainers	1,290	1,365	5,603	611	8,873
No change	1,323	599	1,294	40	3,260
Percentage of net income					
Losers					
10+	—	—	—	—	—
5-10	—	1	8	1	10
2-5	15	63	481	331	890
1-2	41	106	1,479	827	2,452
0-1	136	187	3,823	974	5,120
Total losers	193	357	5,791	2,133	8,473
Gainers					
0-1	330	344	3,701	415	4,791
1-2	340	466	1,349	130	2,285
2-5	530	493	537	65	1,626
5-10	89	57	16	1	165
10+	2	4	—	—	6
Total gainers	1,290	1,366	5,603	612	8,873
No change	1,323	599	1,294	40	3,260

Table 4
Full replacement of rates by the community charge
—present social security arrangements throughout—

(Great Britain: thousand tax units)

	Single pensioner	Single Adults One parent family	Single Adults Other single adult	Pensioner couple	Other Couples no children	Other Couples 1 child	Other Couples 2 children	Other Couples 3+ children	All tax units
Pounds per week									
Losers									
10+	—	—	—	1	3	—	—	—	5
5-10	1	—	60	13	70	25	12	5	185
2-5	66	9	1,763	177	717	313	243	92	3,380
1-2	86	9	831	309	777	346	322	127	2,805
0-1	400	31	1,047	625	1,034	514	624	282	4,556
Total losers	552	49	3,700	1,125	2,601	1,198	1,201	506	10,932

	Single Adults			Other Couples				
	Single pensioner	*One parent family*	*Other single adult*	*Pensioner couple*	*no children*	*1 child*	*2 children*	*3+ children*	*All tax units*
Gainers									
0-1	648	92	529	355	939	485	640	232	3,939
1-2	389	114	404	137	497	280	399	126	2,347
2-5	380	158	632	175	556	325	465	159	2,850
5-10	72	35	119	34	135	80	114	48	638
10+	14	4	13	5	25	13	18	12	103
Total gainers	1,502	402	1,697	706	2,171	1,183	1,636	578	9,877
No change	1,828	443	2,081	477	251	182	220	196	5,679
Percentage of net income									
Losers									
10+	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	3
5-10	16	—	268	7	12	4	1	—	307
2-5	104	8	1,819	168	324	136	73	26	2,659
1-2	128	9	725	343	757	312	273	93	2,641
0-1	305	32	887	608	1,507	747	854	387	5,327
Total losers	553	48	3,701	1,125	2,601	1,199	1,201	506	10,937
Gainers									
0-1	430	109	498	410	1,412	761	1,031	374	5,025
1-2	370	136	457	175	485	282	421	148	2,474
2-5	573	128	579	115	232	126	172	54	1,979
5-10	125	29	133	6	36	14	10	1	355
10+	3	1	28	—	6	1	1	1	40
Total gainers	1,502	402	1,695	706	2,171	1,183	1,636	578	9,872
No change	1,828	443	2,081	477	251	182	220	196	5,679

Acid Rain

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the effect of a reduction in sulphur emissions by the Central Electricity Generating Board on *(a)* acidity of Scandinavian lakes and *(b)* plant damage.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is difficult to quantify the effect of a reduction in CEGB sulphur dioxide emissions on the acidity of Scandinavian lakes because they are only a small part of the total emissions affecting Scandinavia and because the process by which deposited sulphur compounds are transformed in the soil are complex. The recent decision in principle to retrofit flue gas desulphurisation equipment to three major power stations should result by 1997 in a reduction of sulphur deposition between about 1 and 2 per cent. of today's total depositions in Scandinavia.

I am not aware of any evidence of plant damage having been caused by current levels of CEGB sulphur dioxide emissions.

Secondary Mortgage Market

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish his report on the operation of the secondary mortgage market.

Mr. John Patten: I announced on 11 June that I had established a working group to examine the secondary mortgage market. I expect to receive the group's first report shortly.

Local Authorities (Compulsory Tendering)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to extend compulsory tendering by local authorities beyond those services referred to in the Green Paper "Competition in the Provision of Local Authority Services"; how he intends to consult interested parties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Government have not yet finally decided which activities should be included in legislation to extend compulsory competitive tendering by local authorities. We do not, however, see a need for further formal consultations following the many responses we received to last year's consultation paper.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will estimate the increase in cost in money and percentage terms to private and public funds, respectively, of the application of value added tax to all new building and construction work, on the basis sought by the Commission of the European Economic Community;

(2) if he will estimate the increase in cost in money and percentage, respectively, of applying value added tax to sewerage services and water, on the basis sought by the Commission of the European Economic Community;

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1986]: The Government do not accept the Commission's contention that the sixth VAT directive requires the imposition of VAT on sewerage services and water. If they did, however, the increase in cost would depend on the rate imposed.

PRIME MINISTER

South Africa

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister on what basis, with what frequency and for what purpose, information has been exchanged between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Administration concerning the role of the African National Congress in relation to events in South Africa; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We exchange information regularly with the United States Administration on a wide range of subjects, including South Africa.

Higher Education and Industry

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister why Her Majesty's Government have not yet replied to the report of the working group on improving research links between higher education and industry; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government's response to the working group's report was contained in "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s" (Cmnd. 9524), published in May 1985. That Green Paper drew attention to the importance for both higher education and industry, of improved links between them, commended examples of good practice in this field and announced measures to promote more effective and profitable collaboration.

Norway

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her visit to Norway.

The Prime Minister: I visited Norway on 11 and 12 September at the invitation of the Norwegian Government. I had useful talks with the Norwegian Prime Minister which underlined the close friendship between Britain and Norway and our co-operation in many fields, including defence and North sea oil. I was able to inform the Norwegian Government of new measures we have taken to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions from British coal-fired power stations. I also visited Tromso in northern Norway and NATO installations near Oslo. I was honoured to have an audience of His Majesty King Olav V.

Aircraft Industry

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Prime Minister what practical support and encouragement the appropriate Departments in Her Majesty's Government are giving to sustaining and expanding the work force and the high technology involved in *(a)* the airframe, *(b)* the avionics, and *(c)* the power plant aspects of the British aircraft industry; what estimates have been made of the contribution of the aircraft industry to the United Kingdom's balance of payments; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Defence are giving practical support and encouragement to the aircraft industry in many ways, including (in the Department of Trade and Industry's case) the provision of launch aid to British Aerospace for the Airbus A320, to Rolls-Royce for the V2500 engine and to Westland for the EH101 helicopter. The avionics industry benefits indirectly from this support. In addition, the Department provides funding under its civil aircraft and aero-engine R and D budget which is designed to assist the industry to maintain and develop its technology base, and individual companies are eligible for various types of selective financial assistance.

The Ministry of Defence's policy is to procure defence equipment by competitive means whenever practicable and reasonable in order to get the right equipment for the armed forces and the best long-term value for money for the taxpayer. Procurement choices are made in the light of all the factors which are relevant to obtaining long-term value for money, including the defence benefits of maintaining particular industrial capabilities. The Defence Ministry believes that operating this way will not fragment or weaken our defence industries but on the contrary strengthen them and increase their competitiveness.

In 1985 the United Kingdom exported £3,752 million of new aerospace equipment. This represents 4·8 per cent. of all United Kingdom visible exports and a surplus of exports over imports of £1,180 million.

EMPLOYMENT

Wage Rates

40. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Paymaster General what is his latest estimate of the number of firms paying workers less than wages council minimum rates in *(a)* Ayrshire and *(b)* Kilmarnock and Loudoun; and how many subsequent prosecutions have taken place since June 1983.

Mr. Trippier: No estimates of the numbers of firms paying workers less than the wages councils' minimum rates have been made. However, Wages Inspectorate statistics for 1985 show that 19 per cent. of all establishments checked in the Scotland (west) division of the inspectorate, which includes Kilmarnock and Loudoun, were underpaying one or more of their workers. This figure is not representative of all firms covered by wages councils because the inspectorate tends to concentrate on the firms more likely to be underpaying.

Statistics are not collected for areas smaller than Wages Inspectorate divisions.

No firms in the Scotland (west) division have been prosecuted since June 1983 for offences under wages council legislation.

Maternity Leave

Mr. Ashdown asked the Paymaster General if he will state the percentage of women leaving work to have a baby who returned to work after taking maternity leave, in the latest year for which such figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that this information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Sunday Trading

Mr. Wareing asked the Attorney-General what plans he has to seek to take action against the owners of shops who are acting in contravention of the Sunday trading laws.

The Attorney-General: Section 71 of the Shops Act 1950 places the duty to enforce the Sunday trading provisions on local authorities. Those authorities have power to prosecute offenders and, where appropriate, to institute proceedings to have offenders restrained by injunction from further contravention of the law. These powers are sufficient to enable local authorities to fulfill their statutory responsibility and are used throughout England and Wales. The existence of these powers does not derogate from my general power to seek the enforcement of obedience to the law and, if the public interest so requires, it is open to me to bring proceedings "ex officio". I have taken the view that at present no action on my part is required but I am continuing to monitor the situation and have asked for the help of the Association of District Councils in doing so.

Illegitimacy

Mr. Wareing asked the Attorney-General what plans he has to reform the illegitimacy laws; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Government have accepted the recommendations of the Law Commission in its first report on illegitimacy (Law Com. No. 118), as subsequently modified in its second report (Law Com. No. 157). The Government plan to introduce legislation to give effect to the Law Commission's recommendations at the earliest possible opportunity.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Badgers

Mr. Marland asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he intends to define the problem areas for the purposes of badger control operations as envisaged in the Dunnet report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales have recently given thought to those recommendations in Professor Dunnet's report relating to the definition of areas in which there has been a recent history of herd breakdowns attributed to infected badgers, where we would propose to undertake badger removal operations automatically in the event of future otherwise unexplained herd breakdowns.

With the benefit of advice from the consultative panel we have defined the 183 parishes listed, mainly in the south-west of England, within which such control action would take place. However, as we have previously made clear, such control action would be limited to at most the area of the breakdown farm and would only be initiated once all other possible non-badger origins of infection had been investigated and ruled out. Outside the "problem" parishes, as Professor Dunnet recommends, control operations would only proceed with the prior agreement of the consultative panel.

My right hon. Friends have also considered the need to retain statutory powers to kill badgers in the problem areas. Taking account of the control strategy now in place we are not convinced of the case for retention of these powers and believe that, without risk to the wider TB eradication programme, it will be possible for future badger control operations to proceed by voluntary agreement with the occupiers of the land concerned. We therefore intend to revoke the Badgers (Control Areas) Order 1977.

List of parishes with a recent history of cattle herds with Tuberculosis breakdowns of badger origin

SOUTH WEST REGION

Avon
Batheaston
Bathford
Borough of Bath
Charlcombe
Cold Ashton
Cromhall
Dodington
English Combe
Hawkesbury
Horton
Little Sodbury
Priston
St. Catherine
Sodbury
Tickenham
Tortworth
Wickwar
Winterbourne
Wraxall

Cornwall
Blisland
Breage
Callington
Calstock
Camborne
Camelford
Cardinham
Carn Brea
Constantine
Crowan
Cury
Duloe
Egloskerry
Feock
Helland
Jocobstow
Kea
Kenwyn
Kilkhampton
Lanlivery
Lanner
Lanreath
Lanteglos
Lesnewth
Linkinhorne
Lidgvan
Mabe
Madron
Michaelstow
Morvah
Morwenstowe
Mullion
N. Petherwin
Otterham
Paul
Penzanze
Perran Abuloe
Poundstock
Quethiock
Redruth
Roche
St. Breock
St. Buryan
St. Erme
St. Gennys
St. Gluvias
St. Hilary
St. Ive
St. Just
St. Levan
St. Mabyn

St. Neot
St. Teath
St. Veep
St. Wenn
Sancreed
Sennen
South Hill
Stoke Climsland
Stithians
Towednack
Tresmeer
Trevalga
Week St. Mary
Wendron
Whitstone
Withiel

Devon
Ashburton
Bradworthy
Buckland in the Moor
Chagford
Clovelly
East Putford
Hartland
Ilsington
Manaton
North Bovey
Welcombe
West Putford
Widecombe in the Moor
Woodland
Woolfardisworthy Nr Bideford

Dorset
Cheselbourne
Dewlish
Milborne St. Andrew
Stoke Abbot
Winterborne Houghton
Winterborne Stickland

Gloucestershire
Alderley
Ashley
Avening
Beverstone
Bisley with Lypiatt
Boxwell with Leighterton
Brockworth
Charlton Kings
Coaley
Coates
Cranham
Dowdeswell
Edgeworth
Frampton on Severn
Fretherne with Saul
Great Witcombe
Leonard Stanley
Long Newton
Mitcheldean
N. Cerney
North Nibley
Nymphsfield
Owlpen
Ozleworth
Painswick
Prestbury
Rodmarton
Sandhurst
Standish
Stinchcombe
Stroud
Tetbury Upton
Thrupp
Uley
Whiteshill
Whittington
Wotton under Edge

Somerset
Cheddar

Wiltshire
Avebury
Box
Brinkworth
Broad Hinton
Calne Without
Castle Combe
Charlton near Malmesbury
Chippenham Without
Compton Basset
Corsham
Crudwell
Dauntsey
Fyfield
Hankerton
Hilmarton
Langley Burrell Without
Luckington
Lydiard Tregoze
Lyneham
Minety
Monkton Farleigh
North Wraxall
Purton West Kington
West Overton
Wootton Bassett
Yatton Keynell

NORTHERN REGION
Cumbria
Subberthwaite

SOUTH EASTERN REGION
East Sussex
Folkington
Littlington

MIDLANDS AND WESTERN REGION
Staffordshire
Bradnop
Cheddleton
Ipstones

WALES
Dyfed
Bettws Evan
Carmarthen (St. Peters)
Cenarth
Llangeler
Newchurch

Sheep Compensation Scheme

Sir Hector Monro asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he proposes to pay the fees and expenses of assessors appointed under the Sheep Compensation Scheme 1986 as envisaged in his announcements of 13 August and 10 September.

Mr. Gummer: Parliamentary approval of new subheads to cover this new service will be sought in Winter Supplementary Estimates for class IV, vote 4, class XVI, vote 2 and class XVII, vote 2. Pending that approval urgent expenditure will be financed by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund. In the case of class XVI, vote 2, the new subhead and advance from the Contingencies Fund will also cover the costs of the emergency testing services undertaken by the Scottish Office.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Rolls

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many pupils entered the first form in maintained secondary schools in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* Leicestershire in September 1986, September 1983 and September 1979.

Mr. Dunn: Information on the number of pupils entering maintained secondary schools in England is not collected on a regular basis. The nearest approximation is the numbers of pupils aged 11 or under in secondary schools; these are given for Leicestershire and England for January 1980, 1984 and 1986.

Figures for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Pupils aged 11[1] or under in maintained secondary schools[2]

	January 1980	*January 1984*	*January 1986[3]*
Leicestershire	14,157	11,148	9,208
England	542,227	485,721	430,831

[1] Age as at the preceding August.
[2] Middle deemed secondary schools are excluded.
[3] January 1986 figures are provisional.

A and O-level Passes

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide comprehensive figures detailing the number of passes attained in A and O-levels in the summer of 1986 and in each of the past five years giving the percentage of the numbers actually taken.

Mr. Dunn: Information on the 1986 summer examinations is not yet available. Figures for the years 1981 to 1985 are as follows:

GCE A and O-level summer examinations
GCE A-level

Year	*Number of subject passes*	*Number of subject passes as a percentage of total subject entries*
1981	400,338	68·1
1982	416,361	67·8
1983	437,037	69·1
1984	438,302	69·8
1985	427,619	70·2

GCE O-level

Year	*Number of subject passes*		*Number of subject passes as a percentage of total subject entries*	
	Grades A to C	*Grades A to E*	*Grades A to C*	*Grades A to E*
1981	1,774,977	2,550,044	58·0	83·3
1982	1,794,614	2,590,315	57·7	83·3
1983	1,792,927	2,578,068	58·1	83·5
1984	1,769,263	2,559,582	57·3	82·9
1985	1,750,397	2,551,186	57·1	83·2

Source: Survey of Examining Boards in England.

Deaf People

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has had from the Royal National Institute for the Deaf; what reply he is sending; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The chief executive of the institute has written recording the institute's recognition of the potential benefits of the in-service training route for specialist teachers of the deaf, stressing the need to ensure an adequate supply of trained teachers through this route and proposing a meeting to discuss how to encourage teachers to take up the training opportunities available to them. The reply from my predecessor sets out our intention to ensure sufficient in-service training in this field through the new training grant scheme. The chief executive and education officer of the institute met officials of the Department last Friday.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many places allocated to initial teacher training in special needs are currently filled by student teachers of the deaf; how many teachers of the deaf in training now are funded by full secondment from their local education authority; how many teachers of the deaf are receiving training in 1986 on full-time courses.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are currently two courses of initial teacher training for teachers of the deaf, both at Manchester university. One is a four-year undergraduate course, to which intakes in 1983, 1984 and 1985 were 28, 28 and 27 respectively. The other is a one-year postgraduate course to which the intake in 1985 was 10. The numbers of students admitted to training in the academic year 1986-87 are not yet available.

Information on the number of student teachers of the deaf on full secondment from a local education authority is not available. 86 students beginning a course of training to teach the deaf in 1985 were employed in maintained schools or institutions of further education.

120 student teachers of the deaf began full-time courses of training in 1985.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will ensure that the new arrangements to fund the training of teachers of the deaf will be reviewed 12 months after they have been introduced.

Mrs. Rumbold: Yes.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many places he envisages funding for training for teachers of the deaf through the in-service pooling arrangements;

(2) if he intends to issue advice to local education authorities regarding the number of places earmarked through the in-service pooling arrangements for training of teachers of the deaf.

Mrs. Rumbold: Funds will be available in 1987-88 to support the present level of in-service training. The arrangements for administering the allocations covering the academic year 1988-89 and later will also take account of the need for additional in-service training to replace the initial teacher training for teachers of the deaf which will then be being phased out.

Pre-school Provision

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list for each local education authority in England at the latest date for which figures are available the number and proportion of three and four-year-olds attending *(a)* nursery classes, *(b)* nursery schools, *(c)* play groups, and *(d)* total pre-school provision; and what are the waiting lists in each case.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1986, c. *523*.] The number of pupils aged under five receiving education in January 1986 in *(a)* nursery classes of maintained primary schools *(b)* nursery schools and *(c)* all under-fives in maintained schools, together with the proportion these represent of the three and four-year-old population, are given in the table.

The Department does not collect information on the number of pupils aged under five on waiting lists for pre-school education.

Places in play groups and day nurseries and places with child minders are provided by local authority social services departments and not by local education authorities. Some information is collected by the Department of Health and Social Security, but not precisely in the form requested. The number of premises and places, the number of places per 1,000 children aged under five and the waiting lists in each authority in England are given in "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March 1984, England" (A/F84/6), copies of which are available in the Library.

Pupils under 5 receiving education in maintained schools in England—January 1986

LEA	*Nursery Classes*		*Nursery Schools*		*All Schools including Nursery Classes*	
	Pupils	*As a per cent. of Population*	*Pupils*	*As a per cent. of Population*	*Pupils*	*As a per cent. of Population*
Barking	1,395	36·7	0	·0	2, 587	68·1
Barnet	1,707	23·4	495	6·8	4,112	56·3
Bexley	435	8·4	175	3·4	1,355	26·1
Brent	2,036	29·9	268	3·9	4,342	63·9
Bromley	97	1·5	0	·0	1,140	17·3
Croydon	206	2·4	411	4·8	3,151	37·1
Ealing	2,139	27·1	610	7·7	3,688	46·7
Enfield	1,381	20·9	0	·0	3,339	51·5
Haringey	1,967	37·1	213	4·0	3,631	68·5
Harrow	795	16·2	0	·0	1,555	31·7
Havering	224	4·1	0	·0	1,987	36·8
Hillingdon	2,501	42·4	117	2·0	2,949	50·0
Hounslow	3,734	69·1	0	·0	3,779	70·0
Kingston upon Thames	691	22·3	238	7·7	1,632	52·6
Merton	1,321	32·2	173	4·2	2,394	58·4
Newham	2,985	47·4	979	15·5	4,735	75·2
Redbridge	450	8·5	0	·0	1,253	23·6
Richmond upon Thames	498	14·2	68	1·9	1,543	44·1
Sutton	445	10·9	240	5·9	730	17·8
Waltham Forest	1,953	33·1	292	4·9	3,091	52·4
Inner London	17,767	32·3	4,152	7·5	29,362	53·4
Birmingham	6,465	23·4	2,245	8·1	17,577	63·7
Coventry	1,454	17·7	464	5·7	4,512	55·0
Dudley	1,737	23·5	471	6·4	3,224	43·6
Sandwell	3,196	40·5	208	2·6	5,938	75·2
Solihull	1,253	27·2	0	·0	2,640	57·4
Walsall	3,150	47·7	770	11·7	6,066	91·9
Woverhampton	2,867	43·4	810	12·3	4,747	71·9
Knowsley	1,736	33·4	0	·0	3,254	62·6
Liverpool	5,571	46·8	548	4·6	10,184	85·6
St. Helens	1,307	27·2	76	1·6	2,901	60·4
Sefton	1,677	24·0	316	4·5	4,152	59·3
Wirral	1,315	15·3	219	2·5	4,157	48·3
Bolton	2,084	28·9	601	8·3	4,871	67·7
Bury	641	14·2	142	3·2	2,194	48·8
Manchester	5,810	50·5	540	4·7	8,322	72·4
Oldham	1,916	30·9	0	·0	3,883	62·6
Rochdale	784	12·9	885	14·5	3,678	60·3
Salford	2,137	36·8	870	15·0	4,895	84·4
Stockport	213	2·9	779	10·7	3,149	43·1
Tameside	1,900	34·5	324	5·9	4,045	73·5
Trafford	620	11·7	0	·0	991	18·7
Wigan	1,773	21·6	199	2·4	4,622	56·4
Barnsley	2,615	45·9	173	3·0	3,735	65·5
Doncaster	2,999	38·9	0	·0	5,505	71·5
Rotherham	2,354	34·6	352	5·2	3,819	56·2
Sheffield	3,871	34·0	722	6·3	6,915	60·7
Bradford	3,997	28·0	510	3·6	7,821	54·7

LEA	Nursery Classes		Nursery Schools		All Schools including Nursery Classes	
	Pupils	As a per cent. of Population	Pupils	As a per cent. of Population	Pupils	As a per cent. of Population
Calderdale	1,314	26·8	87	1·8	3,028	61·8
Kirklees	3,220	31·0	699	6·7	5,987	57·6
Leeds	5,079	29·7	275	1·6	9,658	56·5
Wakefield	3,091	38·6	484	6·1	5,367	67·1
Gateshead	1,575	31·5	64	1·3	3,161	63·2
Newcastle upon Tyne	2,219	33·6	586	8·9	4,892	74·1
North Tyneside	2,092	44·5	315	6·7	4,058	86·3
South Tyneside	1,216	32·9	688	18·6	3,174	85·8
Sunderland	1,992	23·7	927	11·0	5,553	66·1
Isles of Scilly	0	·0	0	·0	6	·0
Avon	1,832	8·2	1,461	6·6	10,061	45·1
Bedfordshire	3,201	21·1	1,320	8·7	5,370	35·3
Berkshire	2,765	14·2	1,938	9·9	4,990	25·6
Buckinghamshire	1,576	9·4	515	3·1	3,045	18·1
Cambridgeshire	1,309	8·0	635	3·9	6,586	40·4
Cheshire	4,122	17·2	819	3·4	8,991	37·6
Cleveland	7,862	49·4	156	1·0	11,125	70·0
Cornwall	1,265	12·8	94	·9	4,611	46·6
Cumbria	1,539	13·5	694	6·1	6,019	52·8
Derbyshire	4,644	20·5	1,129	5·0	11,334	50·2
Devon	1,635	7·5	247	1·1	4,417	20·2
Dorset	805	6·3	0	·0	1,797	14·1
Durham	3,270	21·5	2,266	14·9	10,075	66·3
East Sussex	660	4·8	296	2·1	4,988	36·1
Essex	1,895	5·0	249	·7	6,988	18·3
Gloucestershire	0	·0	0	·0	3,807	31·2
Hampshire	1,599	4·2	260	·7	7,739	20·2
Hereford and Worcester	997	6·1	0	·0	2,402	14·6
Hertfordshire	5,876	23·6	1,701	6·8	11,745	47·2
Humberside	5,758	26·8	910	4·2	10,761	50·1
Isle of Wight	103	4·3	0	·0	897	37·4
Kent	1,830	4·9	84	·2	4,602	12·4
Lancashire	2,216	6·3	3,358	9·5	16,540	46·7
Leicestershire	5,113	22·1	50	·2	7,122	30·8
Lincolnshire	722	5·3	284	2·1	3,571	26·3
Norfolk	470	2·8	393	2·4	5,147	31·0
North Yorkshire	2,316	14·9	315	2·0	6,528	42·1
Northamptonshire	1,823	12·3	503	3·4	7,031	47·5
Northumberland	1,562	20·3	136	1·8	4,026	52·3
Nottinghamshire	10,586	43·6	536	2·2	13,073	53·8
Oxfordshire	1,245	9·0	502	3·6	2,317	16·8
Shropshire	920	9·4	160	1·6	3,093	31·6
Somerset	81	·8	0	·0	3,436	32·7
Staffordshire	3,986	15·2	1,844	7·0	11,165	42·5
Suffolk	1,867	12·1	167	1·1	4,340	28·2
Surrey	2,231	9·7	404	1·8	4,638	20·2
Warwickshire	1,181	10·1	726	6·2	5,499	47·0
West Sussex	84	·5	451	2·9	1,348	8·8
Wiltshire	184	1·3	0	·0	2,303	16·5
ENGLAND	223,097	19·0	49,383	4·2	508,623	43·3

Population used is the estimated population of 3 and 4-year-olds in each LEA.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring up to date the figures given in reply to a question on 21 March 1978, *Official Report*, column *543*, showing the ratio of the increase in manufactured export prices to the corresponding increase in wholesale prices, using trade in 1980 as a base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table:

Comparisons of changes in export unit values and producer price indices (manufactures)

	UVI 1985 / UVI 1961 (a)	PPI 1985 / PPI 1961 (b)	(a) / (b)
Belgium-Luxembourg	2·77	2·48	1·12
France	5·12	4·82	1·06
Federal Republic of Germany	1·95	2·37	0·82
Italy	7·79	8·73	0·89
Japan	1·78	2·13	0·84
Netherlands	2·35	2·85	0·82
United Kingdom	7·28	6·58	1·11
United States of America	3·72	3·22	1·16

Source: IMF.
UVI = Unit Value Index.
PPI = Producer Price Index.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring up to date the figures given in reply to a written question, *Official Report*, 18 November 1976, column *697*, showing the index figure for trade competitiveness each year and the rate of growth of imported manufactures relative to the growth of exported manufactures.

Mr. Alan Clark: Volume growth rates for trade in manufactures are in the following table. Because the previous answer covered total trade growth rates, the series are taken back to 1963.

United Kingdom Trade in Manufactures

	[1] *Percentage change on previous year*		[2] *Relative export prices*
	Imports	*Exports*	*1980 = 100*
1963	8·6	5·2	81·2
1964	22·0	3·8	81·3
1965	0·4	5·3	83·5
1966	6·2	3·3	85·3
1967	13·3	−1·9	86·2
1968	16·6	14·1	79·7
1969	5·7	12·5	79·2
1970	7·1	1·0	80·1
1971	8·0	7·9	81·9
1972	18·0	0·8	82·0
1973	20·8	12·9	75·5
1974	6·1	5·5	74·2
1975	−6·4	−2·8	77·9
1976	8·8	8·6	75·5
1977	9·6	7·5	79·7
1978	11·5	−0·5	84·5
1979	13·3	−0·8	90·4
1980	−0·8	1·0	100·0
1981	−2·0	−6·0	98·0
1982	9·5	1·8	92·2
1983	13·2	−0·3	89·2
1984	10·4	9·3	87·7
1985	4·9	6·1	89·8

Source: Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics.
[1] Based on Volume data.
[2] Defined as the unit value index of United Kingdom exports of manufactures divided by a weighted average of the unit value indices of competitors' exports of manufactures, both expressed in a common currency.

Wolverhampton Group of Steel Companies

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answers of 3 June, *Official Report*, column *409*, to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) concerning the Wolverhampton Group of Steel Companies, on what date representations were last received by him from the former managing director and principal shareholder; and what response he made.

Mr. Howard: Between 12 July 1984 and 28 February 1985 representations on behalf of the former managing director and principal shareholder of the Wolverhampton Group of Steel Companies were received by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, by the Attorney-General, and by Her Majesty's Treasury, from the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) in whose constituency he resides. The response was that no case for compensation to be paid by the Crown to the companies concerned or to their former managing director and principal shareholder could be sustained and I have no reason to take any other view.

Airbus

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many firm orders and options had been placed for the A320 aircraft as at 17 October; whether any financial support given by Her Majesty's Government will be recovered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: As at 17 October 1986, 134 firm orders and 131 options had been placed for Airbus A320 aircraft. In addition, other commitments for up to a further 152 A320 aircraft had been made at that date under letters of intent, memoranda of understanding or other agreements.

The launch-aid being provided to British Aerospace in respect of its participation in the A320 programme is recoverable by a combination of payments on a fixed timescale in 1990-92 and levies on aircraft sold. In terms of the eventual recovery of the Government's investment the level of firm orders, options and other commitments presently held is very encouraging for an aircraft not scheduled to enter airline service until spring 1988.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions have taken place between his Department and British Aerospace in relation to supporting the proposed A330 and A340 Airbus; what priority his Department gives to active British participation in future developments of such larger civil aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: My Department has maintained close contact with British Aerospce as the Airbus Industrie proposals for the Airbus A330 and A340 have evolved in recent months. An application from British Aerospace for launch-aid in respect of the proposed A330-A340 programme was received earlier this week and will be carefully considered.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the balance of trade in manufactured goods between the United Kingdom and each of the EEC six states in 1972 and in 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table.

United Kingdom Crude[1] *Balance of Trade in Manufactured Goods*[2]
£ million

	1972	*1985*
Trade with:		
Federal Republic of Germany	−307	−5,833
France	+2	−1,221
Italy	−36	−1,387
Netherlands	+55	− 747
Belgium/Luxembourg	+29	− 518

[1] Exports valued free on board; imports valued inclusive of insurance and freight costs
[2] Standard International Trade Classification sections 5 to 8.
Source: United Kingdom trade statistics.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the United Kingdom and for each of the European Economic Community countries, the change in the ratio of export unit values for manufactures to the wholesale price of *(a)* manufactures and *(b)* consumer prices between 1956 and 1985, 1966 and 1985 and 1976 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1986, c. *614*]: Data for 1956 and certain other years for some of these countries are not readily available. The information is in the following table.

Percentage changes

	United Kingdom	*Belgium/ Luxem-bourg*	*Denmark*	*France*	*Federal Republic of Germany*	*Italy*	*Nether-lands*	*Irish Republic*	*Spain*
Export UVI V Producer Price Index									
1961 to 1985	+10·7	+12·1	−5·0	+6·3	−17·7	−10·9	−17·6	n/a	n/a
1966 to 1985	+11·7	+21·3	+2·3	+8·6	−17·0	+1·3	−5·6	n/a	n/a
1976 to 1985	−0·1	+25·8	+6·5	+0·5	−5·9	+2·8	+5·5	+2·0	−12·8
Export UVI V Consumer Price Index									
1961 to 1985	−0·8	−27·1	−28·3	−10·3	−23·5	−22·3	−35·6	n/a	n/a
1966 to 1985	+4·1	−16·6	−13·7	−1·6	−16·1	−2·7	−23·0	n/a	n/a
1976 to 1985	−3·2	+2·7	−1·9	+0·5	−5·0	−10·1	+4·1	−13·8	−19·9

n/a = not available.
UVI = Unit Value Index.
Source: Compiled form IMF and OECD data.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year from 1956 the United Kingdom share of world trade in manufactures in terms of volume and value, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1986, c. *613*]: Information on shares in volume terms for years prior to 1963 is not readily available. The other United Kingdom shares of the main manufacturing countries exports of manufactures are in the following table.

United Kingdom trade in manufactures[1]

Per cent.

	United Kingdom share of MMC'S[2] *Exports of manufactures at 1980 prices*	*at Current prices*
1956		19·4
1957		18·4
1958		18·3
1959		17·9
1960		16·5
1961		16·4
1962		15·9
1962[3]		15·5
1963	17·2	15·3
1964	16·0	14·2
1965	15·3	13·8
1966	14·5	13·2
1967	13·5	12·2
1968	13·3	11·3
1969	13·4	11·2
1970	12·5	10·6
1971	12·5	10·8
1972	11·6	9·9
1973	11·6	9·1
1974	11·0	8·5
1975	11·2	9·1
1976	10·9	8·4
1977	11·2	9·0
1978	10·7	8·9
1979	10·0	9·1
1980	9·7	9·7
1981	8·9	8·5
1982	9·3	8·4
1983	9·0	7·9
1984	8·9	7·6
1985	9·1	7·9

[1] Standard International Trade Classification, sections 5 to 8.
[2] Main manufacturing countries — Belgium, Luxembourg, Canada, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States of America.
[3] As a result of change in 1962 in the way United States figures were compiled, there is a discontinuity in that year.
Source:
Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics

Engineering Goods

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring up to date the figures showing particulars of production and trade in engineering goods in certain countries given in the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 26 November 1979, *Official Report*, column *489*.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1986, c. *619*]: The readily available information is in the following tables.

Output at current prices[1]
Billions of national currency units

	1978	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
United Kingdom	..	17·0	18·0	17·2	18·2	..
Federal Republic of Germany	..	..	130·1	134·7	140·5	143·8
France	..	..	180·7	205·4	234·6	247·4
Italy	..	14,227	18,310	20,835	..	..
United States	..	178·1	190·1	211·4	..	..
Japan	14,885	17,309	19,980	..	..	..

[1] Group 382 of the International Standard Industrial Classification
.. not readily available.
Source: OECD

Balance of Payments

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what he expects the United Kingdom's balance of payments on current account to be during 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Economic prospects for 1987 will be outlined in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement later this year.

Indices of industrial production[1]

1980 = 100.

		United Kingdom	Federal Republic of Germany	France	Italy	United States	Japan
1975		107	84	87	72	69	63
1976		103	88	92	76	72	69
1977		103	90	90	79	81	73
1978		109	92	94	83	91	79
1979		107	96	98	91	99	90
1980		100	100	100	100	100	100
1981		86	100	107	96	105	102
1982		87	98	102	88	94	101
1983		88	99	97	87	96	100
1984		96	101	95	90	115	121
1985		106	n/a	96	99	119	135
1985	Q1	110	100	89	98	116	128
	Q2	105	107	96	105	119	131
	Q3	100	n/a	86	85	124	140
	Q4	110	n/a	114	107	116	142
1986	Q1	111	n/a	n/a	104	116	n/a

[1] Group 382 of the International Standard Industrial Classification.
n/a = not readily available.
Source: OECD.

Value of exports[1]

US $ Billion.

	United Kingdom	Federal Republic of Germany	France	Italy	United States	Japan
1975	9·4	20·3	7·4	6·0	20·9	6·7
1976	9·1	22·3	7·9	6·0	22·0	7·7
1977	10·6	25·3	8·7	7·4	22·2	10·1
1978	12·6	29·6	10·6	8·9	26·3	14·3
1979	15·1	33·7	12·5	10·9	31·9	15·0
1980	19·5	36·2	13·8	13·8	40·4	18·2
1981	16·8	32·1	12·5	12·7	45·8	22·6
1982	16·0	31·7	11·5	12·2	42·5	20·3
1983	13·4	30·1	11·3	12·4	37·1	23·1
1984	14·5	30·1	11·0	12·1	41·0	27·9
1985	[2]17·3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

[1] Standard International Trade Classification (rev. 1) section 71 (Machinery other than Electrical Machinery).
[2] Figure relates to sections 71 to 75 of the Standard International Trade Classification (rev. 2). The equivalent figure for 1984 was $15·4 billion.
n/a = not readily available.
Source: OECD and *UK Overseas Trade Statistics.*

Quality and Standards

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on progress in the United Kingdom in quality and standards since the 1982 White Paper "Standards, Quality and International Competitiveness," Cmnd. 8621.

Mr. Pattie: My right hon. Friend today published an illustrated booklet entitled "Quality Counts" setting out the Government's role since 1982 in encouraging the adoption of modern quality techniques and improvements in the creation, and use, of standards relevant to the needs of British industry. A copy of the booklet has been sent to all hon. Members today.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Foreign Nationals (Electoral Register)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make an estimate of the number of citizens of the Republic of Ireland who, being resident in the United Kingdom, are registered as electors on the current electoral register.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On the basis of the numbers of persons who reported that they were citizens of the Irish Republic in the most recent labour force survey, it is estimated that nearly half a million citizens of the Irish Republic aged 18 and over were usually resident in the United Kingdom in mid-1984. It is not known how many of them were on the electoral register; there is no requirement for applicants for electoral registration to state their citizenship—nationality.

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the Commonwealth and other countries whose citizens if resident in the United Kingdom are entitled to register as electors; and if he will indicate those countries on the list who allow British citizens who are residents to register as electors in those countries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Citizens of all Commonwealth countries and citizens of the Irish Republic are entitled to

register as electors in the United Kingdom. As at September 1982, the latest date for which information is readily available, the Commonwealth countries listed allowed all other Commonwealth citizens, including those who are now British citizens, to vote at their elections. In addition, British citizens may vote at elections in the Irish Republic.

Commonwealth countries which gave the right of vote to all Commonwealth citizens (Information as at September 1982)

Antigua and Barbuda
Australia
Barbados
Canada
Dominica
Grenada
Guyana
Jamaica
Mauritius
New Zealand
St. Lucia
St. Vincent
Sierra Leone
Trinidad and Tobago.

Prisons (Drugs)

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further information he has about the use of illegal drugs in Her Majesty's prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) on 24 July 1986, at column 397.

Released Prisoners (Reconvictions)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide such information as is available of the number of prisoners released on licence from life sentences who are *(a)* convicted for another offence, *(b)* convicted of murder and *(c)* convicted of any other grave offence; if he will give the actual percentage rate for reconviction and also parallel figures for non-lifer prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the reconviction of those released on life licence in the years 1974 to 1984 is published in "Reconviction and recalls of life licensees", Home Office statistical bulletin, issue No. 22/86. Of the 807 persons released on licence in the period 1974-84, four had been reconvicted of murder by the end of 1984. The other figures requested are given in the bulletin (tables 2 and 3 and paragraph 14).

Mr. John Stalker

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recent findings by Mr. Colin Sampson, chief constable of West Yorkshire, into the affairs of Mr. John Stalker, deputy chief constable, Greater Manchester police.

Mr. Hurd: Mr. Sampson submitted his report on his investigation to the Greater Manchester police authority on 14 August. The police authority later decided not to initiate disciplinary proceedings against Mr. Stalker, and advised him to be more circumspect in his political and criminal associations.

I asked for observations from those principally concerned so that I could be fully aware of all the aspects of the case and consider whether there were any lessons to be learnt for the investigation of any future allegations against senior police officers.

I have also considered whether a further inquiry should be undertaken into the origin of the allegations against Mr. Stalker, having regard to continued speculation that the allegations were linked in some way to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and to the inquiry which Mr. Stalker was then conducting and which is nearing completion under Mr. Sampson's leadership. However, Mr. Sampson was aware of that speculation but found no evidence to substantiate it. Moreover, a further inquiry at this stage could be prejudicial to any criminal proceedings which might follow from the inquiry which Mr. Sampson is now conducting in Northern Ireland.

Police Advisory Board

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Police Advisory Board first began to consider the question of non-police organisations wearing diced hat bands; at how many of its meetings this item has been on the board's agenda; why no conclusions on this issue have been reached; and when he expects the board to make recommendations to him.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This was first considered at the meeting of the Police Advisory Board's standing committee on conditions of service on 25 January 1985 and it has been on the agenda for the five subsequent meetings of that committee. There has been some difficulty in establishing the extent to which it presents a national problem but I expect the committee to reach a conclusion at its next meeting in January 1987.

Prisoners (Escort)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the police staff associations were consulted before his Department circulated proposals for the police to take over from the prison service responsibility for escorting prisoners between courts and prisons; what representations he has received from the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Police Federation and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; and how and when he intends to implement this proposal.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have invited the views of the police staff associations and the Metropolitan police on the recommendations affecting the police in the report of a joint scrutiny by the Home Office and the Lord Chancellor's Department of prisoner escort tasks. Consultations on these recommendations are still in progress and the decision whether or not to implement is dependent on the outcome.

National Reporting Centre

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the National Reporting Centre has been re-named the Mutual Aid Co-ordination Centre; and if, to avoid confusion, he will now revise the initials MACC that now apply to military aid to the civil community.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The title was changed to the Mutual Aid Co-ordination Centre as a result of a recommendation by the Association of Chief Police Officers following its review of the policing of the NUM dispute. I do not consider there is likely to be confusion over the change of title.

Detoxification centres

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he has ceased to fund the two experimental detoxification centres.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) on 20 November 1985, at column 167.

Police (Health Protection)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements have been made to protect police officers from infections arising from *(a)* prisoners or arrested persons suffering from infectious diseases, hepatitis B and acquired immune deficiency syndrome, *(b)* hypodermic needles seized from drug addicts, and *(c)* sharp instruments including syringes and razor blades.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Arrangements for protecting police officers while on duty from infectious diseases such as AIDS and hepatitis B are an operational matter for chief officers of police to consider. Guidance on appropriate precautions against specific infections is issued from time to time by the Association of Chief Police Officers on the basis of expert medical advice and the situation is kept under constant review.

Police Complaints Authority

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time taken by the Police Complaints Authority to resolve complaints against police officers in which it has intervened.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: For cases completed in September 1986 the average time taken by the Police Complaints Authority to consider complaints investigation reports forwarded to them by police forces together with proposals in respect of disciplinary action against the officer or officers concerned was 37 days.

South America (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recent visit to South America of the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor).

Mr. Mellor: I visited Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia from 6 to 19 September to assess the scale and likely development of cocaine production and trafficking. I met senior members of their Governments, including the President of Bolivia, and representatives of law enforcement agencies as well as other individuals and organisations concerned with the drug problem. I was impressed with the degree of commitment and awareness which I found, but saddened and concerned at the scale of the problem and the paucity of resources to tackle it. The visit was welcomed by all those I met in demonstrating United Kingdom and European commitment and concern. The Government are reinforcing that message by providing contributions to the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control for law enforcement support activities in the region and by meeting a number of requests for bilateral assistance. The visit was particularly valuable in laying the basis for future co-operation with the four Governments and we are most grateful for their contributions to its success.

European Drugs Task Force

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the United Kingdom's European Economic Community partners about the setting up of a European drugs task force to combat the traffic in illegal narcotics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: On 20 October I chaired a meeting of Community Ministers in London, at which we agreed that the Community and its member states have a major role to play in stepping up the fight against drug abuse. We agreed upon a seven-point plan which would be pursued in conjunction with the Council of Europe's Pompidou group, covering:

(i) measures to reduce demand for drugs, especially among young people;
(ii) measures to improve the treatment of addicts and rehabilitation services;
(iii) ensuring that bilateral and Community aid supports as appropriate a recipient country's efforts to combat drug abuse;
(iv) steps to ensure that legislation takes account of the need to maintain effective control over illicit drug trafficking, particularly at the Community's external frontiers;

(v) mutual enforcement of confiscation orders relating to drug traffickers' assets;

(vi) enhanced co-operation between law enforcement agencies involving exchange of drug liaison officers between member states, the posting of drug liaison officers to other countries and the establishment of a world-wide directory of those involved in the fight against drug abuse — this would be achieved by inviting Trevi to examine the scope for creating a co-ordinated network of drug liaison officers to monitor developments in producer countries;

(vii) preparation of joint assessments by Community ambassadors in drug producing countries in order to ensure a steady flow of recommendations for action by the Twelve.

Ministers did not discuss the setting up of a European drugs task force; this would be for the Commission to propose if it considered that it fell within Community competence.

Women Prisoners (Pregnancy)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many women detained in Her Majesty's prison, Holloway experienced complications necessitating transfer to a general hospital during pregnancy in each month of the current year;

(2) how many women detained in Her Majesty's prison, Holloway experienced pregnancy which ended in the death of the foetus before full term during each month of the current year;

(3) how many women in custody in England experienced pregnancy which ended in the death of the foetus before full term during each month of the current year;

(4) if he will state the number of infant deaths occurring among children delivered to women during the term of their imprisonment in England for each month of the current year;

(5) how many women were pregnant in Her Majesty's prison, Holloway for each month during the current year.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Visa and Immigration Officers

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what he estimates to be the cost of the training and placement of visa or immigration officers at Heathrow airport; and what is the minimum, the average and the maximum cost of the employment of a visa or immigration officer at Heathrow airport.

Mr. Waddington: The information readily available is as follows. On first appointment immigration officers undergo 10 weeks training comprising a six-weeks recruit course followed by four weeks desk training. Throughout this period they receive the basic salary in the range of £5,605-£10,188, plus allowances. The average cost per place of non-residential courses at the immigration service training unit at Harmondsworth is of the order of £200 a week. Interviewing passengers from a number of countries, including in particular the Indian subcontinent, also requires the service of interpreters.

Immigration (Members' Representations)

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes he proposes to make in the guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases.

Mr. Hurd: The change will substitute the following for paragraph 3 of the present guidelines:

"*Representations to the Minister*

3. A Member wishing to submit representations in the case of a passenger refused entry may request the Minister's Private Office, or, out of working hours, the Home Office Duty Officer, to arrange for the removal of the passenger to be deferred. If the passenger was refused entry because he did not have the required entry clearance under the Immigration Rules action to remove him will not automatically be deferred. If the passenger wishes to come to the United Kingdom he should apply abroad for the required entry clearance. In other cases action to remove the passenger will normally be deferred for a period of 12 working days to enable the Member to submit written representations.

Note

An entry clearance may take the form of a visa, an entry certificate (for non-visa Commonwealth citizens) or a letter of consent (for all other non-visa nationals). Visa nationals require a visa whatever the purpose of their journey here. All other nationals require an entry clearance when coming for work, settlement, marriage leading to settlement or as a dependant of one of these categories."

Copies of the amendment have been placed in the Library and are available also in the Vote Office.

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he has made for the 1986 review of the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984.

Mr. Hurd: Sir Cyril Philips, who was appointed in 1985 to carry out the annual review of the prevention of terrorism legislation, has had to give up this work because of other commitments. I am glad to say that Viscount Colville of Culross has accepted my invitation to carry out this annual review.

Iran and Iraq (Visitors)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many citizens of *(a)* Iran and *(b)* Iraq have been admitted to the United Kingdom in each of the years 1981 to 1986; and for what reasons they visited the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: Information on the numbers of passengers admitted to the United Kingdom by nationality and purpose of journey is published annually in table 1 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom" (Cmnd. 8533, 8944, 9246, 9544 and 9863 for the years 1981 to 1985 respectively). Corresponding figures for 1986 will be published in 1987.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the number of people claiming supplementary benefit in South Yorkshire ad at each of the offices of his Department serving the Wentworth constituency in 1979 and at the latest available date, the percentage change this represents, the percentage change in the number of staff dealing with this benefit and the total number of staff employed in these offices in 1979 and at the present time.

Mr. Lyell: South Yorkshire is covered by 13 of the Department's offices (Rotherham North, Rotherham

South, Sheffield South-East, Sheffield South-West, Sheffield North-East, Sheffield North-West, Barnsley West, Barnsley East, Wath on Dearne, Doncaster East, Doncaster West, Mexborough and Goldthorpe). Mexborough and Goldthorpe are national insurance offices and do not deal with supplementary benefit.

Wentworth constituency is covered by Rotherham, North and Wath on Dearne offices. The boundaries of the offices are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

The information that is available is as follows:

	Number of new-repeat claims to supplementary benefits (including unsuccessful)			*Number of people*[1] *receiving supplementary benefit*		
	1982-83	*1985-86*	*Percentage change*	*1982-83*	*1985-86*	*Percentage change*
Rotherham North office	5,619	5,571	−0·9	5,291	5,520	+4·3
Wath upon Dearne office	9,350	9,393	+0·5	6,958	8,174	+17·5
South Yorkshire offices	164,455	160,174	−2·6	129,422	147,164	+13·7

[1] Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action at February each year.

Changes in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86

	Total staff complement 1982-83	*Total staff complement 1985-86*
Rotherham North office	74	69
Wath upon Dearne office	56	66
South Yorkshire offices	1,667	1,602

	Supplementary benefits staff		
	1982-83 complement	*1985-86 complement*	*Percentage change*
Rotherham North office	36	44	+22·2
Wath upon Dearne office	56	66	+17·8
South Yorkshire offices	906	1,074	+18·5

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the numbers of people receiving supplementary benefit in each of the 36 metropolitan districts for each year from 1979 to 1986;

(2) if he will give the numbers receiving supplementary benefits per thousand head of population in each of the 36 metropolitan districts for each year from 1979 to 1986;

(3) if he will list the numbers of children in each of the 36 metropolitan districts who are dependent upon supplementary benefit claimants for each year from 1979 to 1986;

(4) if he will list the numbers of children dependent upon people receiving supplementary benefit per thousand head of population in each of the metropolitan districts for each year from 1979 to 1986.

Mr. Major: I shall let the right hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Residential Homes

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of private residential care homes for the elderly operating in the East Midlands; if he will list them by district, giving the number of residents in such homes by district; and if he will also give comparative information for Leicestershire, and also in total the number of such homes and the total number of residents in England and Wales.

Mrs. Currie: The analyses available centrally relate to shire counties and the latest information for England is given in the table. The figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Registered private residential care homes for elderly and disabled people. Numbers of homes and residents, as at 31 March 1985
East Midlands and England *Number*

	Homes	*Residents*
Total—England	5,200	69,000
Total—East Midlands	305	3,871
Derbyshire	80	1,103
Leicestershire	58	596
Lincolnshire	68	933
Northamptonshire	49	553
Nottinghamshire	50	686

Doctors and Dentists Review Body (Recommendations)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with the relevant professions about the implementation of the recommendations of the Doctors and Dentists Review Body.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend normally meets representatives of the medical and dental professions each year to inform them of the review body's recommendations and explain the Government's response. The last such meeting took place on 22 May. Subsequently, detailed proposals for implementing the recommendations in full from 1 July 1986 were accepted by the professions.

Wheelchairs

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many electrical wheelchairs for disabled persons have been withdrawn from service which had been supplied by his Department and were in need of repair or replacement over the last 12 months.

Mr. Major: Information is not held in the form requested. In the 12 months to 30 June 1986 a total of 2,829 electrically powered indoor wheelchairs were withdrawn from service (against 11,706 on issue), but information is not held centrally as to what proportion of these were withdrawn for repair or replacement, and what proportion were withdrawn for other reasons such as the need for a different model, voluntary relinquishment or the death of the user.

Mentally Handicapped Children

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many mentally handicapped children remain in long-stay hospitals;

(2) when he expects his Department's information paper on mentally handicapped children in long-stay hospitals to be published;

(3) if he will set a date for letting all mentally handicapped children out of long-stay hospitals and into appropriate community facilities; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will meet representations from Exodus, the organisation pressing to bring mentally handicapped children out of long-stay hospitals; and if he will make a statement;

(5) when he last consulted with regional health authority chairmen about transferring all mentally handicapped children from long-stay hospitals to the community; and what conclusions were reached;

(6) how many mentally handicapped children have been transfered from long-stay hospitals to the community in each of the last seven years; and if he is satisfied that adequate community provision has been made for them.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the right hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Departmental Offices, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if a decision has yet been reached on the relocation of his Department's offices at Parthenon drive, Liverpool; which interested parties have been consulted; what representations he has received about the matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: It has been decided to rehouse the Department's office at Parthenon drive, Liverpool in alternative accommodation which has recently been obtained at Stopgate lane, Liverpool. Adaptation work will now proceed quickly to ensure that the unsatisfactory premises currently occupied by the local office can be vacated as soon as possible.

Local Members of Parliament were consulted. Only one representation has been received — from the hon. Member himself — asking whether the office could be resited nearer to its present location. This has not proved possible.

Other interested parties are being advised of the resiting of the office.

Alternative Medicine

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his policy towards the use of alternative medicine; and if he has any plans to establish a regulating body to control its practitioners.

Mrs. Currie: Medical practitioners in the National Health Service can offer any form of treatment, including alternative medicine, which they consider to be in the interests of their patients and which they feel competent to provide. Practitioners of alternative medicine who work outside the National Health Service are at liberty to offer their services privately, subject to the provisions of statute and civil law. We have no present intention to establish a regulating body to control its practitioners.

Social Security Convention (Canada)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress is being made towards a social security convention with the Canadian Department of Health and Welfare to enable pensions payable to British pensioners residing in Canada to be uprated; and what the annual cost of such uprating would be.

Mr. Lyell: The Government have accepted the case in principle for a social security convention with Canada which would include uprating United Kingdom pensions in Canada.

Officials of the Department and of the Canadian Department of Health and Welfare have held discussions on the preparatory technical matters. Such a convention, however, would involve extra expenditure for the United Kingdom to which we cannot at present be committed. The cost of paying full index-linked United Kingdom pension to pensioners in Canada at November 1985 rates is estimated to be over £35 million a year. The cost of paying only the pension increases due after any convention came into effect is estimated at about £4·8 million in the first year, rising year by year until all British pensioners are being paid at full United Kingdom rates. Consequently, we cannot say when we shall be able to make further progress towards a new social security convention with Canada.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what, in the light of the recent European Court of Justice ruling in the case of Miss Marshall v. South West Hampshire area health authority, he plans to do to ensure that occupational pension schemes do not discriminate against women on grounds of either their sex or their part-time working.

Mr. Major: The Sex Discrimination Bill currently before Parliament would make it unlawful for a woman to

be dismissed on grounds of age when a man of the same age and in comparable circumstances would not. This complies with the ruling of the European Court of Justice in the case referred to. The Government are considering the whole question of equal treatment for men and women in occupational pension schemes in the light of the recent European Community directive.

Orthodontic Treatment (Leicester)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how long outpatients have to wait for an appointment at the orthodontic department of Glenfield hospital, Leicester.

Mr. Newton: The information is not available centrally. The hon. and learned Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Leicestershire district health authority.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those organisations of disabled people he has consulted during the current parliamentary Session; and what subjects were discussed in each case.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1986]: The Department has consulted extensively with a large number of organisations representing disabled people on a wide range of issues during the current parliamentary Session. To prepare a complete list of the organisations involved and the subjects discussed would be a major task and could not be justified, on the ground of disproportionate cost.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Stamp Duty

Mr. Heddle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amount of stamp duty collected on conveyances which are subject to a mortgage under section 57 of the Stamp Act 1891 for each of the last five years;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of cases where stamp duty has been collected on conveyances which are subject to mortgages in accordance with section 57 of the Stamp Act 1891 for each of the last five years;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the cost to the Exchequer of collecting stamp duty on conveyances which are subject to mortgages under section 57 of the Stamp Act 1891 for each of the last five years.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A conveyance subject to a mortgage is only one of a variety of circumstances in which section 57 of the Stamp Act 1891 provides for ad valorem stamp duty to be charged on the conveyance of property. The Inland Revenue does not keep separate records of cases which concern mortgages, or indeed records of section 57 cases as a whole separately from others. I regret therefore that I cannot provide my hon. Friend with this information.

Personal Taxation (Green Paper)

Mr. Wareing asked the Chancellor of Exchequer what recent representations he has received concerning the effects on married women of proposals contained in the Green Paper on personal taxation; what his response has been; and if he will make such representations available in the Library.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have received a wide-ranging response to the Green Paper and are now studying all the comments very carefully. As responses to the Green Paper are regarded as confidential they will not be made available in the Library, but it is open to those who have commented to make public their own response, and I understand a number of organisations have already done so.

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Dorrell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Lawson: The Economic and Finance Council met in Luxembourg on 13 October. I chaired the meeting and my hon. Friend the Minister of State represented the United Kingdom.

The Council discussed the Commission's proposal for a further tranche of investment project finance for small and medium-sized firms in the Community under the new Community instrument facility. The Council will return to this topic later in the year.

The Council had a useful discussion on budgetary discipline and Community spending on agriculture. The context of the discussion was the latest Commission assessment that there will be a substantial overrun of agricultural expenditure in 1987 and the long-term problem of restraining common agricultural policy expenditure.

There was general agreement in the Council and with the Commission on the urgency and seriousness of the situation. I tabled some Presidency conclusions which received general support in the Council, though the German, Greek and Danish delegations expressed some reservations.

These conclusions provided that, with a view to bringing expenditure under better control, avoiding the production of surpluses for which markets cannot be found and opening the way for a more structured approach to disposal of existing stocks, forthcoming policy decisions should, while respecting the principles set out in article 39 of the treaty, have regard to the following principles:

(i) Community support prices should more closely reflect supply, demand and market conditions, especially in sectors where there is surplus production;

(ii) the intervention system should operate according to its intended role, as a safety net to support the market at times of particular pressure and not as a standard alternative marketing outlet;

(iii) price support policies should wherever possible be flexibly operated so that commercial risks are not borne in their entirety through public finance.

Budget Council

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the latest meeting of the European Economic Community Budget Council.

Mr. Brooke: Further to my answer of 25 July, at column *461*, the Budget Council reconvened in Brussels on

8 to 9 September. As before, I served as chairman and my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary represented the United Kingdom.

The Council continued its discussions on the Commission's preliminary draft budget proposals for 1987. The Council also considered the Commission's preliminary draft amending budget for 1986 and amending letter for 1987.

The Council took note of the serious situation revealed by the Commission's communications whereby there is likely to be a revenue shortfall in the 1986 budget which could have serious implications for the resources available in 1987. The Commission undertook to provide later in 1986 more precise data on revenue and expenditure. The Council urged the Commission to take all possible measures to ensure that expenditure is reduced in an equitable way, while taking account of the Community's obligations and avoiding the slippage of expenditure to 1987.

The Council agreed by a qualified majority to establish a draft budget for 1987. The United Kingdom formed part of the qualified majority. Italy abstained. Portugal and Ireland voted against.

The draft budget respects the 1987 reference framework set by the ECOFIN Council in April, and is fully consistent with the budget discipline conclusions agreed by the Council in December 1984.

The expenditure proposed by the Council totals 35,946 million ecu (£22,552 million[1]) of payment appropriations and 36,945 million ecu (£23,179 million) of commitment appropriations. The Council proposed 22,961 milliom ecu (£14,406 million) of payment and commitment appropriations for agricultural guarantee expenditure; this is consistent with the 1987 budget discipline guideline for agricultural expenditure. It proposed 4,103 million ecu (about £2,574 million) in payment appropriations for other compulsory expenditure (somewhat below the limit in the 1987 reference framework). It also proposed 8,881 million ecu (£5,572 million) of payment appropriations and 9,855 million ecu (£6,183 million) of commitment appropriations for non-compulsory expenditure. These increases, which amount to 4·05 and 3·73 per cent. respectively, are within half the 1987 maximum rate of 8·1 per cent.

On the revenue side, the draft budget proposals imply that the highest rate of VAT paid by member states other than the United Kingdom and Germany would be 1·3445 per cent., while the United Kingdom's rate would be 0·7784 per cent. Provision is made for the United Kingdom to benefit from a VAT abatement of 1,633 million ecu (£1,025 million), in accordance with the abatement system agreed at the Fontainebleau European Council. The Council noted that revenue changes in 1986 would increase substantially the United Kingdom's share of VAT payments and thus our subsequent entitlement to abatement. The Council agreed that, to the extent that this abatement increase was not taken into account in the 1987 budget, the Council would include provision for it when establishing the 1988 draft budget.

The draft budget has now been forwarded to the European Parliament. The Parliament is expected to vote on its first reading of the budget in the week beginning 10 November.

[1] All figures converted at the 1987 Budget exchange rate of £1 = 1·5939 ecus.

Inland Revenue (Cash Limit)

Mr. Sackville asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is proposing any change in the Inland Revenue's cash limit for 1986-87.

Mr. McGregor: Yes. The cash limit for class XIX, vote 7 — Economic and Financial Administration (Inland Revenue) — will be reduced by £1,600,000 to £958,817,000. This reflects expenditure which will be accounted for by the Property Services Agency on a programme to rationalise local Inland Revenue offices. The Inland Revenue's running costs target is not affected.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Spearing asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the actual and percentage increase in the cost of fuel and power by the imposition of value added tax on the basis sought by the Commission of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1986]: The Government do not accept the Commission's contention that the sixth VAT directive requires the imposition of VAT on fuel and power. If they did, however, the increase in cost would depend on the rate imposed.

TRANSPORT

Road Repairs and Maintenance

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet received a copy of the Horne report on road repairs and maintenance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Horne report on public utilities' street works was published in November 1985. I announced the Government's response to the report on 24 July at column *455*. The Gaffney report on structural highway maintenance was published on 21 July 1986 along with the Department's initial response.

Ministry of Transport Tests

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many appeals against the withdrawal of authorisation to conduct Ministry of Transport tests were considered in the last annual period for which figures are available; and what was the average decision time involved.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: One hundred and two appeals were considered in 1985. Of these 71 were by authorised examiners (garages) against withdrawal of authorisation and 31 were by nominated testers against their suspension from testing. The average decision time was 15 weeks.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many garages were authorised to conduct Ministry of Transport testing at the most recent date for which figures are available; and how many of these authorisations were withdrawn in each of the first five years, respectively.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: For the quarter ending 30 September 1986 there were 16,939 privately operated testing stations authorised to conduct MOT testing. I

regret that information regarding the number of these authorisations that may have been withdrawn in each of their first five years of operation is not readily available and can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to speed up the consideration of appeals against the withdrawal of Ministry of Transport authorisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The number of appeals against withdrawal of MOT authorisations is increasing. Eighteen appeals were dealt with in 1982; 60 in 1983; 87 in 1984; 102 in 1985, and the 1986 figure is expected to be even higher. As a result, the consideration of these appeals within our existing resources is taking longer than I would like. Measures for reducing the time taken are currently being looked at as part of the Department's review of the workings of the MOT scheme.

Mersey Tunnels (Tolls)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning his recent decision to sanction increased tolls for the use of the Mersey tunnels; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Letters objecting to the decision have been received from the Merseyside chamber of commerce and industry and from a member of the public. Another member of the public has written to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. It has been explained to correspondents that the decision to confirm the tolls increase order made by the former metropolitan county council was taken on the basis of the evidence presented at a public inquiry. The reasons were fully set out in the decision letter of 25 July. It would have been inappropriate to reopen the matter.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Irish Foreign Minister (Representations)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he made to the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland to his comments about Royal Ulster Constabulary decisions in respect of the July Orange processions when they met in Brussels during the recent meeting of the EEC Council of Ministers.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs wrote to the hon. Member on 14 August and copies of the letter have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Turkey

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the protocol agreement between the United Kingdom and Turkey will be ratified; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs wrote to my hon. Friend on 6 August and copies have been placed in the Library of both Houses.

Expo 86

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many firms based in Scotland were asked to consider participating in the British Pavilion at Expo 86 in Vancouver; and how many actually participated.

Mr. Eggar: I wrote to the hon. Member on 8 September and copies of the letter have been placed in the Library of the House.

Embassies

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy in relation to the purchase of fittings, furnishings, equipment, materials, utensils, crockery, and so on, for British embassies and consulates throughout the world.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs wrote to the hon. Member on 8 August and copies of the letter have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Pakistan (Human Rights)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made about human rights in Pakistan.

Mr. Eggar: We continue to draw the attention of the Government of Pakistan to the public and parliamentary concern in this country about violations of human rights.

Middle East

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent visit to the middle east of the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), indicating Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the recent talks between President Mubarak of Egypt and King Hussein of Jordan; and what rôle Her Majesty's Government see for the Palestine Liberation Organisation in any peace negotiations.

Mr. Renton: I held useful talks in Sudan, Egypt and Jordan and reaffirmed our support for efforts to achieve a just and lasting settlement of the Arab/Israel dispute: we believe that representatives of the Palestinian people have an important part to play in peace negotiations.

Visas

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he estimates will be the maximum and the average cost of sending a visa or immigration officer to India as a result of the Government's new visa requirements; how many such officers he expects to send to India; and what will be the total cost of the training and sending of such officers to India.

Mr. Eggar: The maximum cost of posting an entry clearance officer to India is £126,000 per year based on 1986-87 prices. (This relates to Bombay where costs are highest.) The average cost is £121,800. Twelve additional entry clearance officers are being sent to India at a total

cost of £1·46 million at 1986-87 prices. Initially there will be no additional training costs because experienced immigration officers are being sent to posts.

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the costs of the new visa regimes will be met.

Mr. Eggar: Our objective is to meet these costs from the fees charged for visas, though it may not be possible to do this in the first year. Visa fees are currently under review in the normal way.

Russian Embassy

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken to acquire the sites in London to be made available to the Russians for new embassy premises; and on what basis the titles of the sites will be held.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Two sites in London are to be made available to the Government of the USSR for new embassy premises, 1-7 Kensington Palace Gardens and 245 Warwick Road. The former will remain part of the Crown Estate but we have recently completed arrangements with the Crown Estate Commissioners under which in due course I, as a corporation sole, will take a lease of the site from the commissioners. As for 245 Warwick Road, I took a conditional transfer of the freehold title to this site from the Secretary of State for Defence on 18 March 1985 and it is proposed that this transfer will be made absolute in the near future. In due course 99-year leases of the sites will be granted by me to the Government of the USSR.

The sites will be acquired on the basis of powers granted under section 2 of the Commissioners of Works Act 1852 and section 122 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has signified her consent to my exercise of these powers to acquire the sites.

Foreign Affairs Council

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will report on the outcome of the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on 15 and 16 September.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I represented the United Kingdom at the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 15 and 16 September.

Meeting in the framework of European political co-operation, the Foreign Ministers reviewed the policy of the Twelve towards South Africa and agreed a statement. They called for the lifting of the state of emergency and the release of all those detained without trial. They emphasised the importance of positive measures to assist the victims of apartheid. They deplored the South African Government's failure to take the steps needed for genuine national dialogue and, as a consequence, they decided to adopt certain restrictive measures towards South Africa. These are a ban on new investment and on the import of iron, steel and gold coins from South Africa. The representatives of the Governments of the Member States of the ECSC meeting in the Council agreed that the ban on the import of iron and steel would enter into force on 27 September. Further consideration would be given to the implementation on the ban on gold coins and new investment. The UK has already imposed a ban on the import of gold coins and announced after the Commonwealth Review meeting its intention to impose a volutary ban on new investment.

Foreign Ministers also issued a statement on Chile expressing deep concern about the reimposition of the state of siege and calling for it to be lifted. Foreign Ministers issued a statememt welcoming the release of political prisoners in Poland. They expressed the hope that it would be followed by other measures designed to promote dialogue and democratic reform. Copies of all three statements have been placed in the Library of the House.

Ministers reaffirmed the need for the closest possible co-operation in the fight against international terrorism in the light of the latest terrorist outrages.

The Council approved the EC/EFTA Annual Report for 1985 and 1986 and endorsed a declaration on EC/EFTA relations which reviewed the progress made since the Luxembourg Declaration of April 1984, reaffirmed the Community's commitment to the EC/EFTA relationship and set out priorities for future work.

The Council discussed a revised mandate for negotiations with the Community's Mediterranean partners on the maintenance of trade access following enlargement. Ministers also discussed the results of the negotiations between the Commission and the United States on the citrus/pasta dispute with a view to early EC endorsement of the agreement reached.

A meeting at Ministerial level of the EC/Turkey Association Council was held on 16 September.

The Council also adopted a resolution on Community energy objectives for 1995.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Listed Buildings

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, in relation to listed buildings, the statutory charges registered under article 108 and schedule 4 to the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 include any object or structure fixed to a building or forming part of the land and comprised within the curtilage of the building as required under article 31(7).

Mr. Needham: Objects or structures, as referred to in paragraph (7) of article 31 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972, are not required to be registered in the statutory charges register.

Footbridge (Newtownbreda)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the present works commenced at the footbridge opposite Saintfields road Presbyterian church, Newtownbreda; when these works are due for completion; what is the objective of these works; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: This work began on 4 August 1986 and was completed on 18 September. The objective was to replace the bridge deck and end supports which were severely damaged in a traffic accident.

From the numerous inquiries received from local residents and representatives about the timing of repairs

to the bridge and their concern for the safety of children, I am satisfied that there is a demand for the footbridge at this location.

Commissioners of National Education

(General Lesson)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the General Lesson issued in 1835 by the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland and circulated to schools in the Province by his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney).

Dr. Mawhinney: The text is as follows:—

"CHRISTIANS should endeavour, as the Apostle Paul commands them, to live peaceably with all men (Romans c 12 v 18), even with those of a different religious persuasion.

Our SAVIOUR, CHRIST, commanded his Disciples to love one another. He taught them to love even their enemies, to bless those that cursed them, and to pray for those who persecuted them. He himself prayed for his murderers.

Many Men hold erroneous doctrines; but we ought not to hate or persecute them. We ought to hold fast what we are convinced is the truth; but not to treat harshly those who are in error. JESUS CHRIST did not intend his Religion to be forced on men by violent means. He would not allow his Disciples to fight for him.

If any persons treat us unkindly, we must not do the same to them; for Christ and His Apostles have taught us not to return evil for evil. If we would obey CHRIST, we must do to others, not as they do to us, but as we would wish them to do to us.

Quarrelling with our neighbours and abusing them, is not the way to convince them that we are in the right, and they in the wrong. It is more likely to convince them that we have not a Christian spirit.

We ought, by behaving gently and kindly to everyone, to show ourselves followers of CHRIST, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. (1 Peter c. 2 v. 23)."

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Cecil Graham in Fermanagh on 9 November 1981; and if he will give details;

(2) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Silas Lyttle in South Tyrone on 17 November 1981; and if he will give details;

(3) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Albert Beacom in Fermanagh on 17 November 1981; and if he will give details;

(4) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Martin Clifford in Fermanagh on 30 April 1982; and if he will give details;

(5) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Helen Woodhouse in Fermanagh on 9 November 1982; and if he will give details;

(6) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Gary Ewing in Fermanagh on 9 November 1982; and if he will give details;

(7) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Jim Gibson in South Tyrone on 2 December 1982; and if he will give details;

(8) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Alan Price in Fermanagh on 13 February 1983; and if he will give details;

(9) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Cecil McNeill in South Tyrone on 25 February 1983; and if he will give details;

(10) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Andrew Stinson in South Tyrone on 4 June 1983; and if he will give details;

(11) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Thomas Harron in South Tyrone on 13 July 1983; and if he will give details;

(12) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Oswald Neely in South Tyrone on 13 July 1983; and if he will give details;

(13) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Ronald Alexander in South Tyrone on 13 July 1983; and if he will give details;

(14) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of John Roxborough in South Tyrone on 13 July 1983; and if he will give details;

(15) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Cyrus Campbell in South Tyrone on 24 October 1983; and if he will give details;

(16) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Ronnie Funston in Fermanagh on 13 March 1984; and if he will give details;

(17) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Jimmy Johnston in South Tyrone on 8 May 1984; and if he will give details;

(18) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Ivan Hillen in South Tyrone on 12 May 1984; and if he will give details;

(19) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Robert V. Huggins in Fermanagh on 18 May 1984; and if he will give details;

(20) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Thomas H. Agar in Fermanagh on 18 May 1984; and if he will give details.

Mr. Scott: There have been convictions in relation to seven of these murders. One person was convicted of the murder of James Gibson and another of the murders of Thomas Harron, Oswald Neely, Ronald Alexander and John Roxborough. Two people were convicted of the murder of Cyrus Campbell. The other convictions were connected with the murder of Silas Lyttle. One person was convicted of manslaughter and another of possession of firearms and membership of the IRA.

SCOTLAND

Dentistry

15. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will initiate a review of the system of remuneration for dentists, and dental charges for retirement pensioners and students.

Mr. John MacKay: We have no plans to review the remuneration arrangements. Many pensioners receive full or partial remission of charges on grounds of low income. Students receive assistance with dental charges according to their personal circumstances. The Government have no plans to alter any of these arrangements.

Labour Statistics

16. **Mr. Steel** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland are presently unemployed.

Mr. Rifkind: On 11 September 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed claimants in Scotland totalled 363,037 (14·4 per cent.).

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the latest level of unemployment in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: On 11 September 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed claimants in Scotland totalled 363,037 (14·4 per cent.).

The problem of high unemployment remains, of course, a major concern. Employment prospects for all unemployed people will best be enhanced by a better economic performance and increased industrial competitiveness which the Government's policies are designed to secure. In the meantime, the full range of the Government's special employment and training measures are available to those hardest hit by unemployment.

Forestry Commission

17. **Mr. Corrie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures from the Forestry Commission on plantings of hardwoods and softwoods.

Mr. John Mackay: The figures for the year ended 31 March 1986 are as follows:

Hectares

	New planting		*Restocking*		*Total*	
	Hardwoods	*Softwoods*	*Hardwoods*	*Softwoods*	*Hardwoods*	*Softwoods*
Forestry Commission	56	4,277	306	6,991	362	11,268
Private Sector	849	18,170	1,492	2,847	2,341	21,017
Totals	905	22,447	1,798	9,838	2,703	32,285

The private sector figures comprise the areas of planting for which grant aid was paid by the Forestry Commission during the year.

32. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what new initiatives are being planned by the Forestry Commission in the field of conservation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission's environmental policies have evolved over many years. The recent revision of its conservation policy, published in March 1986 under the title "The Forestry Commission and Conservation", took account of its new statutory duty to seek to achieve a reasonable balance between forestry activities and environmental considerations. The commission has consulted conservation organisations over the implementation of this policy, an important aim of which is to improve the conservation value of each forest as a whole. This will be achieved through the development of conservation plans for all commission forests, prepared in consultation with the Nature Conservancy Council and other organisations.

Private Hospital Development

18. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on private hospital development in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Under section 14 of the Health Services Act 1976, as amended by section 14 of the Health Services Act 1980, private hospital developers are required to notify the Secretary of State of proposals to establish private hospitals up to 119 beds in size. In cases where the number of beds planned exceeds 119 the Secretary of State's authorisation is required. There are eight private hospitals in Scotland. No new private hospital developments have been notified to my right hon. and learned Friend nor proposals submitted for authorisation during 1986.

Electricity Generation

19. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Scottish director of British Coal to discuss electricity generation in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has not met the Scottish director of British Coal to discuss this matter. The requirement for coal for electricity generation in Scotland is a matter for commercial negotiation between the Scottish electricity boards and British Coal.

Scottish Economy

20. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the state of the Scottish economy.

Mr. Rifkind: I am encouraged by underlying strengths in the Scottish economy such as recent growth in manufacturing productivity and the progress made in developing newer high technology industries such as electronics. Although in recent months the adverse effects of the fall in the price of oil have been more apparent in Scotland than elsewhere in the UK, Scotland should benefit from the wider effects of the fall in the oil price on the UK and world economies.

Rural Areas

21. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the financial support given by his Department for rural areas.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Office administers a wide range of assistance to rural areas. This includes direct support for basic rural industries such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry and tourism, amounting to almost £400 million in the current year; recognition of rural needs in the rate support grant distibution and the planning of public expenditure programmes; assistance for social and community development projects through the local capital grants scheme; and the continuing work of the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board, which between them will invest over £50 million in the rural economy this year.

Springburn Initiative

22. **Mr. Michael J. Martin** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement regarding the latest progress of the Springburn initiative.

Mr. Lang: I understand from the Scottish Development Agency that good progress is now being made in putting together the detailed proposals for the initiative.

Steel Industry

23. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when next he will meet the chairman of the British Steel Corporation to discuss the state of the steel industry in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend plans to meet the chairman of the British Steel Corporation again in the near future and to continue to do so at regular intervals.

Job Creation

24. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will visit Dundee to discuss with local organisations measures to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has visited Dundee twice this year, most recently on 17 October when he met representatives of Tayside regional council. Dundee enjoys the full range of Government employment and training measures, and also benefits from other specific measures including development area status, the Tayside enterprise zone, and the Dundee project, all of which should assist levels of unemployment.

Manufacturing Productivity

25. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the trend of manufacturing productivity in Scotland since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The annual growth rate in manufacturing output per employee in Scotland over the period 1979 to 1985 has been 6·2 per cent. This exceeds the corresponding United Kingdom figure of 3·8 per cent. and is also well above the low increase of 0·4 per cent. achieved in the previous six-year period.

Cervical Smears

26. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what delay there has been in carrying out cervical smears as a result of the shortage of cytology staff at the department of pathology in the University of Aberdeen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I understand that the department of pathology asked general practitioners in the area not to send routine smears from asymptomatic women during August and September while efforts were made to overtake a heavy backlog of work. The situation has since been remedied by the recruitment of extra staff to the department, and I am informed that non-urgent smears are now being reported on within two weeks.

Teachers' Salaries

27. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has yet received the report of the committee of inquiry into teachers' pay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend received the report of the Main committee on 22 September and it was published on 2 October. I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) earlier today.

29. **Mr. Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to give his response to the recommendations of the Main committee on teachers' pay and conditions.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) earlier today.

Employment (Stirling)

28. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about employment structures in the Queensland ward of the Stirling constituency.

Mr. Lang: I refer to the answers given to my hon. Friend on 24 June and 1 July 1986 at columns 91 and 485 and to the letter which my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Gray of Contin sent to my hon. Friend on 2 July, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House.

European Regional Development Fund

30. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of grants made towards projects in Scotland by the European regional development fund since its inception in 1975.

Mr. Lang: Commitments and allocations for Scotland total £616 million.

Rating Reform

31. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Scottish branch of the National Federation of Small Businesses and the Self-Employed to discuss rating reform.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend last met representatives of the Scottish branch of the federation on 14 March this year.

Ayrshire (Investment)

34. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Scottish Development Agency to discuss investment by the agency in Ayshire.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present for such a meeting. He met the chairman recently.

Company Liquidations

35. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many companies went into liquidation in Scotland during 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Lang: The numbers of liquidations notified for these years were published on page 45 of the *Scottish Economic Bulletin*, No. 33, June 1986. Copies have been provided to Members with constituencies in Scotland.

Primary School Closures

36. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occassions since the introduction of the consultation procedure prior to the closure of a primary school this has led to the retention of the school; and on how many occasions closure has followed.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not held centrally. It is for the education authority to decide whether to propose a particular school for closure and whether to proceed with closure.

Forestry

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to provide Government financial assistance for forestry roads.

Mr. Rifkind: It is up to local authorities to assess priorities in their roads and transport financial plans, but I am prepared to take such expenditure into account when determining capital allocations for future years. In assisted areas, a 30 per cent. grant is available under the Industrial Development Act 1982 for improvements to roads required for the extraction of timber.

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Scottish Development Agency and Scottish forestry products development group report on forest products in Scotland in the light of the importance of roads to the harvesting of timber.

Mr. Rifkind: The report, which derived from a major study of the opportunities for growth in exploiting Scotland's timber resources, described in brief terms the industrial infrastructure which exists in Scotland, including the transport and communications network. The group's study remit did not extend to considering the provision of roads.

Where a regional council considers improved communication links to be important to industrial development, and for other purposes, it can, as local roads authority, determine to upgrade roads in its area. If an authority includes such work on its roads and transport capital programmes, I shall take account of it in determining capital allocations.

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about a national financial assistance scheme for forestry industry projects and the production of promotional literature concerning opportunities in the Borders region for the development of forest products.

Mr. Rifkind: In May of this year, Borders regional council's economic development department sent to the Scottish Office a copy of its report on forestry and woodlands in the Borders which covers these matters. As regards a national financial assistance scheme, I would refer to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 20 June, at column 670.

Re-Chem International

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make available funding to investigate the incidence of children born with eye defects within the vicinity of the former Re-Chem chemical waste disposal plant at Roughmute, Bonnybridge.

Mr. John MacKay: Funding in this area has already been made available. An epidemiologist from the University of Edinburgh is examining the incidence of microphthalmos in the Forth Valley health board area, under the direction of the working group on microphthalmos.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date he received a dossier about Re-Chem International from the office of Alex Falconer, Member of the European Assembly; and if he will make a response.

Mr. Ancram: The dossier arrived in my office on 28 January 1986. I replied to Mr. Falconer on 13 February.

Mortality and Morbidity Statistics

(Denny-Bonnybridge)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what steps were taken to analyse the mortality and morbidity figures in the Denny-Bonnybridge area in 1983-84: and what are the results of such analysis;

(2) whether he will take steps to analyse the mortality or morbidity figures in the Denny-Bonnybridge area for at least the next decade.

Mr. John MacKay: As the hon. Member is aware, the independent group chaired by Professor Lenihan concluded that the mortality and morbidity rates in the Bonnybridge-Denny area showed no unusual features. Further investigation related to two congenital anomalies — microphthalmos and duodenal atresia — were, however, recommended by the group. These investigations are being undertaken. Figures for cancer incidence and congenital abnormalities in the Forth Valley area are routinely recorded.

Pollution

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what his Department considers to be a safe level of polychlorinated biphenyls, polychlorinated dibenzodioxin (especially 2, 3, 7, 8 TCDD) and polychlorinated dibenzofurans in milk, soil, water and human tissue.

Mr. John MacKay: The steering group on food surveillance, the committee on the medical aspects of contamination of air, land and soil and the interdepartmental committee on dioxins have been asked to look at various aspects of the toxicological significance of polychlorinated biphenyls, dioxins and dibenzofurans. None is yet in a position to comment.

Some guidance already exists in relation to short-term and long-term exposure to airborne polychlorinated biphenyls. This is contained in guidance note EH 40/86 "Occupational Exposure Limits 1986" issued by the Health and Safety Executive, copies of which are available in the Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 23 October 1986

ENVIRONMENT

Mortgages

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses were being bought on mortgage in 1986 and in each of the past seven years.

Mr. Tracey: The proportion of households buying their homes with a mortgage loan is estimated from information collected in the annual general household survey: the latest results available are for 1984. The figures are derived from those proportions and from my Department's estimates of total households.

Owner-occupiers buying with mortgage loans: England

mid-year	*millions*
1979	5·3
1980	5·4
1981	5·5
1982	5·7
1983	6·1
1984	6·5

Council Housing

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses were empty for more than a year *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the east midlands and *(c)* in Leicester in each of the past seven years, giving the same areas, the total numbers of council housing stock and the relevant percentages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The figures are derived from local authorities' annual housing investment programme returns.

Local authority dwellings vacant more than a year at 1 April

	England			*East Midlands*			*Leicester*		
	Total stock (000)	*Long term vacant*[1] *Number*	*per cent. of stock*	*Total stock (000)*	*Long term vacant*[1] *Number*	*per cent. of stock*	*Total stock Number*	*Long term vacant*[1] *Number*	*per cent. of stock*
1980	[2]4,764	[2]23,200	0·5	400	1,560	0·4	36,688	255	0·7
1981	4,912	24,100	0·5	399	1,540	0·4	37,339	133	0·4
1982	4,819	19,800	0·4	386	1,250	0·3	37,132	136	0·4
1983	4,660	22,700	0·5	370	1,120	0·3	35,491	72	0·2
1984	4,561	25,300	0·6	362	1,750	0·5	34,655	76	0·2
1985	4,511	26,100	0·6	361	700	0·2	34,401	138	0·4
1986	4,439	27,100	0·6	356	740	0·2	34,032	77	0·2

[1] From 1983 including dwellings closed for slum clearance.
[2] Excluding GLC housing for which no return received.

Merseyside Development Corporation

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many units of accommodation will be available for sale or rent within the dockland area of the Merseyside Development Corporation.

Mr. John Patten: Over the next five years about 430 houses and approximately 210 flats will be built in Merseyside Development Corporation's designated area. Of these, 130 houses will be available for rent.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the luxury apartments in the Albert dock complex on Merseyside will be available for sale or rent.

Mr. John Patten: Arrowcroft Ltd. is engaged in discussions with Merseyside Development Corporation on the design of flat units within the Albert dock complex. It is intended to provide over 100 units for sale. No time scale for their construction has yet been decided.

Portsmouth (Housing)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the content of the telephone call between his Department and an officer of Portsmouth city council concerning the Portsdown Park housing estate on 3 March;

(2) if he will make available copies of all the correspondence and details of any other contacts between his Department and Portsmouth city council with regard to the city's plan to refurbish the Portsdown Park estate which took place between the original submission of the Barratt's bid and the final decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Grant-related Expenditure

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will rank in descending order, using their 1986-87 budgets, all English local authorities on the basis of the percentage above or below their grant-related expenditure assessments for 1986-87.

Mr. Ridley: I have today placed the information in the House of Commons Library.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the shares of total grant-related expenditure given to *(a)* London, *(b)* the metropolitan areas and *(c)* non-metropolitan areas in

each year from 1981-82 to 1987-88 (provisional), taking account of all changes in definition and service transfers from year to year.

Mr. Ridley: Following are the figures requested:

	London	*Metropolitan Areas*	*Non-Metropolitan Areas*
1981-82[1]	18·7	25·2	56·1
1982-83[1]	19·0	25·0	56·0
1983-84[1]	19·0	25·1	56·0
1984-85[1]	18·7	25·0	56·3
1985-86	18·6	25·3	56·1
1986-87	18·9	25·5	55·6
1987-88[2]	19.0	25·5	55·5

[1] Prior to 1985-86 GLC received GRE in respect of public passenger transport: in later years responsibility for public passenger transport has resided with London Regional Transport. The GLC GRE for public passenger transport represented no more than about 0·1 per cent. of total GRE in any year.
[2] Provisional.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange for the publication of the technical handbook on grant-related expenditure for 1987-88.

Mr. Ridley: We aim to publish the technical handbook on grant-related expenditure for 1987-88 within two months of laying the 1987-88 RSG settlement report before the House. This will be some two to three months earlier than in previous years.

House Condition Survey

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, how properties have been selected for inclusion in the current house condition survey being undertaken by his Department.

Mr. Ridley: The 1986 English house condition survey, which is currently in progress, consists of a sample of 30,700 dwellings distributed across England. The sample was chosen to include all 8,200 addresses surveyed in the 1981 EHCS. Subject to certain technical adjustments to take account of regional differences in dwelling age and tenure, the remaining addresses were selected at random from the Post Code Address File.

UK 2000

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of UK 2000, listing the membership of the board and those businesses which have agreed to sponsor schemes.

Mr. Ridley: Since the launch of UK 2000 on 14 July the board has concentrated on helping the voluntary organisations to develop projects, on seeking sponsorship, and on setting up detailed administrative arrangements. Criteria for UK 2000 projects have been defined and steps have been taken to encourage projects from other organisations not represented on the board. The target for the board to fill 5,000 Manpower Services Commission community programme places by April 1987 remains unchanged.

The names of the members of the UK 2000 board are listed in the table.

I understand that several voluntary organisations have themselves attracted sponsorship for projects; details of these agreements will be available soon. The UK 2000 central unit is separately negotiating with some 35 organisations which have expressed interest in sponsoring aspects of UK 2000, but these discussions are not yet complete.

UK 2000 Board Members

Richard Branson[1], (Chairman) Virgin Group;
Ernest Hall[1], Halifax;
Jean Denton[1], Rover Group;
Stephen O'Brien[1], Business in the Community;
John Pontin[1], Bristol;
Ian Branton representing the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers;
Brian Lymbery representing the Civic Trust;
Elizabeth Hoodless representing Community Service Volunteers;
Jonathan Porritt representing Friends of the Earth;
John Davidson representing the Groundwork Foundation;
Ian Eldridge representing the Keep Britain Tidy Group;
Franklyn Perrin representing the Royal Society for Nature Conservation.

[1] Serves in a personal capacity.

Officials of the Department of the Environment and of the Manpower Services Commission attend board meetings as assessors.

Local Government Reform

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is able to give details of savings that have arisen from the abolition of the Greater London council and the six metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) on 22 May 1986, at columns *295-96*. I cannot yet add substantively to that reply. Further information on manpower levels and redundancies is currently being received and analysed. I hope to make a further statement in due course.

Rates

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the average unrebated domestic rate bill paid in each year since 1966 by householders in England.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to him on 14 April, at column 307.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of rate support grant paid to each local authority in each of the years from 1978-79 to 1986-87 expressed in constant 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Ridley: Tables of rate support grant paid to local authorities since 1974-75 were placed in the House of Commons Library on 6 March. These figures can be converted into real terms at 1986-87 prices by multiplying the figure for each year by a factor which takes account of inflation based on the GDP deflator as in the following table:

Factors for converting rate support grant in cash terms to real terms at 1986-87 prices

Year	*Factor*
1978-79	1·957
1979-80	1·675
1980-81	1·412
1981-82	1·285
1982-83	1·198

Year	Factor
1983-84	1·147
1984-85	1·100
1985-86	1·037
1986-87	1·000

Notes:
The grant figures for 1974-75 to 1980-81 are not comparable with those for 1981-82 to 1986-87 because:

i. They comprise the needs, resources and domestic elements whereas from 1981-82 onwards the figures comprise block grant and domestic rate relief grant;

ii. Grant in support of services provided by metropolitan county councils was paid to the districts up to 1980-81 and to the counties thereafter.

The grant figures in the tables for London and metropolitan areas for 1981-82 to 1985-86 are not comparable with those for 1986-87 because of the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan county councils on 31 March 1986.

All figures in the grant tables are in cash terms. Those for 1981-82 and earlier years are final entitlements. Domestic rate relief grant figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 are final entitlements; those for 1985-86 and 1986-87 are first estimates. Block grant figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 are entitlements after holdback based upon provisional outturn expenditure; those for 1985-86 are entitlements after holdback based on budgets; those for 1986-87 are entitlements based on initial claims.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish figures showing *(a)* the percentage increase in domestic water rates for each year since 1978-79 for each English regional water authority and the overall average, *(b)* the cumulative percentage increase since 1978-79 on the same basis and *(c)* the average domestic water rates bill per household for each year since 1978-79 for each water authority and the overall average.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested is shown in the table. The average household bills are taken from charges returns made annually to DOE.

Water authority average household bills and annual percentage increases 1978-79—1986-87

Water Authority	1978-79	1979-80	Per cent.	1980-81	Per cent.	1981-82	Per cent.	1982-83	Per cent.	1983-84	Per cent.	1984-85	Per cent.	1985-86	Per cent.	1986-87	Per cent.	Increase 1986-87 over 1978-79
	£.p	£.p		£.p		£.p		£.p		£.p		£.p		£.p		£.p		
Combined all services																		
North West	34·62	37·90	9·5	46·80	23·5	54·69	16·9	59·86	9·7	63·16	5·5	68·25	8·1	77·57	13·7	85·19	9·8	146·1
Northumbrian	32·06	33·94	5·9	41·95	23·6	49·19	17·3	56·86	16·0	64·52	13·5	75·22	16·6	80·38	6·9	84·34	4·9	163·1
Severn Trent	35·95	40·51	12·7	48·99	20·9	56·78	15·9	62·44	7·4	64·63	3·5	67·88	5·0	76·16	12·2	83·55	9·7	132·4
Yorkshire	35·60	39·36	10·6	49·04	24·6	57·21	16·7	65·30	14·1	68·78	5·3	72·64	5·6	82·30	13·3	90·96	10·5	155·5
Anglian	45·02	48·83	8·5	63·01	29·0	75·08	19·2	82·66	11·9	87·80	6·2	93·96	7·0	105·98	12·8	116·69	10·1	159·2
Thames	34·66	38·62	11·4	47·82	23·8	54·47	13·9	60·77	13·5	66·74	9·8	73·41	7·6	80·75	10·0	83·09	2·9	139·7
Southern	42·20	43·80	3·8	56·60	29·2	67·00	18·4	74·40	11·0	78·36	5·3	82·30	5·0	91·72	11·4	99·58	8·6	136·0
Wessex	47·27	57·22	21·0	65·44	14·4	72·87	11·4	78·49	7·5	81·56	3·9	85·59	4·9	95·35	11·4	107·09	12·3	126·5
South West	49·68	54·57	9·8	66·72	22·3	75·22	12·7	81·24	8·6	87·96	8·3	93·48	6·3	104·59	11·9	110·90	6·0	123·2
English Averages	37·50	41·47	10·6	51·37	23·9	59·47	15·8	66·01	11·0	70·92	7·4	75·73	6·8	84·56	11·7	91·25	7·9	143·3

Derelict Land Clearance

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he hopes to announce his decision relating to the application by the Caradon district council for a derelict land clearance grant in respect of the site formerly occupied by HMS Fisgard, Torpoint; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The Caradon district council's application for derelict land grant is under consideration by my Department along with many such applications from other authorities, both in the south-west region and nationally. A decision on whether funds can be made available in 1987-88 for the proposal will be made early in 1987.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average gross weekly rent for all local authority tenants in England in April 1979 and each subsequent year to 1986; and what proportion of average weekly earnings these gross weekly rent payments represent in each of those years.

Mr. Ridley: The estimated figures are as follows:

Average Weekly Unrebated Rents Local Authority Tenants England

	Rent £ per week	As per cent. of average male adult earnings[1]
April		
1979	6·41	6·3
1980	7·70	6·2
1981	11·42	8·1
1982	13·48	8·7
1983	13·97	8·5
1984	14·66	8·2
1985	15·54	8·1
1986	16·36	n/a

[1] Men aged 21 and over working full time in all occupations
Sources: CIPFA and Department of Employment
n/a = not available

Local Government Expenditure

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for each authority selected for rate limitation in 1986-87 the percentage increase or decrease in its 1986-87 budgeted total expenditure compared with its original 1985-86 budget.

Mr. Ridley: The information is as follows:

	Per cent.
Basildon	+24·1
Camden[1]	+25·2
Greenwich[1]	+63·9
Hackney[1]	+40·5
Haringey[1]	+22·9
Islington[1]	+23·8
Lambeth[1]	+34·8
Lewisham[1]	+39·5
Liverpool[1]	+12·7
Newcastle[1]	+21·3
Southwark[1]	+25·6
Thamesdown	+ 4·6

[1] Figures for these authorities for 1985-86 and 1986-87 are not directly comparable, because of the effects of costs included in 1986-87 budgets in respect of services inherited on abolition of the Greater London council or the metropolitan county councils.

Housing Finance

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the housing subsidy paid to each London borough, metropolitan district and non-metropolitan district in each of the years from 1978-79 to 1986-87, expressed in constant 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Ridley: I shall answer this question shortly.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the housing investment programme allocations made to each London borough, metropolitan district and non-metropolitan district in each of the years from 1978-79 to 1986-87, expressed in constant 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Ridley: Lists of the housing investment programme allocations for all housing authorities in England are placed in the House of Commons Library each year. A list of these allocations for the years 1978-79 to 1986-87, adjusted to 1986-87 prices, will be placed in the Library as soon as possible. It should of course be noted that the level of allocations to authorities does not correspond to the level of housing capital expenditure by those authorities in those years, because of the growth of expenditure financed by other means, principally from capital receipts.

Local Authorities (Capital Receipts)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library details of accumulated capital receipts for 1985-86 in a similar manner to those given for 1984-85 on 16 July, *Official Report*, columns *544-45*.

Mr. Ridley: Returns from local authorities are currently being received and analysed. As soon as the information is reasonably complete, I will place details in the Library on the same basis as before.

Cement Industry

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the present condition of the domestic cement industry.

Mr. John Patten: The United Kingdom industry can meet domestic demand both in quantity and quality. Capacity in 1985 was 15·8 million tons, with usage running at 84 per cent. The quality of the ordinary Portland cement produced is higher than BS12. It is well able to compete with unsubsidised imports from the European Community.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the turnover of the domestic cement industry and its total profits or losses in each year since 1980.

Mr. John Patten: The information for the United Kingdom is given in the following table. The profit figures are pre-tax and interest deductions.

£ million

	Turnover £	Profit £
1980	537	55
1981	526	41
1982	590	55
1983	616	55
1984	632	37
1985	639	23

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the quantity and value of cement used in Britain annually and the respective percentages supplied by the domestic cement industry.

Mr. John Patten: The figures are as follows:

	Total Consumption		Domestic Share per cent.	
	Volume Metric tonnes	Value £ million	Volume Metric tonnes	Value £ million
1980	14·2	537	99	99
1981	12·3	540	98	99
1982	13·0	604	98	98
1983	13·5	631	97	98
1984	13·8	643	96	97
1985	13·8	662	96	96

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Bernard Ingham

Q57. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will dismiss Mr. Bernard Ingham, in the light of the fourth report from the Defence Committee on Westlands.

The Prime Minister: No.

EEC Budget

Mr. Deakins asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 26 March, *Official Report*, column *493*, if it remains Her Majesty's Government's policy to oppose the inclusion in EEC budgets of special extra provisions for the cost of the past problems; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes. The Government will continue to argue against special extra provision in the EC budget for the so-called cost of the past problem. The Government voted in favour of the Council's draft budget for 1987, which respects the budget discipline limits.

Dr. Kurt Waldheim

Mr. Freeson asked the Prime Minister if she will now make a further statement on progress being made with the investigation of Ministry of Defence records regarding the alleged involvement of Dr. Kurt Waldheim of German Army Group E in the interrogation and subsequent deaths of British prisoners of war during world war 2.

The Prime Minister: In May hon. Members sent to me and to the Leader of the House the names of eight service men believed to have been taken prisoner in Greece by German Army Group E during world war 2. On 9 June the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) sent four further names to the Secretary of State for Defence. The Ministry of Defence has undertaken a thorough and painstaking search of military records for information relevant to Dr. Waldheim's involvement in the fate of these men. The search relating to the first group of eight service men has been completed. Of these, two are known to have survived the war; one died of wounds; and the fate of the rest cannot be precisely established. The search relating to the second group of four service men is continuing. The search of records so far completed has revealed no evidence of criminal activity on the part of Dr. Waldheim.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 October.

Mr. Hirst asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 October.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 October.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 October.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. Following Questions in the House I shall be going to sign the book of condolence opened for President Machel of Mozambique.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Post Office

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the procurement activities of the Post Office will be published.

Mr. Howard: The report is published today.

The Commission was asked to investigate the efficiency and cost of the way goods and services are purchased by and distributed within the Post Office, whether the efficiency of these procurement activities, costing some £380 million in 1985, could be improved and whether they had improved since the telecommunications business was separated from the Post Office in 1981. In its report the commission has taken account of the effect on the arrangements for procurement of a major structural reorganisation, announced by the Post Office during the commission's inquiry, which establishes separate letters, parcels and counters businesses.

The commission found that since 1981 purchasing standards in the Post Office had been improved substantially and in general had secured value for money, but it recommends a number of ways in which purchasing, stock management and distribution and staffing practices should be further improved.

The commission found that the Post Office largely shared its views on actions to be taken to improve the efficiency of procurement activities and is already putting in hand many of the necessary changes, although progress has in some cases been relatively slow. It did not find that the Post Office was pursuing a course of conduct which operates against the public interest.

The commission considers it essential that goods purchased centrally should be offered to users in the separate businesses at prices which take account of all the costs of procurement (including distribution) so that they may be compared with the cost of direct purchasing by the businesses. It considers that where the businesses' own choice would be direct procurement this should be refused only when there is a clear advantage to the Post Office as a whole.

Among its more detailed findings the commission sees the development of management information and accounting systems as important, in particular, in determining the charges to users for goods and services and in the improvement of demand forecasting and stock management. It recommends careful control of current computer systems development to assure achievement of these objectives.

The commission makes several recommendations aimed at correcting shortcomings found in stock management. It recommends a reduction in stocks (excluding strategic stocks) to an average by value level of three months by not later than August 1987 and that consideration be given to whether there is scope for further reduction to two months. It recommends a review to determine whether any of the goods stocked would be better supplied directly from the manufacturers to the users under centrally negotiated contracts.

The commission recommends specific measures to improve procurement in particular areas of goods and services which it had considered in detail, including stamps, vehicles, uniforms, advertising and building and engineering maintenance.

The commission was concerned to discover that in the regions the Post Office had, until very recently, no method of assessing the effectiveness of expenditure of £80 million per annum on goods and services and maintained no central record of regional stocks, the number of stores or the number of staff employed in them. The commission considers that the recent appointment of regional purchasing and supply officers should improve purchasing in the regions. It recommends closer control of local stores by the new businesses, and that each should be obliged to account for its stocks and review stockholdings.

The commission makes recommendations relating to the staffing of procurement activities, including the measurement and monitoring of work loads, regular external reviews of staff levels, local productivity schemes, closer budgeting and reduction of overtime. It found that the pay rates of storekeepers, which were under review when the commission completed its work, are much higher in the Post Office than elsewhere and recommends that they should be brought into line with remuneration for comparable work in other organisations.

The Post Office will be producing written responses to the commission's findings and I shall report on those statements at the appropriate time.

South Africa

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what agreements are currently in force relating to South African commodities entering *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the EEC; what quotas are currently in operation on those commodities; and of which of these commodities there is a surplus within the Community.

Mr. Alan Clark: There are no agreements relating to imports of South African commodities into the United Kingdom and the EEC; no quotas are in operation; and there are no imports of commodities known to be in surplus in the Community.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the recent visit to Liverpool by the Minister for Information Technology, the hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Mr. Pattie).

Mr. Pattie: I visited Liverpool on 14 October 1986.

In the morning I opened new premises of a design and management company in Cheshire and on arrival in Liverpool I visited the Wavertree technology park, where I met representatives of two companies sited on the park. I addressed a lunchtime meeting of the University of Liverpool Conservative Association and in the afternoon visited a computer service company in Liverpool.

In the evening I attended a dinner with representatives from local industry and commerce.

Employment Assumptions

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the assumptions regarding employment and related prospects for the regions in the United Kingdom contained in his Department's report to the European Commission of Government assumptions about employment and industry up to 1990.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In the opinion of the Government it is not sensible or practicable to make forecasts of national unemployment for several years ahead. However, in order to comply with the rules of the European regional development fund, it was necessary to submit a report on the United Kingdom's regional development programme 1986-90. This has been submitted but not yet considered by the European Community Regional Policy Committee or the Commission. As part of the requirement the report contains assumptions about the number of unemployed claimants in each region of the United Kingdom in 1990. These used the national unemployment assumption from the 1986 public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9207), covering the period 1986-87 to 1988-89. The 1990 figure was derived by repeating the assumption for 1988-89 a further year. The national assumption was allocated to regions in proportion to 1985 regional unemployment, to reach regional assumptions. No specific assumption about industry was made, but in some cases the document refers to possible trends.

Cement (Imports)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the quantities of cement imported into Britain from each European Economic country in 1985 and to date in 1986.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom imports of cement from EC member states
Quantity: thousand metric tonnes

	1985	*1986 January to August*
Federal Republic of Germany	72·5	38·6
France	40·0	45·3
Italy	—	0·2
Netherlands	110·5	63·9
Belgium/Luxembourg	4·4	4·3
Irish Republic	211·3	79·6
Denmark	1·9	4·3
Greece	—	18·0
Spain	44·2	32·5
Portugal	0·0	—

Source: Country of origin data corresponding to SITC R2 subgroup 661.2 in the *United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics*.

Notes:
(i) All figures are provisional.
(ii) — no trade.
0·0 negligible trade.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received concerning the dumping of Greek cement in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have received numerous representations from the British cement industry and from consumer interests about the possible imports of cement from Greece. I have taken up these representations and refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) on 21 October 1986, at column 780.

Company Liquidations

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list for each year from 1979 to 1983 the percentage of businesses established in each year by young people aged 16 to 25 years which have gone into liquidation within a three-year period.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is not available.

Council of Industry Ministers

Mr. Porter asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the progress made at the recent European Community Council of Industry Ministers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Industry Council met under my chairmanship on 20 October. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry represented the United Kingdom.

The Council adopted a resolution approving the broad strategy of the Commission's action programme for small and medium-sized enterprises, and also a statement on deregulation which welcomed the Commission's new

procedure — involving its task force on SMEs — for assessing the compliance costs that Commission proposals will have on business.

I secured the unanimous support of the Council for a resolution welcoming the Commission's determination to apply strictly the code on state aids to the steel industry and to ensure that none of its provisions are undermined. The Council had initial discussion of the Commission's proposals to free certain steel products from the production quota system, during which there was general agreement that the process of liberalisation should continue. I noted that majorities appeared to exist for the liberalisation of category Ic (galvanised sheet) from quota, and for the removal of Commission powers in connection with divergences from traditional intra-Community trade flows in steel products on the understanding that Commission surveillance would continue. I postponed final decisions on these and the other detailed Commission proposals until the next Industry Council on 18 November, for which the Commission had agreed to prepare a preliminary analysis of Eurofer's important recent initiative on steel restructuring.

The Council discussed the Commission's proposal for a sixth Council directive on aid to shipbuilding to replace the existing directive, which expires on 31 December 1986. There was broad agreement on the Commission's approach that a common ceiling should be set on direct and indirect aids benefiting ship production and that there should be separate provision for aids for restructuring. I concluded that the necessary preparations should be made to enable the Council to have decisive negotiations on the directive at the next Industry Council.

The Council also noted the Commission's intentions to bring forward proposals to help restructure Portuguese industry.

EMPLOYMENT

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General what percentage of businesses using the enterprise allowance scheme in the Northern region have ceased to trade *(a)* within one year of the commencement of their business and *(b)* between one and two years from the commencement of their business.

Mr. Trippier: The percentages are:

(a) 13·4 per cent. of those people who joined the scheme in August 1985 had ceased their trading in their EAS business before the end of their year on the allowance (August 1986);

(b) information is not available for the period requested. Completed surveys are on a national basis but a current survey will provide a regional breakdown and results will be available in spring 1987. However, the latest survey results show that of 44 people surveyed in the Northern region who joined the scheme between 1 March and 30 April 1984 and completed a year in the scheme six had ceased to trade six months after the allowance had stopped. The survey report will be published in November and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General what percentage of businesses nationally which used the enterprise allowance scheme in its first year of operation, August 1983-84, were still trading in August 1985.

Mr. Trippier: Information is not available for the period requested. However, the latest survey evidence shows that 76 per cent. of participants who joined the schemes between 1 March and 30 April 1984 and completed a year on the scheme were still trading six months after the allowance had stopped. The survey report will be published in November and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General what percentage of businesses in the Northern region, set up by the 18 to 25 years age group, and which used the enterprise allowance scheme during its first year of operation, August 1983-84, were still trading in August 1986.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not available. Existing survey results are based on a sample of only six people in this age group in the Northern region and no valid conclusion can be based on such a small sample. A survey presently being conducted on those who set up in business 18 months ago will be based on a larger sample. The results of this survey will be available by March 1987.

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General what percentage of businesses in the Northern region which used the enterprise allowance scheme during its first year of operation, August 1983-84, were still trading in August 1986.

Mr. Trippier: Information is not available for the period requested. Completed surveys provide evidence of survival rates nationally; a current survey will provide a regional breakdown and results will be published in spring 1987. However, the latest survey reports show that of the 44 people surveyed in the Northern region who joined the scheme between 1 March and 30 April 1984 and completed a year on the scheme 30 were still trading six months after the allowance had stopped. A copy of the report to be published in November will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General what percentage of businesses using the enterprise allowance scheme nationally have ceased to trade *(a)* within one year of the commencement of their business and *(b)* between one and two years from the commencement of their business.

Mr. Trippier: The percentages are:

(a) 11·5 per cent. of those people who joined the scheme in August 1985 had ceased trading in their EAS business before the end of their year on the allowance (August 1986).

(b) Information is not available for the period requested. However, the latest survey results show that of the 781 people surveyed who joined the scheme between 1 March and 30 April 1984 and completed a year on the scheme 188 (24 per cent.) had ceased to trade six months after the allowance had stopped.

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General what percentage of businesses nationally which were established by the 18 to 25 years age group, and which used the enterprise allowance scheme during its first year of operation, August 1983-84, were still trading in August 1986.

Mr. Trippier: Information is not available for the period requested. However, the latest survey results show that of the 86 people between the ages of 18 and 24 surveyed who joined the scheme between 1 March and 30 April 1984 and completed a year on the scheme 59 were still trading six months after the allowance had stopped. The survey report will be published in November and will be placed in the Library.

Long-term Unemployed Persons

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General if a person refusing to attend an interview for a place on the proposed six-month training course for the long-term unemployed under 25 years of age will be liable for benefit sanctions.

Mr. Lee: The purpose of the new job training scheme is to help participants to acquire skills to compete on equal terms for the increasing number of job vacancies. Participation in the scheme will be voluntary and no benefit sanctions will be applied to people not wishing to take part.

This training scheme is only one of the range of opportunities which may be offered in the pilot areas at an interview under the restart scheme. People who fail to respond to a request to attend an interview at a jobcentre without good reason are under social security legislation liable to benefit sanctions.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General (1) how many persons are presently eligible for the proposed six-month training course for the long-term unemployed under 25 years;

(2) in the case of the proposed six-month training course for the long-term unemployed under 25 years *(a)* how many places there will be on an annual basis, *(b)* how it will be funded, *(c)* who will provide training and *(d)* what qualifications it will lead to;

(3) if an element of work experience will be included in the proposed six-month training course for the long-term unemployed under 25 years.

Mr. Trippier: Job training scheme pilot programmes will be open to adults unemployed for six months or more in the pilot areas. Some 50,000 people were in this category at the latest count.

The Manpower Services Commission is currently discussing the scale and nature of provision within the pilots with potential managing agents and I shall write to the hon. Member with further details when these are available. The costs of the pilots will be met from within the adult training budget.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General if he will provide an update of the statistics published in July in the *Official Report* concerning the destinations of the long-term unemployed interviewed to date under the national restart programme.

Mr. Lee: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General how many persons have ceased to claim benefits as a result of being interviewed or after being called to interview under the national restart scheme.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available in the precise form asked for, but as at 11 September 1986 the number of people who had left the unemployed count (most of whom would have been receiving benefit) following invitation to a restart counselling interview or attendance at such an interview was 54,367.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General if a person completing a course relating to the restart programme and failing to find full-time employment will remain classified as long-term unemployed for statistical and benefit purposes.

Mr. Lee: People attending a restart course continue during their participation to claim and receive unemployment benefits to which they are entitled. Consequently there is no change to their classification statistically or for benefit purposes.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General what was the number of long-term unemployed 12 months ago, six months ago and at the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of claimants who had been unemployed for over a year in Great Britain (excluding Northern Ireland) 12 months ago, six months ago, and at 10 July 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available.

Unemployed claimants

	Number
10 October 1985	1,292,777
10 April 1986	1,295,641
10 July 1986	1,285,366

This comparison is affected by the change in the timing of the compilation of the unemployment count in February 1986.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to increase their programme of overseas aid for the financial year 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The planned aid budget for 1987-88, contained in the 1986 public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702), is £1,230 million, an increase of £43 million or 3·6 per cent. over the aid budget for 1986-87. The outcome of this year's public expenditure survey will be published in the Government's 1987 public expenditure White Paper.

Bophuthatswana

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funding out of the Overseas Development Agency budget, and for what projects, has been given to Bophuthatswana.

Mr. Chris Patten: None.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student grants

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the value of the student grant inside and outside London at outturn and at constant prices together with its real value, indexed using 100 as a base, when compared with the rise in retail prices, average earnings, rents and books for *(a)* each year since 1962 and *(b)* each year since 1979; and if he will show the total value of students' grants expressed as a proportion of the gross domestic product for each year.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

	"Elsewhere" rate of grant £	Real value in percentage terms (September 1962 and 1979 = 100 respectively) deflated by increases in								London rate of grant £	Real value in percentage terms (September 1962 and 1979 = 100 respectively) of the grant deflated by increases in								Total cost maintenance as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
		(a) Retail prices		(b) Average earnings		(c) Rents		(d) Book prices[1]			(a) Retail prices		(b) Average earnings		(c) Rents		(d) Book prices[1]		
1962-63	320	100		100		100		100		330	100		100		100		100		0·08
1963-64	320	98		93		95		96		330	98		93		95		96		0·09
1964-65	320	94		86		91		92		330	94		86		91		92		0·10
1965-66	340	95		86		91		92		370	101		90		96		97		0·12
1966-67	340	92		80		86		89		370	97		85		91		94		0·12
1967-68	340	91		78		79		82		370	96		82		84		87		0·13
1968-69	360	91		76		81		82		395	97		81		86		87		0·14
1969-70	360	86		71		76		77		395	92		75		80		82		[1]0·17
1970-71	380	85		66		74		75		420	91		71		79		80		0·17
1971-72	430	88		67		77		74		465	92		71		81		77		0·17
1972-73	445	85		62		71		71		480	88		65		74		75		0·15
1973-74	485	85		59		71		71		520	88		61		73		74		0·16
1974-75	605	90		62		83		69		665	95		66		89		74		0·15
1975-76	740	87		60		89		71		810	92		63		95		75		0·16
1976-77	875	90		62		91		72		955	95		65		97		77		0·17
1977-78	1,010	90		66		95		69		1,145	99		73		104		76		0·18
1978-79	1,100	91		63		94		69		1,315	105		73		109		80		0·18
1979-80	1,245	88	100	62	100	92	100	67	100	1,485	102	100	71	100	106	100	78	100	0·18
1980-81	1,430	88	99	58	94	81	88	65	97	1,695	101	99	67	93	93	87	75	96	0·19
1981-82	1,535	84	96	56	91	69	75	62	92	1,825	97	95	64	90	80	75	71	92	0·19
1982-83	1,595	82	93	53	87	66	72	55	82	1,900	94	92	62	87	77	72	64	82	0·19
1983-84	1,660	81	92	51	83	65	71	48	72	1,975	93	91	59	83	75	71	56	72	0·19
1984-85	1,775	83	94	52	84	65	71	47	70	2,100	95	93	60	84	75	71	53	69	0·17
1985-86	1,830	80	91	52	83	63	69	43	65	2,165	92	90	59	83	72	68	50	64	not yet available
1986-87	1,901	81	92	not yet available		64	69	43	65	2,246	93	91	not yet available		74	69	50	64	[1]not yet available
Adjusted[2]																			
1984-85		80	90	50	81	63	69	45	66		92	90	58	81	73	68	52	67	
1985-86		77	88	50	80	61	66	42	62		89	88	57	80	70	66	48	62	
1986-87		78	89	not yet available		61	67	42	62		90	88	not yet available		71	66	48	62	

[1]Cost of maintenance on teacher training is included from 1969-70 onwards.

[2]The indices include adjustments to allow for changes in the provision of students' travel costs.

[3]Revised estimates.

Reyes Syndrome

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the Medical Research Council is supporting research into Reyes syndrome or has any plans to do so.

Mr. Walden: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to him of 13 June, at column 318. The MRC is always willing to consider soundly based research proposals for support through its grants schemes in competition with other applications.

Callington Primary School

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the normal period of time between an inspection by Her Majesty's inspectors of a primary school and their published report; and if he is now able to publish Her Majesty's inspector's report on Callington primary school following the inspection visit in July 1985.

Mr. Dunn: I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that the report by Her Majesty's inspectors on Callington primary school was issued on 8 October 1986 and was published on 22 October 1986.

As to the wider issues he raises, since 1 January 1983 there have been a total of 700 reports published on schools and colleges on the basis of full inspections, of which 294 related to primary schools. The average time between inspection and publication is nine months. It remains the aim of Her Majesty's Inspectorate that reports should be issued to individual institutions within six months of an inspection. It is working to achieve that time scale. However, no institution or governing body has to wait that long to know the findings of the inspections, as Her Majesty's Inspectorate discusses these and other matters with the head and staff during and at the end of each inspection and with the governing bodies shortly after.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how the extra £40 million resources for education authorities for books for the general certificate of secondary education has been allocated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Government are supporting £40 million expenditure on books and equipment for the GCSE over three years. £20 million is being made available this year: £15 million is being supported through education support grant and the other £5 million is a grant for the provision of scientific and technological equipment made available by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment in conjunction with the Manpower Services Commission. A further £20 million at least is being set aside for books and equipment through education support grant over the next two financial years.

To secure an equitable distribution of the amount available through ESG for books and equipment a ceiling on the amount of expenditure has been set for each authority. These allocations have been calculated on the basis of 75 per cent. according to the relevant school population and 25 per cent. according to the number of maintained secondary schools. The £5 million available through the MSC for equipment has been allocated on the

basis of 50 per cent. according to relevant school population and 50 per cent. according to the number of maintained secondary schools.

SCOTLAND

Health Boards (Administration)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he has issued to health boards in Scotland about the employment of nursing staff as unit managers in the re-structuring of health board administration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Guidance on the implementation of general management in units of the Scottish Health Service was issued by the Scottish Home and Health Department on 25 August 1986 in NHS Circular 1986 (GEN) 20, copies of which are in the Library.

Unit general manager posts will be widely advertised by health boards. Competition will be open. There will be no presumption for or against applicants from any particular background. The principal criterion for selection will be management skill and aptitude. The circular contains guidance on appropriate involvement of nursing and other professional staff in support of unit general managers.

Housing Lists

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will request from all local authorities in Scotland a detailed report of the number of persons on their council's housing list, showing age groups of applicants, length of time on waiting lists; and their plans for reducing such lists.

Mr. Ancram: Housing plans which the local authorities submit to the Scottish Development Department at regular intervals already include proposals for reducing waiting lists. I do not think that the benefit of requesting further information from local authorities on housing lists would justify the extra burden it would impose on them.

Pollution

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, pursuant to his written reply to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West on 24 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *230*, he will now publish the results of the toxicological assessment and the membership of the expert committees and other individual experts consulted on these matters.

Mr. John MacKay: The expert committees concerned have not yet completed their work. I shall send the hon. Member a list of the members of these committees, and am placing a copy of the list in the Library.

Local Authorities (Environmental Duties)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether he will make available additional funding to local authorities to enable them to carry out the adequate sampling and testing of milk;

(2) whether he will ascertain from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities whether Scottish local authorities require additional finance to carry out their environmental duties.

Mr. Ancram: Provision has been made for local authority current expenditure for 1987-88 at 3·75 per cent. over budgets for the present year, and guidelines have been increased by an average of 9·2 per cent. over their previous level. Local authorities should therefore have adequate resources to carry out all their duties. If the hon. Member has a particular problem in mind he may care to write to me.

Housing Support Grant

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will express the housing support grant awarded to Dundee district council at constant prices in each year since 1980.

Mr. Ancram: The information is given in the table below:

Housing support grant paid

Year	*At outturn prices* £	*At 1985-86 average prices*[1] £
1980-81	8,602,017	11,704,380
1981-82	5,285,879	6,546,629
1982-83	1,820,168	2,102,272
1983-84	—	—
1984-85	—	—
1985-86	—	—

[1] Using GDP deflators.

Education (Expenditure)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total expenditure of Tayside region on education at constant prices in each year since 1982.

Mr. John MacKay: The total gross expenditure of Tayside region on education in each year since 1981-82, expressed in constant prices, is as follows:

Year	*Expenditure*[1] *£ million*
1981-82	105·387
1982-83	104·842
1983-84	106·167
1984-85	106·530

[1] At November 1984 prices.

Information on 1985-86 actual expenditure is not yet available.

Tayside Regional Council (Talks)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his discussions with the convenor of Tayside regional council, Mr. John McAllion, during his visit to Dundee and Tayside on 17 October.

Mr. Rifkind: I had a most useful meeting with Convenor McAllion during my visit to Tayside regional council on 17 October. Our discussion ranged over a number of items of local and national interest including textile imports, North sea oil, the region's capital expenditure plans and the Dundee waterfront project.

Hip Replacement

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average waiting time for a hip replacement operation for the elderly in Dundee, Tayside health board and Scotland overall; and what were the corresponding figures two years previously.

Mr. John MacKay: The latest information centrally available on patients admitted, treated and discharged relates to 1984. The industrial action in 1982 make 1981 figures the most appropriate comparison.

Mean waiting times (in days) for total hip replacements

	Males 65+	*Females 65+*	*Both Sexes 65+*
1984			
Dundee	186	286	246
Tayside	172	220	203
Scotland	204	199	201
1981			
Dundee	144	228	207
Tayside	231	286	265
Scotland	215	213	214

Health Council (Dundee)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what study he has made of the annual report of Dundee local health council, with particular reference to the renal unit at Dundee royal infirmary, orthopaedic waiting lists and the knock-on effect of geriatric bed provision; and if he will provide Tayside health board with additional funds to assist with these problems.

Mr. John MacKay: The matters raised in the annual report of the Dundee local health council are primarily the responsibility of Tayside health board. The board is the second best funded in Scotland in relation to the needs of its area, and it would be unfair to other boards to increase the proportion of available resources allocated to Tayside.

Rents

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about alleged over-charging by landlords for rooms rented by young persons; and if he will discuss this matter with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities as soon as possible.

Mr. Michael Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations specifically about alleged overcharging by landlords for rooms rented by young persons. Some representations have, however, been received from local authorities and other bodies about the alleged excessive levels of rent charged by some private sector landlards for poor quality accommodation. If the convention has relevant evidence on any aspect of these matters, my right hon. and learned Friend is prepared to consider it at any time.

Rent Officers

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now bring in legislation for the appointment of rent officers in Scotland whose duties would be similar to those operating in England at present.

Mr. Ancram: It is not evident that such legislation is required since for all practical purposes the duties of a rent officer in Scotland and in England and Wales are identical, that is, to determine and register fair rents.

Urban Aid

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of urban aid projects reaching the expiry of their funding during the current financial year 1986-87; and if he will permit, without ratecapping penalties, the inclusion of selected projects within the mainstream expenditure of local authorities.

Mr. Ancram: The funding of about 180 projects assisted under the urban programme expires during 1986-87. Decisions on the future of these projects are for local authorities to take within the resources available to them.

Rates

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the average unrebated domestic rate bill paid in each year since 1966 by householders in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: Estimated average domestic rate bills for Scotland (including water rates) are shown in the table below:

Local authority financial year	*£*
1966-67[1]	42
1967-68	41
1968-69	43
1969-70	46
1970-71	51
1971-72	63
1972-73	66
1973-74	71
1974-75	83
1975-76[2]	108
1976-77[3]	123
1977-78	139
1978-79	132
1979-80	149
1980-81	199
1981-82	272
1982-83	310
1983-84	310
1984-85	328
1985-86	392
1986-87	417

[1] May to May.
[2] May to March; 10½ months.
[3] April to March.

Since 1976 these figures have been contained in "Rating Review", regularly issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Copies are available in the Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Monetary System

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will in future seek to require the EEC Commission to make estimates of the effects of EMS realignments on EEC budget costs and an own resources revenue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke I agree that the Commission should be asked to make such estimates, even though they must be very uncertain.

EEC (Payments)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what have been the United Kingdom's total net payments to the EEC in each year from 1983.

Mr. Brooke The information required is contained in table 3 of the statement on the 1986 Community budget (Cmnd 9907) published in early October. A copy is available in the House of Commons Library.

EEC (Expenditure)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the principle that the maximum level of EEC expenditure will be determined at the beginning of the budgetary year is subject to any qualifications about exceptional circumstances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke I refer the hon. Member to the Council's conclusions on budgetary discipline of December 1984, a copy of which is available in the Library. Article 2 of the conclusions includes provision for the Council to take account of exceptional circumstances when calculating the financial guideline for agriculture.

EEC Budget

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the correction formula for United Kingdom budgetary contribution to the EEC, agreed at Fontainebleau, will continue unchanged if the value added tax ceiling is raised to 1·6 per cent.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke This question is hypothetical. Disregarding that, however, neither the VAT ceiling nor the correction formula for the United Kingdom can be changed without the consent of the Governments and Parliaments of all member states, including the United Kingdom.

Privatisation

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which financial institution advised Her Majesty's Government about the level of the offer price for shares in British Telecom and the Trustee Savings Bank, respectively; and which financial institutions are advising Her Majesty's Government about the level of the offer price for shares in British Gas.

Mr. Norman Lamont The Government's advisers on the British Telecom offer for sale were Kleinwort Benson Ltd. and Hoare Govett Ltd. Advice about share pricing was also provided by Philips and Drew. N. M. Rothschild and Sons Ltd. and Cazenove and Co. are acting as the Government's advisers on the forthcoming Offer for Sale of shares in British Gas. The arrangements for the TSB flotation were entirely a matter for the TSB and its own financial advisers.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Royal Ulster Constabulary

13. **Mr. Archer** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether Mr. Colin Sampson has yet completed his inquiry into matters connected with the Royal Ulster Constabulary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I understand that the first part of Mr. Sampson's report was submitted to the Chief Constable of the RUC yesterday. The Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland also received a copy. I understand that this part of the report covers the incident on 24 November 1982 in which Mr. Michael Tighe was shot dead. I also understand that Mr. Sampson hopes to submit as soon as possible a second part which will address the associated issues connected with all the cases under investigation. As is the usual practice with police reports covering criminal investigations, it will not be published. On the basis of Mr. Sampson's report, along with any comments from the Chief Constable, the Department of Public Prosecutions (Northern Ireland) will decide, in consultation with my right hon. Friend the Attorney-General, what directions to give as to criminal proceedings.

An additional section of Mr. Sampson's report will deal with matters concerning the management of the RUC. I propose to make a statement to the House on these aspects at the earliest opportunity. It will, however, be understood that I have no role in the conduct of criminal proceedings, nor would it be appropriate for any comments to be made upon the individual investigations involved until all such proceedings are completed.

15. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to whether the inquiry by Mr. Colin Sampson into allegations against the Royal Ulster Constabulary has yet been completed.

16. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the final version of the report into the Royal Ulster Constabulary being conducted by the chief constable of West Yorkshire to be available.

Mr. Tom King: I understand that the first volume of Mr. Sampson's report was submitted to the Chief Constable of the RUC yesterday. The Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland also received a copy.

Divis Flats

12. **Mr. Bell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will make a decision on the recommendations of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for the demolition of the Divis flats; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: On 13 October I announced that I had accepted the recommendation of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that its future strategy for dealing with the problems of Divis flats should be one of phased demolition of the remaining Sectra blocks subject to periodic review.

Small Businesses

14. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are currently being taken to encourage small businesses in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: Support for the establishement and growth of small businesses in Northern Ireland is largely channelled through the Local Enterprise Development

Unit, funded by Government. The unit's resources are being strengthened to intensify efforts on stimulating the growth of existing small businesses. Among other Government measures, the enterprise allowance scheme and training facilities also encourage people to set up and develop small businesses.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

17. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the operation on the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friend to a reply I gave earlier to a question by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham).

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how far the Anglo-Irish Agreement has met the objectives originally set for it and what empirical methods are used to evaluate the progress of the agreement;

(2) if he will make a statement on progress achieved by the Anglo-Irish Conference;

(3) what improvements the closer co-operation between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Republic of Ireland, since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, has produced in the situation in Northern Ireland, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1986]: We have made good progress since the Anglo-Irish Agreement came into force. We have laid the basis for improved cross-border security co-ordination in the Conference, and the Conference has reassured nationalists that their interests will be taken into account when the Government make decisions. Unionists should also draw reassurance from the renewed commitment in the agreement by both Governments to the principle of consent.

The Government evaluate all their policies, including the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to see whether they have met their objectives. But we have always recognised that the problems which the agreement addresses will not be solved quickly or easily. I am confident that when a final assessment can be made of the agreement its effect will be seen to have been positive.

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Robert Bennett in South Tyrone on 7 September 1984; and if he will give details;

(2) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Malcolm Cullen in South Tyrone on 7 September 1984; and if he will give details;

(3) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Melvin Simpson in South Tyrone on 8 October 1984; and if he will give details;

(4) if any anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have caused the death of Fred Jackson in South Tyrone on 19 October 1984; and if he will give details;

(5) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Peter W. Gallimore in Fermanagh on 19 October 1984; and if he will give details;

(6) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Jimmy Graham in Fermanagh on 1 February 1985; and if he will give details;

(7) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Hugh McCormac in Fermanagh on 3 March 1985; and if he will give details;

(8) if anyone has been made amendable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Robert Gilliland in Fermanagh on 21 June 1985; and if he will give details;

(9) what information he has as to whether anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Seamus McAvoy, a constituent of South Tyrone, shot in the Irish Republic on 20 August 1985; and as to details;

(10) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of George Gilliland in South Tyrone on 7 December 1985; and if he will give details;

(11) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of William J. Clements in South Tyrone on 7 December 1985; and if he will give details;

(12) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of John Early in Fermanagh on 3 February; and if he will give details;

(13) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Derek Breen in Fermanagh on 11 February; and if he will give details;

(14) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of John McCabe in Fermanagh on 11 February; and if he will give details;

(15) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of David Wilson in South Tyrone on 17 May; and if he will give details.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Reyes Syndrome

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what study his Department has made of the relative incidence of Reyes syndrome in Northern Ireland compared with England and Wales.

Mr. Needham: None. Work on the factors which may be responsible for the varying incidence of Reyes syndrome in different parts of the British Isles is being undertaken by the British paediatric surveillance unit. Provisional figures for the period 1 August 1985 to 31 July 1986 show that the incidence in Northern Ireland has fallen to the same level as in Great Britain.

Employment (Equal Opportunities)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response he has had to the

consultative paper "Equal Opportunity in Employment in Northern Ireland: Future Strategy Options", and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: Since the consultative paper was issued as recently as mid-September it is too early to expect considered and formal responses and indeed none have been submitted so far. Interested parties have until 31 March 1987 to submit their views and it would not be appropriate to make a statement until those are received and considered.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (1) *(a)* passengers and *(b)* visitors from (i) India (ii) Pakistan (iii) Bangladesh (iv) Nigeria and (v) Ghana arrived in the United Kingdom in each month since January 1985;

(2) how many *(a)* passengers and *(b)* visitors in total have arrived in the United Kingdom since January.

Mr. Waddington: The tables give, for citizens of the five countries requested, the latest available monthly figures of *(a)* total passengers and *(b)* visitors admitted to the United Kingdom. In the first five months of this year a total of 2·45 million passengers, excluding European Community nationals, were admitted, of whom 1·76 million were visitors. In addition, there were just over 10 million admissions of British citizens and other European Community nationals.

Admissions of all passengers to the United Kingdom for certain nationalities

Number

	India	*Pakistan*	*Bangladesh*	*Ghana*	*Nigeria*
1985					
January	14,100	6,620	1,600	2,460	16,000
February	12,100	5,670	1,540	2,220	10,800
March	15,800	7,820	1,930	2,560	12,800
April	20,000	9,420	2,070	2,740	15,800
May	29,300	10,000	2,240	2,940	14,400
June	31,300	13,400	2,350	3,300	17,000
July	28,700	16,500	3,600	4,280	23,300
August	25,000	14,100	3,070	4,470	27,700
September	24,900	11,400	3,240	3,600	24,100
October	19,400	8,260	2,690	3,080	19,200
November	14,900	6,680	1,960	3,250	18,900
December	16,700	7,300	1,860	3,220	20,800
1986					
January	15,700	6,780	1,870	3,040	20,500
February	14,200	5,720	1,670	2,510	17,100
March	17,100	7,670	2,020	2,490	19,000
April	21,400	9,290	2,100	2,780	18,600
May	29,800	10,100	2,540	3,000	21,100

Admissions of visitors to the United Kingdom for certain nationalities

Number

	India	*Pakistan*	*Bangladesh*	*Ghana*	*Nigeria*
1985					
January	6,280	3,320	440	1,390	8,860
February	6,480	3,240	400	1,500	8,020
March	8,940	4,860	540	1,880	9,620
April	12,100	6,030	680	1,810	11,200
May	22,400	7,010	820	2,080	10,800
June	24,300	10,700	1,250	2,380	12,400
July	22,000	13,300	1,790	3,250	18,800
August	17,200	10,100	1,480	3,250	22,200
September	16,400	7,180	1,190	2,320	16,900
October	13,300	5,960	1,060	2,180	14,600
November	9,360	4,390	700	2,500	14,700
December	10,200	4,780	790	2,410	15,700
1986					
January	7,040	3,610	520	1,750	12,300
February	8,150	3,400	460	1,740	12,600
March	9,310	4,820	610	1,780	14,400
April	12,800	6,200	740	1,770	13,400
May	21,600	7,280	1,180	2,210	15,900

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers from *(a)* India, *(b)*

Pakistan, *(c)* Bangladesh, *(d)* Ghana and *(e)* Nigeria were granted temporary admission in (i) 1985, (ii) the first quarter of the current year, (iii) the second quarter and (iv) up to the latest available date.

Mr. Waddington: The statistics covering the number of passengers granted temporary admission are not subdivided by nationality.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many passengers in total have been granted temporary admission in each quarter of the current year;

(2) how many passengers refused entry to the United Kingdom were *(a)* detained, *(b)* given temporary admission and *(c)* given temporary admission to hotels in each quarter since January.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers from *(a)* India, *(b)* Pakistan, *(c)* Bangladesh, *(d)* Ghana and *(e)* Nigeria failed to leave on the due date following a grant of temporary admission in (i) 1985, (ii) the first quarter of the current year, (iii) the second quarter of the current year, and up to the latest available date.

Mr. Waddington: Figures for the number of passengers who failed to leave on the date due following a grant of temporary admission are not maintained centrally by nationality. Available port records are as follows:

	Heathrow (Terminal 3)		*Heathrow (Terminal 4)*		*Gatwick*	
	1985	*1986*	*1985*	*1986*	*1985*	*1986*
India	69	117	—	26	3	1
Pakistan	21	41	—	4	—	2
Bangladesh	100	172	—	7	3	2
Ghana	29	41	—	5	5	4
Nigeria	8	18	—	—	3	4

Notes: Figures for 1986 at Gatwick and terminal 3 are from 1 January to 19 October 1986. The figures for terminal 4 are from 12 April, when the terminal opened, to 19 October 1986.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many immigration officers are now in post at *(a)* terminal 3 and *(b)* terminal 4 at Heathrow; and what are the grades and salaries of these officers.

Mr. Waddington: The information, on 30 September 1986, is as follows:

Grade	*Numbers*		*Basic salary scales*	
	Terminal 3	*Terminal 4*	*Minimum* £	*Maximum* £
Assistant Chief Inspector	1	1	14,318	19,465
Inspector	4	3	12,979	15,182
Chief Immigration Officer	35	16	10,433	12,418
Immigration Officer	228	100	5,605	10,188

In addition, inspectors, chief immigration officers and immigration officers receive London weighting, premium pay for weekend working, overtime and a shift disturbance allowance which ranges from 12½ per cent. to 16½ of basic pay.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost per day of holding in detention a passenger refused entry to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on 22 July 1986, at columns *147–48*.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations have been made by right hon. and hon. Members to Ministers in his Department about *(a)* port refusals and *(b)* other immigration matters in each month since May.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the total number of those, respectively, from the Indian subcontinent, Nigeria and Ghana who absconded during 1984, 1985 and during the first six months of 1986 having been given temporary admission, being refused entry into the United Kingdom as visitors; and what is the percentage in each of these three years of absconders amongst those granted temporary admission.

Mr. Waddington: The information is not available in the form requested. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today to a question from the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs).

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors to the United Kingdom who arrived on 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 October were obliged to wait for more than six hours before being examined by the Immigration Service; and how many who arrived on the corresponding dates in October 1985 were so obliged.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1986]: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many remand prisoners are currently being held in police cells; how many there were in each of the past 12 weeks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The number of prisoners held in police cells last Friday[1] (17 October) and on the 12 previous Fridays were as follows. Save where indicated, all the prisoners were held in the south-east; the majority would have been untried.

17 October	97
10 October	96
3 October	[2]188
26 September	105

19 September	82
12 September	84
5 September	61
29 August	89
22 August	73
15 August	197
8 August	150
1 August	204
25 July	214

[1] Figures relate to Thursday night-Friday morning.
[2] Including 91 held in the north-west because of disturbances at Risley remand centre.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current nightly cost of keeping a remand prisoner in a police cell; and how this compares with each of the past five years.

Mr. Mellor: The average cost per prisoner-night of prisoners held in Metropolitan police cells during the financial year ended 31 March 1986, the most recent period for which information is readily available, is estimated at approximately £170. The approximate figure for previous years is as follows:

	£
1984-85	200
1983-84	150
1982-83	100

No figures have been calculated for 1981-82, during much of which police cells were rarely used. The cost represents actual expenditure by the police in staff, accommodation and services, and is determined by various factors, in particular, the number of prisoners and the number of locations at which they are held.

The cost of prisoners held by other police forces vary considerably according to circumstances. Comprehensive figures could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were remanded in custody in police cells as of *(a)* 31 July, *(b)* 31 August and *(c)* 30 September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The number of persons remanded in custody in police cells on the dates requested was as follows:

	Males	*Young offenders (aged 17 to 21)*	*Females*	*Total*
31 July 1986	124	18	62	204
31 August 1986	37	19	35	91
30 September 1986	53	23	55	131

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the remanding in custody of women.

Mr. Mellor: I have received a number of representations regarding the remanding in custody of women, including reports from the Social Services Committee and the Howard League, and correspondence from Members of Parliament and the TUC.

Visas

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for visas had been received at each post in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan by the latest available date; and how many of these had been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused.

Mr. Waddington: On 6 October my right hon. Friend announced the introduction of a visa requirement for citizens of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Information on the numbers of entry clearance applications other than for settlement received and decided at posts in the Indian subcontinent in the period 6 to 17 October is given in the following table. Information on such entry clearance applications is collected regularly only for calendar months.

Entry clearance applications other than for settlement, 6 to 17 October 1986

Indian sub-continent Post	*Number of persons*		
	Applications newly received	*Applications granted*	*Applications refused initially*
New Delhi	1,390	1,300	10
Bombay	1,530	1,470	+
Calcutta	300	300	+
Madras	280	270	+
Dhaka	200	170	20
Islamabad	600	570	20
Karachi	620	600	+

Pre-trial Custody

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the length of time spent by persons in pre-trial custody.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 23 July 1986, at column *241*.

Ethnic Minorities (Prisoners)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the treatment of persons from the ethnic minorities in prison.

Mr. Mellor: The Department receives many communications from and on behalf of prisoners relating to aspects of their treatment, and some of these refer to matters of particular concern to the ethnic minorities, for example diet and religious facilities. It would not be practicable to attempt to list such representations separately. We have, in addition, recently received the report of the NACRO race issues advisory committee on black people in the criminal justice system and we are studying its conclusions and recommendations with care.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons who were members of the ethnic minorities were refused parole in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not readily available.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* non-white and *(b)* white women were treated for mental illness while remanded in custody in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985;

(2) how many *(a)* non-white and *(b)* white women were treated for mental illness while serving a prison sentence in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985;

(3) how many *(a)* non-white and *(b)* white people were treated for mental illness while remanded in custody in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985;

(4) how many *(a)* non-white and *(b)* white people were treated for mental illness while serving a prison sentence in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985;

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not statistically recorded.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the transfer of prisoners from the ethnic minorities to mental institutions.

Mr. Mellor: None.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* non-white and *(b)* white people were sent to a mental institution on conviction of an offence in the years from 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The number of hospital orders made by courts following conviction of an offence is given in the table. No information is available as to the ethnic origin of the persons concerned.

Year	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Number of hospital orders following conviction of an offender	721	716	699	717	778	762

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* non-white and *(b)* white people were transferred to mental institutions while remanded in custody in the years from 1980 to 1985;

(2) how many *(a)* non-white and *(b)* white people were transferred to mental institutions while serving prison sentences in the years 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The number of persons transferred from prison to hospital under mental health legislation is given in the table. No information is available as to ethnic origin.

Year	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Transfer to hospital of persons serving sentences of imprisonment etc. (section 47 of the Mental Health Act 1983[1])	87	86	85	92	108	100
Transfer to hospital of remand and civil prisoners and persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 (section 48 of the Mental Health Act 1983[1])	19	22	18	23	47	41
Total	106	108	103	115	155	141

[1] or equivalent under the Mental Health Act 1959.

Prisoners (Psychiatric Care)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the psychiatric care of female prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: Various individuals and organisations have expressed views on Holloway prison's C1 unit and the Social Services Committee report on the Prison Medical Service has made recommendations about various aspects of the psychiatric care of all prisoners, male and female.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many police officers transferred from the Metropolitan police to other forces in each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985;

(2) how many police officers transferred to the Metropolitan police from other police forces in England and Wales in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the information on transfers to the Metropolitan police from other forces in England and Wales is not immediately available. But transfers of police officers to and from the Metropolitan police involving other police forces, including Scottish forces and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, for the years 1980 to 1985 are as follows:

Year	*Transfers to the Metropolitan police*	*Transfers from the Metropolitan police*
1980	83	78
1981	73	38
1982	107	48
1983	56	57
1984	44	85
1985	25	113

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers in the Metropolitan police force of the rank *(a)* inspector, *(b)* sergeant and *(c)* constable resigned from the Metropolitan police in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is not readily available in the form requested. I shall publish it in the *Official Report* as soon as possible.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers in the Metropolitan

police force retired after (*a*) 25 years' service, (*b*) 30 years' service and (*c*) in excess of 30 years' service in each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the information readily available is as follows:

Year	*25 years service*	*26-29 years service*	*30 and over years service*
1980	179	180	187
1981	140	131	165
1982	109	174	202
1983	102	158	226
1984	94	176	310
1985	76	240	364

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the permitted daily mileage per shift in the Metropolitan police force for (*a*) road patrol vehicles, (*b*) station inspectors, (*c*) crime cars and (*d*) criminal investigation department vehicles.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that, though he has set a limit on total weekly mileage, there are at present no limits on mileage for specific types of vehicle or for shifts.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in respect of the total strength of the Metropolitan police force; and what steps he proposes to take in respect of those representations.

Mr. Hurd: I have discussed Metropolitan police manpower with the Commissioner on a number of occasions, and I have received representations from right hon. and hon. Members and others. Following a review to assess the manpower needs of the force, I announced on 20 May that it was to receive increases of up to 1,200 in the police establishment and 600 in the civil staff ceiling over the next four years. As the first stage of this programme I have approved increases of 300 in the police establishment and 107 in the civil staff ceiling for 1986-87, in addition to the increase of 50 in the establishment specifically for drugs work which I approved last October, and the increase of 43 in the ceiling approved by my predecessor last year.

The Metropolitan police are now recruiting to fill the gap of about 600 between present strength and the increased establishment which I have authorised.

Prisoners (Assaults)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (*a*) non-white and (*b*) white people were assaulted in prison in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Mellor: Information on offences against prison discipline of gross personal violence and of assault punished in prison department establishments is given annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales," (tables 9 (g), (h) and (i) of the latest issue, for 1985, Cmnd. 9903) but no analysis by ethnic origin of the victim is available.

Prisons (Food Poisoning)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many outbreaks of food poisoning there were in British prisons in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Mellor: There have been no serious outbreaks of food poisoning in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales in the last six years.

Penal establishments in Scotland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Prisons (Kitchens and Food)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations he has received regarding the conditions in prison kitchens;

(2) what representations he has received regarding the quality of prison food.

Mr. Mellor: Since 1 April this year 149 petitions and 19 letters from MPs have been received on the subject of food, together with a number of letters from the general public. Sixty-three petitions and two letters from MPs included reference to quality and eight petitions reference to prison kitchens.

Prison Doctors

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many doctors specialising in mental illness were employed by the prison service in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and at the latest date.

Mr. Mellor: About 40 per cent. of currently serving full-time medical officers have a psychiatric qualification. Corresponding information about part-time medical officers and about full-time medical officers employed in the past is not readily accessible and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many doctors from the ethnic minorities were employed by the prison service in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and at latest date.

Mr. Mellor: Of 91 doctors currently employed as prison medical officers on a full-time basis, 31 are from ethnic minorities. Corresponding information about part-time medical officers and about full-time medical officers employed in the past is not readily accessible and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prisons (Fires)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fires were reported in British prisons in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The number of fires in England and Wales reported to headquarters in each of the years in question was as follows:

	Number
1980	226
1981	235
1982	260
1983	311
1984	272
1985	262

Prisoners (Deaths)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners died while in prison in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985 specifying whether by natural causes or otherwise.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested for England and Wales is as follows:

Year	*Total number of deaths*	*Number of deaths from natural causes*
1980	65	33
1981	58	35
1982	61	28
1983	64	33
1984	65	31
1985	59	27

Prisoners (Injuries)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* non-white and *(b)* white prisoners were admitted to hospital for injuries sustained in prison in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not statistically recorded.

Prison Medical Facilities

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the standard of prison medical facilities.

Mr. Mellor: Representations relating to specific aspects of prison medical facilities are received from time to time from hon. Members and other interested individuals and organisations. We have also received the third report of the Social Services Committee (published on 25 June 1986) which contains 58 recommendations based on a wide-ranging inquiry into the Prison Medical Service.

Prisoners (Racial Attacks)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding racial attacks on prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: From time to time complaints of assault are made by or on behalf of prisoners in which it is alleged there was a racial element and these are investigated, but no central record is kept. If the hon. Member has a particular case or cases in mind, he may wish to write.

Prison Discipline (Report)

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce his detailed response to the recommendations in the "Report of the Committee on the Prison Disciplinary System", Cmnd 9641.

Mr. Hurd: The Government's proposals are published today in the White Paper, "Prison Disciplinary System in England and Wales", (Cmnd. 9920).

Women Prisoners (Pregnancy)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many women detained in Her Majesty's prison, Holloway experienced complications necessitating transfer to a general hospital during pregnancy in each month of the current year;

(2) how many women detained in Her Majesty's prison, Holloway experienced pregnancy which ended in the death of the foetus before full term during each month of the current year;

(3) how many women in custody in England experienced pregnancy which ended in the death of the foetus before full term during each month of the current year;

(4) if he will state the number of infant deaths occurring among children delivered to women during the term of their imprisonment in England for each month of the current year;

(5) how many women were pregnant in Her Majesty's prison, Holloway for each month during the current year.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 October 1986]: The information required for each month of the current year is as follows:

	January	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*
Holloway									
Pregnant women experiencing complications necessitating transfer to a general hospital	2	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0
Pregnancies ending in death of foetus before full term[1]	2	1	1	1	2	0	4	0	0
Pregnant women[2]	35	26	25	29	29	24	25	23	22
England									
Pregnancies ending in death of foetus before full term[1]	4	3	3	3	4	0	6	1	2
Infant deaths among children delivered during the term of imprisonment	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

[1]These figures are for deaths of foetus by miscarriage, abortion or ectopic pregnancies.
[2]Number of women received in Holloway during each month who were known to be pregnant on reception.

TRANSPORT

British Rail

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what subjects were discussed when he last met the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend discussed a wide range of matters of current interest with the chairman.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress on the proposals to improve the passenger rail service on the East coast route.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend inspected the East cost main line electrification work on 15 October. Work is slightly ahead of programme and well within budget. The first electric services are due to operate between Hitchin and Huntingdon on 3 November — a full six months ahead of programme. Contracts have been let for some two thirds of the investment, including the new high speed Electra locomotives. Full electric services between London and Leeds are due to start in October 1989 (although trial runs could start as soon as summer 1988) and to Edinburgh in May 1991.

M25 (Completion)

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the completion of the remaining section of the M25 London orbital motorway between the A1 and A41.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The section from west of the A41 to Bricket Wood opened on 17 October. The final section, up to the A1, will be opened on 29 October.

Bus Services

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport what changes in Sunday bus services he now expects as a result of service tendering pursuant to the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that the level of Sunday bus services has been broadly maintained, although there are some variations (including improvements) from one part of the country to the other. There have been reductions on some of the least used services where subsidy represented particularly poor value for ratepayers' money, and gave particularly little benefit to travellers; it is one of the advantages of the Transport Act 1985 that it has enabled many local authorities to examine more closely the allocation of bus service subsidies, and to secure maximum value for money.

North Devon Link Road

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to advertise and let contracts for stage 2A and 2B of the north Devon link road together with the Barnstaple by-pass and Barnstaple relief road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We expect to invite tenders for stage 2A later this year and to let a contract early in 1987.

Progress on stage 2B is subject to completion of the remaining statutory procedures necessitated by the modifications agreed to the orders. I will inform my hon. friend as soon as a timetable can be set.

We expect to invite tenders for Barnstaple by-pass next spring, and to let a contract in the summer.

The Barnstaple relief road is a responsibility of the Devon county council.

THE ARTS

Tate Gallery of the North

Mr. Parry asked the Minister for the Arts what is the anticipated date of the opening of the Tate Gallery of the North.

Mr. Luce: I understand that the trustees of the Tate Gallery plan to open the Tate in the North in the early summer of 1988.

Museums and Galleries (Merseyside)

Mr. Parry asked the Minister for the Arts what is the estimate of the budget of national museums and galleries on Merseyside in the financial years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: The grant-in-aid for the national museums and galleries on Merseyside is £8·745 million for 1986-87. I expect this to be broadly maintained in real terms for the next two years.

Mr. Parry asked the Minister for the Arts (1) if there are any plans to appoint a historian to the board of trustees of the Merseyside Museum of Labour History; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the names and occupations of members of the board of trustees of the Merseyside Museum of Labour History.

Mr. Luce: The Merseyside Museum of Labour History is the responsibility of the board of trustees of the national museums and galleries on Merseyside. I listed the present members of the board, and their occupations, in my reply of 21 October to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing). I have no plans at present to make any further appointments to the board.

Mr. Parry asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received concerning the future of the present siting of the Merseyside Museum of Labour History.

Mr. Luce: The siting of the Merseyside Museum of Labour History is a matter for the trustees of the national museums and galleries on Merseyside. I understand that the trustees are to review certain accommodation questions shortly. I have received no direct representations on the subject, but my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) has drawn to my attention a letter from the Merseyside divisional organiser of the Transport and General Workers Union.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Mr. Maclennan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the press notice issued by my Department on 16 October recording the outcome of the Agriculture Council on 13-14 October, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Animals (Exports)

Mr. Madden asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what representations he has received, from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and others, about the suffering of animals subject to the Export of Animals Protection Order 1981; if he plans further action to protect live animals, exported from the United Kingdom under licence, from suffering; what action he is taking, within the European Economic Community, to ensure member states enforce European Economic Community directives concerning safeguards against animal suffering; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many United Kingdom exporters of live animals have been fined for breaches of licence conditions, issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under the Export of Animals Protection Order 1981, since 1981 to date; what fines have been imposed in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department is not aware that any exporters have been fined under the Export of Animals (Protection) Order 1981. Over the years we have received many representations about the export of live food animals, and Compassion in World Farming has recently expressed concern about the impact of protests by French farmers on the welfare of exported British sheep. We have obtained assurances at the highest level from the French authorities that they would take steps to protect future trade, and are continuing to make vigorous representations to them.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has also submitted reports that sheep destined for France have been sent on to Spain. We do not license exports to that country because it has not implemented Community safeguards on animal welfare. We have contacted the French and Spanish authorities to discuss these reports and ask for their future co-operation. We are also investigating whether breaches of the 1981 order have occurred and have demanded more extensive information before future export licences for sheep to France are issued.

DEFENCE

Royal Ordnance Factories

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what effect the sale of Royal Ordnance factory, Leeds will have on his policy of competitive tendering as it relates to battle tanks;

(2) what will be the effect of the sale of Royal Ordnance factories on the competitive tendering policy with regard to main battle tanks.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence indicated in the House on 24 July, full national competition for main battle tanks is not a practical long-term aim when the likely value of business cannot justify or sustain competitive industrial capacities required. The change of ownership at Leeds and the new investment should however in themselves ensure greater efficiency in satisfying our orders as well as enabling the factory to offer even more effective performance against the foreign competition and to participate more powerfully in collaborative ventures. Competition at the important sub-contractor level will of course continue. The prospective sale of the remaining Royal Ordnance factories should have no effect upon competitive tender opportunities in the main battle tank field.

RAF Wittering

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the number of empty Royal Air Force houses at RAF Wittering over the past five years on a yearly basis.

Mr. Freeman: The number of empty houses otherwise available for RAF use over the past five years at RAF Wittering were as follows:

July	*Empty houses*
1982	166
1983	281
1984	238
1985	125
1986	122

Of these quarters, 26 are held for allocation to RAF personnel. The USAF has asked to make use of 41 and is considering its possible need for the remainder.

In addition, 253 houses on the base are already earmarked for use by United States forces rather than the RAF, and about 50 per cent. of these are at present unoccupied awaiting modernisation.

NATO

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation meeting at Gleneagles and its significance for follow-up strategy following the Reykjavik talks.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made earlier today.

Royal Ordnance Factories plc.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library the prospectus for the sale of Royal Ordnance Factories plc.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. As it has been decided not to proceed with plans for a public offer of shares in Royal Ordnance plc no offer for sale document known as a prospectus will be published. It is now our intention to sell Royal Ordnance privately and to this end a detailed information memorandum has been prepared. This

document is not a prospectus and it would not be appropriate to make it generally available. Recipients are obliged to enter a confidentiality agreement.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the latest situation regarding the sale of Royal Ordnance Factories plc.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In accordance with plans announced to the House of Commons by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 24 July 1986 —column 618—the tank building factory at Leeds has been sold to Vickers plc; and we are now seeking bids for Royal Ordnance plc as a whole on the basis of an information memorandum.

US Base (Holy Loch)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the terms of the agreement between the United Kingdom and the United States Government in relation to the United States base at Holy Loch.

Mr. Stanley: Use of the base at the Holy Loch is covered by confidential agreements between the United Kingdom and United States Governments.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have taken place between his Department and the United States Department of Defence about the future of the Holy Loch base; what has been the outcome of the discussions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Discussions of this kind are confidential. The United States Defence Secretary stated on 22 October that there was no truth whatever in recent stories about United States intentions to withdraw from the Holy Loch.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

HMS Glamorgan

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the sale of HMS Glamorgan to the Chilean navy; what his response was; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations from right hon. and hon. Members and from the public concerning this sale. We take scrupulous care not to approve the supply of defence items which in our judgment are likely to be used for internal repression. A naval destroyer does not come into this category.

Chile

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Chile respecting the violation of human rights in that country following the reimposition of a state of siege on 7 September and the ensuing loss of life.

Mr. Eggar: EC Foreign Ministers issued a statement on 16 September calling for the lifting of the state of siege and the release of those detained, deploring all violence, and expressing concern at recent loss of life. My right hon. and learned Friend reiterated these concerns in his EC Presidency address to the United Nations General Assembly on 24 September, and at his bilateral meeting with the Chilean Foreign Minister on 25 September.

Gibraltar

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to make an official visit to the dependent territory of Gibraltar, and have discussions with the Chief Minister and other Gibraltar Government elected representatives on the future of the territory.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to visit Gibraltar in the near future, but he naturally consults the Chief Minister and his colleagues at regular intervals.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the removal of the ceremonial frontier guard from the border post in the dependent territory of Gibraltar.

Mr. Eggar: The guard was withdrawn on 31 July. It no longer seems appropriate to have a guard of this nature at a frontier between two countries who are European Community partners and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies. The Spanish Government have not yet withdrawn their guard. We will continue to press them to do so.

GCHQ

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the shortage of radio operators at Government communications headquarters, Cheltenham.

Mr. Renton: There is no such shortage. Recruitment continues to be successful and it is expected on present trends that the planned strength of radio officers at GCHQ will be maintained up to and beyond the end of the decade.

Visas

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he estimates to be *(a)* the average and *(b)* the maximum distances which visa applicants from the Indian state of Gujerat will have to travel in order to attend at the nearest British consulate.

Mr. Eggar: The maximum distance to the deputy high commission in Bombay from any part of the state of Gujerat is approximately 875 kms. The average distance travelled by visa applicants is not known and could be calculated only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what delay he anticipates will be incurred by people from the Indian state of Gujerat seeking to visit relatives in the United Kingdom as a result of the introduction of a visa system.

Mr. Eggar: Procedures for the issue of entry clearance have been streamlined and additional entry clearance officers have been sent to Bombay. It is hoped that any delay will normally be well within the period which most

people spend planning international travel. Intending applicants are advised to apply as far in advance as possible.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs wha he estimates will be the cost to Her Majesty's Government of installing additional visa officers or other immigration personnel in India, including their cost of passage and accommodation.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 21 October. The recurrent costs, which include cost of passage and accommodation, of installing additional visa officers or other immigration personnel in India are estimated to be £3·1 million in 1987-88.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many new visa officers or other immigration officials he anticipates will have to be sent to India in order to deal with visa applications in that country.

Mr. Eggar: Twelve additional entry clearance officers are being sent to India. They will be joined by relief entry clearance officers, as necessary, during the seasonal peaks.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visa officers or other immigration officials he intends to station in the Indian state of Gujerat.

Mr. Eggar: None. The nearest entry clearance issuing post will be the British deputy high commission at Bombay.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visitors are estimated to have come to the United Kingdom from the Indian state of Gujerat during the last year for which records are available.

Mr. Eggar: The information is not available as statistics are maintained by country of origin only.

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* in tabular form the names of all those countries which require British citizens to provide an entry visa for the purpose of making a visit.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) on 21 October.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many additional staff, dealing with visa applications, were at each post in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan on 14 October.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) on 21 October. Of the three additional staff concerned, two were in Karachi and one in Dhaka.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for visas have been received in Colombo since the scheme was introduced; and how many have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused and how many appeals against refusal have been (i) lodged, (ii) granted and (iii) turned down.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is given in the following table:

31 May 1985—16 October 1986

	Visa applications
Received	13,698
Granted	12,173
Refused	1,130
	Appeals
Lodged	458
Withdrawn	25
Allowed	36
Dismissed	71

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the visa requirements of individual Commonwealth countries as they affect the citizens of other countries within the Commonwealth.

Mr. Eggar: I regret the information requested is not held by this Department and can be obtained only at disproportionate costs.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the average amount of time it will take for applications for visitors' visas to be finalised in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The waiting time from first application to decision varies from case to case. But, depending on the numbers applying, visit applications are normally finalised on the same day that they are received, unless further inquiries need to be made.

Underground Nuclear Tests

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account his Department takes, in dealing with problems of verification of underground nuclear tests, of the agreement of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to on-site monitoring.

Mr. Renton: As they stand at present, the qualified nature of such offers would not in our view provide adequate levels of verification for a comprehensive test ban treaty. In any case, a range of technical problems would still need resolution. We welcome signs from the Reykjavik meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev that the Soviet Union is prepared seriously to address verification issues, in the context of ratification of the threshold test ban treaty and peaceful nuclear explosion treaty. But the questions raised by verification of a CTBT will be of a different order.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what priority he gives to the establishment of negative security assurances to non-nuclear weapon states, as a means of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Renton: The United Kingdom and all other nuclear weapon states have given unilateral assurances to non-nuclear weapon states, but we continue to attach the highest importance to the non-proliferation treaty as the main defence against the spread of nuclear weapons.

Departure Taxation

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of those commonwealth countries which levy a departure tax on departing British citizens together with the amount of the tax in each case expressed in pound sterling at the current rate of exchange.

Mr. Eggar: According to the latest available information, airport taxes are levied by the following Commonwealth countries on departing passengers of all nationalities:

Note: Taxes are normally paid in local currency upon departure. In many countries diplomats, transit passengers and infants are exempt. Taxes for children vary. (A)—Not applicable to transit passengers and infants under 2 years. (B)—Not applicable to transit passengers.

Country	*£ Sterling*
Antigua (B)	
Departing Caribbean	2·58
Departing International	5·15
Australia (B)	
Departing International	8·89
Exception: Children under 12	
Bahamas (B)	
Embarkation Tax Adult	3·49
Exception: Children under 3	
Bangladesh (A)	
Departing Domestic	0·24
Departing International	2·36
Barbados (B)	
Departing Domestic and International	4·15
Exception: Children under 12	
Belize (A)	
Departing International	6·97
Bermuda (A)	6·97
Fiji (B)	
Departing International	0·63
Exception: Children under 12	
Gambia (B)	
Departing Domestic and International	3·11
Ghana (A)	
Departing Domestic	0·24
Departing International	0·96
Grenada (B)	
Departing International	5·17
Exception: Children under 12	
Guyana (B)	
Departing International	8·74
Exception: Children under 7	
India (B)	
Departing Domestic, Subcontinent and Burma	2·75
Departing International Rest	5·50
Jamaica (A)	
Departing Domestic and International	1·22
Kenya	6·97
Kiribati Republic	
Departing International	2·22
Lesotho	
Departing International	0·66
Exceptions: Transit passengers and children under 5 years	
Malawi (A)	
Departing International	3·58
Malaysia (A)	
Departing Domestic	0·80
Departing International Brunei and Singapore	1·33
Departing International Rest	3·99
Maldive Islands	5·00
Departing International	
Mauritius (A)	5·40
Nauru	4·45
Departing International	
Exception: Transit passengers and children under 12	
Saint Christopher and Nevis	
Departing International Nationals	2·58
Departing International Non-nationals	3·48
Exception: Transit passengers and children under 12 years	
New Zealand (A)	0·80
Departing International Passengers	
Nigeria (A)	
Departing Domestic Adult	1·01
Departing Domestic Child	0·50
Departing International Adult	4·02
Departing International Child	2·01
Papua New Guinea (A)	5·23
St. Lucia	
Departing International Caribbean	2·58
Departing International Rest	5·16
Sierre Leone (A)	
Departing International	0·48
Singapore (A)	1·60
Departing International Brunei, Malaysia	
Departing International Rest	3·85
Solomon Islands (A)	1·91
Departing International	
Sri Lanka (A)	5·00
Departing International	
Tanzania (A)	2·24
Departing Domestic	
Departing International Residents	2·24
Departing International Non-residents	6·97
Tonga (A)	2·22
Trinidad and Tobago	
Departing International	3·88
Exception: Transit passengers and children under 5 years	
Tuvalu	
Departing International	4·45
Exception: Transit passengers and children under 3	
Uganda (A)	3·00

Country	*£ Sterling*
Vanuatu (A)	
Departing International	7·00
Departing Domestic	1·40
Zambia (A)	
Departing Domestic	0·44
Departing International	1·68
Zimbabwe	
Departing International	4·23
Exception: Children under 12	

Turks and Caicos Islands

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Mr. Eggar: There is little to add to the statement that I made to the House on 25 July. The constitutional commission referred to in that statement was duly appointed on 15 September under Sir Roy Marshall a former vice-chancellor of Hull univerisity. The commission will assemble in the Turks and Caicos Islands on 5 November and is expected to conclude its review by the end of the year.

On 24 September, the Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands acting on the instructions of the Secretary of State appointed a commission of inquiry to investigate allegations about irregularities in the transfer of Crown land in 1983. The commissioner, Mr. Louis Blom-Cooper, QC, has already begun his investigations.

South Africa

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the criteria which Her Majesty's Government will require to be satisfied for Her Majesty's Government to recognise Bophuthatswana.

Mrs. Chalker: The normal criteria which the Government apply for recognition of a state are that it should have, and seem likely to continue to have, a clearly defined territory with a population, a Government who are able of themselves to exercise effective control of that territory, and independence in their external relations. Other factors, including some United Nations resolutions, may also be relevant.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all visits by his officials to Transkei, Venda and Ciskei setting out the dates and purpose.

Mrs. Chalker: We have no official contacts. There have been occasional visits by officials for consular purposes. A comprehensive list is not available.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy regarding attitude and contact towards *(a)* Transkei, Venda, Bophuthatswana and Ciskei and *(b)* the homelands in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Kingdom does not recognise Transkei, Venda, Bophuthatswana or Ciskei as independent states; there are therefore no official contacts with them. The so-called homelands are an integral part of the Republic of South Africa and are treated as such.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requests have been received from Bophuthatswana for visits or discussions by his officials; and what response has been given.

Mrs. Chalker: We eschew official contacts with Bophuthatswana.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when was the last time any of his officials visited Bophuthatswana; and if he will set out a schedule of contact his officials have had with Bophuthatswana since March 1983.

Mrs. Chalker: We have no official contacts. There have been occasional visits by officials for consular purposes. A comprehensive list is not available.

Reykjavik Summit

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the final proposal on intermediate nuclear forces in Europe which was provisionally agreed between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the Reykjavik summit; and if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards a separate agreement on intermediate nuclear forces which would involve the removal of all SS20, cruise and Pershing II missiles from Europe.

Mr. Renton: At the Reykjavik meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev a global ceiling of 100 LRINF warheads was provisionally agreed. All the Soviet systems would be deployed in Asia and the United States systems in the United States. We welcome any equal global limit on LRINF.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Natural and Herbal Medicines

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will review the structure of the committees advising him in the practice of natural and herbal medicines; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: There are a number of committees that advise my right hon. Friend on the provision of medical and pharmaceutical services.

Doctors may prescribe any drugs including natural and herbal medicines (for example, senna tablets) which they feel are suitable for individual patients. These medicines are available at National Health Service expense unless they are included in Schedule 3A to the National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 1974.

Reyes Syndrome

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the over the counter medicinal products sold for babies and children which contain aspirin or aspirin derivatives; and what advice has he received regarding the continued sale of these products;

(2) how significant was the risk factor study regarding Reyes syndrome in the decision of the Committee on Safety of Medicines on the use of children's aspirin; who paid for the study; what was the nature of his

Department's involvement; and in what way he intends that his Department should support continuation of the study or work on its implications;

(3) whether the Committee on Safety of Medicines received any representations or communications from the aspirin manufacturers during the period in 1985 when it was considering the relationship between the use of aspirin and Reyes syndrome;

(4) precisely when the Committee on Safety of Medicines first received evidence from the United States that the number of reports of Reyes syndrome had fallen in line with the fall in the use of aspirin; what was the source of the information; who sent it; and what was the response of the Committee.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the right hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what references to aspirin are made in Health Education Council literature and what changes have been made following the recommendation that aspirin should not be given to children.

Mrs. Currie: The recommendation that aspirin should not be given to children was announced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe) in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 10 June 1986 at columns *145-46*. The current edition of the Health Education Council booklet, "Minor Illness — How to treat it at home", which refers to the use of soluble aspirin in the treatment of sore throats, colds and sunburn, has been withdrawn so that a clear statement can be included warning of the dangers of giving aspirin to children.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* young persons and *(b)* adults are known to have suffered from Reyes syndrome.

Mrs. Currie: I regret I cannot give the right hon. Member all the information he seeks. A joint study of Reyes syndrome in children commenced in 1981 and is conducted by the British Paediatric Association and the Public Health Laboratory Service Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre. The available figures are given in the the table.

Reported cases of Reyes Syndrome in the British Isles in children under 16 years of age

Year (1 August-31 July)	*Number*
1981-82	42
1982-83	60
1983-84	81
1984-85	50
1985-86[1]	50

[1] Provisional.

Lithotripsy

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current state of the descriptive study being carried out at St. Thomas's hospital, London, to compare lithotripsy with alternatives; when the study began and when it is due to end and at what estimated cost; and what other studies are known to the Department into extra-corporeal shock-wave lithotripsy (ESWL).

Mrs. Currie: The collection of data for this study is expected to be completed by the end of 1986. Preliminary results are expected in the spring of 1987. The study was approved for three years from April 1985 at an estimated cost of £70,000. The Department is not aware of any similar research studies in the National Health Service.

"Breaking the Sound Barrier"

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action his Department has taken in the light of the "Breaking the Sound Barrier" campaign of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, Age Concern England and the British Association for the Hard of Hearing; if there is any further action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The Department has been closely associated with the campaign since the planning stage. Ministers continue to give support by letter, in speeches and by attending meetings. We are in process of consulting professional and other bodies about cutting waiting times for National Health Service hearing aids and actively pursuing the possibility of linking the promotion of induction loop systems with the Sympathetic Hearing Scheme to which the Department has already given considerable financial support.

Deaf People

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pre-lingual deaf people there are in Britain.

Mr. Major: I regret that statistics are not collected in this form and the registers kept by local authorities in England are not truly representative. However, it appears to be generally estimated that the prevalence of pre-lingual deafness is around one per thousand of live births.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health service units provide specifically for the mental health of profoundly deaf people; where they are located; what is their size in terms of both professional staff and patients treated; what provision there is in regions which do not have such a unit; and how much supra-regional funding is provided.

Mr. Major: Two units within the National Health Service are known to provide specialist psychiatric services for people who are deaf. These are located at the Springfield hospital, in Wandsworth, and at the Whittingham hospital in Preston. The numbers of patients treated in 1985-86 were:

	In-patient/discharges and deaths	*Out-patient attendances*
Springfield hospital	27	187
Whittingham hospital	56	183

Information is not held centrally on the numbers of staff appointed directly to these units.

In addition, building is scheduled to start on a major new psychiatric unit at the Queen Elizabeth hospital, Birmingham, early in 1990. The unit will include specialist facilities for patients throughout the west midlands region with particular needs, including deaf people with psychiatric disorders. The building is scheduled for completion in 1993.

Supra-regional funds are not at present provided for this service, though North Western and South West Thames regional health authorities have recently applied for their services to be supra-regionally designated. These applications are currently under consideration by the Supra Regional Services Advisory Group.

The principle of supra-regional services is to make available a highly-specialised facility to patients from regions which do not contain such a facility themselves.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the nature and extent of provision for the mental health needs of deaf people including the extent of domiciliary provision, the number of hostels, and the number of professional people in the National Health Service who are able to communicate fluently with the pre-lingually deaf people.

Mr. Major: The mental health needs of the majority of deaf people can be met within the general mental health services. Domiciliary provision and hostels form part of these general services, and are available to deaf people. However, information is not collected centrally about the extent of such domiciliary services or hostel provision, or about the number of professional people working in the National Health Service who are able to communicate fluently with pre-lingually deaf people.

A small proportion of deaf people have a profound hearing handicap or are pre-lingually deaf, and require special communication skills from those who work with them. Such skills are available in the two specialist psychiatric units at Whittingham hospital, Preston, and Springfield hospital, London.

Psychiatric Beds

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many psychiatric in-patient beds there are in Britain per 100,000 people; and what are the corresponding figures for psychiatric beds, where there are staff able to communicate, per 100,000 pre-lingually deaf people.

Mr. Major: In 1985, the latest year for which figures are available centrally, the average daily number of available beds in mental illness specialities per 100,000 population in England was 161. Information for the rest of Great Britain is a matter for the my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales. Information is not held centrally on the corresponding figures for psychiatric beds where the staff are able to communicate with pre-lingually deaf patients.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the latest figures for the percentage of in-patient cases that have to wait for longer than one year in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the west midlands region, *(c)* the four Thames regions, *(d)* the North Staffordshire district health authority and *(e)* the district health authorities with the highest and lowest percentage figures in the west midlands region;

(2) if he will give the latest figures for the percentage of urgent in-patient cases that have to wait for longer than one month in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the west midlands region, *(c)* the four Thames regions, *(d)* the North Staffordshire district health authority and *(e)* the district health authorities with the highest and lowest percentage figures in the west midlands region.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much additional money will be allocated to the hospital service specifically for the purpose of cutting waiting lists; and what representations he has received from health authority managers regarding the amount that would be required for a significant improvement.

Mr. Newton: Health authorities have been asked to report by the end of this month on how the position on waiting lists and times can be improved. The Government consider that there is much scope for improving services to patients and reducing waiting times by management action to bring about better use of resources.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish a list of district health authorities in rank order according to the percentage figure of in-patients who have to wait for over a year for treatment;

(2) if he will publish a list of district health authorities in rank order according to the percentage of urgent in-patient cases who have to wait for over a month.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Irradiated Food

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make publicly available all the documentary comments on the report on the "Safety and Wholesomeness of Irradiated Foods" by the advisory committee on irradiated and novel foods which have been submitted to date to his Department for consideration; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many comments he has had from *(a)* individuals and *(b)* organisations on the report on the "Safety and Wholesomeness of Irradiated Foods" by the advisory committee on irradiated and novel foods published on 10 April; if he will list the organisations concerned; and if he will state what proportion of the comments were broadly in favour or against the report's recommendations;

(3) if he is now in a position to announce his conclusions on the findings contained in the report on the "Safety and Wholesomeness of Irradiated Foods" by the advisory committee on irradiated and novel foods; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Around 4,600 individuals and 117 organisations have commented. A summary of comments will be given to the advisory committee on irradiated and novel foods in December. Health and Agriculture Ministers will consider the report in the light of any further advice from the committee.

We do not intend, following standard practice, to publish all the thousands of comments received on the report, most of which raise similar points in similar terms. When making our views known, we will, however, also make available a summary of the main issues raised.

The majority of letters from individuals voice concern as to the safety of the process. Organisations offer varied views according to interest and scientific background. Common to all is the desire for effective and enforceable controls of the process and that irradiated food should be

clearly labelled. Several point out the dangers of active organisms in food and their risks to health which might be diminished following irradiation.

The list of the organisations is as follows:

Agricultural and Food Research Council, Institute of Food Research
Association of British Abattoir Owners Ltd.
Association of District Councils
Association of London Authorities
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Association of Public Analysts
Association of Sea and Air Port Health Authorities
Avon County Council
Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union
Ballymoney Borough Council
Bradford City Metropolitan Council
British Association for Holistic Health
British Food Manufacturing Industries Research Association
British Holistic Medical Association
British Housewives League
Brighton and Hove Consumer Group
British Retailers Association
British Veterinary Association
Burntwood Environment Group
Cambridge Health Authority
Campden Food Preservation Research Association
Cancer Help Centre—Bristol
Catering Industries Liaison Council
College of Homoeopathy
Consumers Association
Consumers in the European Community Group (UK)
Co-operative Union Ltd.
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Coventry Environmental Health and Consumers Services Department
Creamery Proprietors Association
South Cumbria Community Health Council
Dairy Crest Foods
East Birmingham Pensioners
Faculty of Community Medicine
Farm and Food Society
Federation of Agricultural Co-operatives (UK) Ltd
Food and Drink Federation
General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
General Foods Ltd
Green Party
Gwent County Council
Gwent District Council's Association
Haringey Borough Consumer Protection Service
Hertfoldshire County Council
Hyperactive Children's Support Group, Littlehampton
Institute of Food Science and Technology
Institute of Health Food Retailing
Institution of Mechanical Engineers
Institute of Trading Standards Administration
Isle of Wight County Council
Isotron PLC
Ken Bell (International) Ltd
Labour Party—Abergavenny
Labour Party—Carmarthen
Labour Party—Coventry North West
Labour Party—Llanfrechea
Labour Party—Monmouth
Labour Party—North Colchester
Lancashire County Council
League of Jewish Women
Lewisham Pensioners' Action Group
Liverpool Central and Southern Community Health Council
Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards (LACOTS)
London Fruiterers' and Florists Association Ltd.
Low Moor and Oakenshaw Community Association
Meat and Livestock Commission
Milk Marketing Board
Mushroom Growers' Association
National Cold Storage Federation
National Consumer Council
National Council of Women of Great Britain
National Farmers' Union
National Federation of Consumer Groups
National Federation of Fishmongers Ltd.
National Federation of Meat Traders
National Federation of Wholesale Poultry Merchants
National Federation of Women's Institutes (and local groups)
National Housewives Association Ltd.
Neath Borough Council
Nestle Co. Ltd.
Northern Health and Social Services Board (NI)
North Gwent Community Health Council
North Staffordshire Health Authority
North Tees Community Health Council
Nottinghamshire County Council
Ottery St. Mary Locality Planning Team
Oxford Environmental Health Department
Pembrokeshire Community Health Council
Quo-Tec Ltd.
Retail Consortium
Retail Fruit Trade Federation Ltd.
Retail Fruit Federation (Manchester and District Branch)
RHM Research ltd.
Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland
Royal Society of Health
Ryedale District Council
Salford Environmental Health and Control Department
Scottish Consumer Council
Sheffield Environmental Health and Consumer Services Department
Society of Chemical Industry
Soroptimist International of Rhondda and District
Southwark Public Protection Department
Spice Trade Association
Stepping Hill Hospital, Dietetic Department, Stockport
Swansea City Council
Swansea Valley—Friends of the Earth
Tesco Stores Ltd.
Totton and Eling Community Association
Townswomen's Guild—local groups
UK Federation of Business and Professional Women
Viritech Ltd.
Welsh Consumer Council
Welsh Counties Committee
Welshpool Women's Liberal Association
Whole Earth Foods Ltd
Women's Farming Union—West Midlands Branch
Worthing Children's Helpline

Primary Health Care (Hampstead)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the expenditure on primary health care in the Hampstead district health authority in the last three years; and what was the average for English district health authorities.

Mr. Newton: Following are the figures requested:

Expenditure on primary health care[1]

	1983-84		1984-85		1985-86[2]	
	Total £ million	Per head of population £	Total £ million	Per head of population £	Total £ million	Per head of population £
Hampstead Health Authority	9·8	93	10·7	101	11·2	105
Average for district health authorities in England		76		83		88

[1] Current expenditure on community health services plus net expenditure on family practitioner services. The latter expenditure cannot strictly be attributed to particular districts but has been included (pro rata to population) from the annual accounts of the family practitioner committees which account for it.
[2] Provisional figures.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of people in Dundee currently awaiting an appeal to a supplementary benefit tribunal; and what was the corresponding figure two years ago.

Mr. Lyell: Departmental figures are not available for areas smaller than a social security region. I suggest that the hon. Member writes to the president of social security appeal tribunals who, I understand, will be able to provide information on the number of appeals currently awaiting a hearing.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current waiting time for the result of an adjudication from a supplementary benefits tribunal in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Scotland as a whole; and what action he proposes to take to reduce these waiting times.

Mr. Lyell: The latest available statistics, which relate to the quarter ended 31 December 1985, show that the average length of time from lodgement of an appeal to tribunal hearing in supplementary benefit cases is 11·6 weeks in Scotland. Equivalents are not available for localities smaller than a social security region. We are concerned at the time taken to process appeals and a study has been commissioned to examine procedures. We are aware that the president of social security appeal tribunals is similarly concerned and is also examining procedures with a view to reducing waiting times.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons were classed as long-term unemployed for the purpose of receiving supplementary benefit 12 months ago, six months ago and at the latest available date; and if he will distinguish those persons receiving the long-term rate of supplementary benefit in each case.

Mr. Lyell: The number of supplementary benefit claimants unemployed for more than one year was 1,032,800 on 14 November 1985 and 1,027,700 on 8 May 1986.

The long-term scale rate is not normally payable to a claimant who is unemployed and subject to the condition of availability for work but at December 1984 there were 25,000 long-term unemployed claimants who were receiving the long-term scale rate either because they had a partner over 60 or because they were not required to be available for supplementary benefit purposes but had chosen none the less to claim as unemployed.

The dates given are the latest at which the information requested is available.

Rents

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much has been paid by his Department for rented accommodation for young persons in Scotland in the years 1984, 1985 and the latest available figures for 1986;

(2) what guidelines are issued to his Department's officials in Scotland in relation to the payment of rent to landlords for rooms tenanted by young persons;

(3) what checks are carried out by his Department's officials in Scotland when paying rent on behalf of young persons regarding the standard of declaration, the amount and condition of the furnishings and the availability of bathroom and toilet facilities; and whether regular checks are made on the properties for which rent is being paid;

(4) if he will conduct an investigation into allegations of overcharging by landlords for rooms tenanted by young unemployed persons whose rent is paid by his Department's offices in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: No information is available centrally on the amount of housing benefit paid to young people in Scotland for rented accommodation.

Help with rent is provided through the housing benefit scheme which is administered by local authorities. Authorities can restrict the amount of rent eligible for benefit in certain circumstances if they consider that the rent is unreasonably high.

Advice to local authorities on the use of their power to restrict benefit on unreasonably high rents is included in a guidance manual on housing benefits administration issued by the Department (a copy is in the Library), but it is for the responsible authority to decide what checks should be carried out to enable it to decide whether a restriction should be applied. We plan to strengthen local authorities' powers to prevent abuse of the revised housing benefit scheme from April 1988.

We have no plans to conduct an investigation into allegations of overcharging by landlords in Scotland for rooms tenanted by young people in receipt of housing benefit, but I hope that any specific evidence of abuse will be passed to the relevant local authority.

Methylene Chloride

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the permitted level of methylene chloride in decaffeinated coffee; if his Department has studied United States Food and Drug Administration surveys of the potentially harmful effects of methylene chloride in hairsprays; and if he will make a statement on the levels of methylene chloride permitted.

Mrs. Currie: We are advised that methylene chloride is a solvent with many uses, which includes the decaffeination of coffee. Any residue in the final coffee product must not exceed five parts per million.

The only recent research from the United States of America of which we are aware tested for carcinogenic effects on animals and was concerned with the effects of inhalation of methylene chloride in general, rather than hairsprays in particular. Whilst carcinogenic effects were indicated in animals exposed, the doses involves were vastly in excess of any which could be received from using a hairspray. Earlier studies of workers showed no adverse effects from methylene chloride.

We are awaiting further advice on the safety in use of methylene chloride in the light of these recent studies. There are at present no statutory limits on the amount of methylene chloride which hairsprays may contain. In the light of the independent advice received, it will be for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to consider any action which may be required.

Diabetics

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will arrange for plastic sugar level testing strips and plastic syringes to be available to diabetics on prescription; what representations he has received on this issue; what are the estimated net costs of making such items available on prescription; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Blood glucose testing strips and plastic syringes are already available to diabetics through the hospital service where clinically necessary. We have received many representations from hon. Members and others requesting that they be prescribed by general practitioners. In round terms, this would cost the family practitoner services about £15 million to £20 million a year. At present the necessary resources are not available, and in any event it would be necessary to consider priorities, bearing in mind the many other desirable developments to which any additional resources may be devoted.

Departmental Staffing and Claims

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will state the number of staff employed in his Department's local office in *(a)* August 1979 and *(b)* August 1986 in the Greater London area;

(2) if he will state the number of benefit claims in action, live load, in *(a)* August 1979 and *(b)* August 1986 in the Greater London area.

Mr. Lyell: Comprehensive figures are not available on the number of staff employed in the Department's offices within the Greater London area before April 1983. Some offices within the Greater London area deal with areas outside the Greater London area as the boundaries are not coterminous.

Information that is available is as follows:

	August 1979	*August 1983*	*August 1986*
Number of staff employed in the Greater London area	n.a.	9,402	9,942
Number of people receiving supplementary benefit[1]	446,589	658,564	775,227

[1] Based on a 100 per cent. count of cases in action in August.
n.a. = not available.

Direct comparisons between the number of staff and claims are misleading as workloads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the number of benefit claims awaiting processing, backlog, in *(a)* August 1979 and *(b)* August 1986 in the Greater London area.

Mr. Lyell: Figures for the number of claims awaiting action in local offices are not available for the period before 1983. On 30 August 1983, 21,691 claims for supplementary benefit were awaiting action in local offices serving the Greater London area. The comparable figure for 26 August this year was 38,712.

Training Programmes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if attendance on or completion of a course relating to the Government's restart programme or the proposed six-month training programme for the long-term unemployed under 25 years will affect entitlement to supplementary benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Geriatric Care

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many beds were available for geriatric care in the *(a)* public and *(b)* private sector in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985;

(2) how many geriatric patients were treated in *(a)* public and *(b)* private sector hospitals in each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not collected centrally in precisely the form requested. I shall let the hon. Member have the available information as soon as possible.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the number of beds available for geriatric care in British hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: There have been no recent formal representations from organised bodies about the number of beds available in geriatric units. We are in close consultation with regional health authorities concerning services for geriatric patients in their regions.

Mental Illness

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much money was made available by the Government for local authorities to provide for those suffering from mental illness in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985;

(2) how much money was spent by each local authority in providing care for those suffering from mental illness in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985 specifying the sum spent authority by authority.

Mrs. Currie: The Government do not allocate money to local authorities specifically for expenditure on services for mentally ill people. General support for expenditure is provided through the rate support grant system and it is for local authorities to determine levels of spending on specific services in the light of local circumstances and priorities within the overall framework of relevant Government policies and plans.

Some information about annual expenditure by individual local authorities on services for mentally ill people and figures on the numbers of places made available in day centres and residential accommodation by local authorities are published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy each year in "Personal Social Services Statistics: Actuals", copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients were readmitted to mental institutions within *(a)* 0 to one month, *(b)* one to three months, *(c)* three to six months, *(d)* six to 12 months, *(e)* one to two years and *(f)* two to three years of their original release in each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks as it is not available centrally. The hon. Member might like to write to the chairman of the regional health authority for the geographical area of his interest for further information.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding female psychiatric patients.

Mrs. Currie: We are not aware of any such recent representations. We are in close consultation with the regional health authorities concerning provision of psychiatric services for women and men in their regions.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the standard of community care for those released from mental institutions.

Mrs. Currie: We continue to receive a large number of representations about community care for mentally disordered people reflecting a very natural concern, which my right hon. Friend shares, that community care services should be comprehensive, flexible, accessible and acceptable. These concerns were well illustrated in the second report from the Social Services Committee published in January 1985, and in the Government response to that report. We pursue these concerns in the context of ministerial reviews with chairmen of regional health authorities and in other ways.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women were admitted to mental institutions in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mrs. Currie: The table shows the numbers of admissions of women to National Health Service mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units in England. Some women may have been admitted more than once during a year.

Admissions of women to mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units in England

Year	*Mental illness*	*Mental handicap*
1980	107,045	8,441
1981	110,551	9,876
1982	108,386	11,076
1983	110,668	13,837
1984	111,936	15,712
1985	116,429	17,281

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money was spent on mental institutions in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mrs. Currie: Costing returns submitted by health authorities in England show their total current expenditure on hospitals categorised as mental illness and mental handicap as:

Year	*Mental illness* £ *million*	*Mental handicap* £ *million*
1979-80	486·8	261·8
1980-81	625·0	339·2
1981-82	682·3	373·3
1982-83	718·4	399·8
1983-84	748·4	418·2
1984-85	788·8	440·7

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients were accommodated in mental institutions in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table:

Resident Patients at 31 December in National Health Service mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units in England

Year	*Mental illness* *Number*	*Mental handicap* *Number*
1980	74,830	44,440
1981	73,170	43,090
1982	70,880	41,710
1983	69,030	40,170
1984	66,050	38,370
1985	63,970	36,340

Radiotherapy

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he has provided to regional health authorities about the minimum numbers of new patients requiring radiotherapy treatment which should be the basis of an area radiotherapy unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 21 October 1986]: Guidance on the organisation of radiotherapy services for the treatment of cancer is contained in HC(78)32, a copy of which is in the Library. Further guidance is contained in a report an acute services for cancer by an expert working group of the standing sub-committee on cancer of the Department's standing medical advisory committee. This was sent to health authorities under cover of HN(84)23, a copy of which is also in the Library.

Both the guidance and the report on acute services for cancer draw attention to the variety of factors that health authorities will need to take into account. They envisage

that over 3,000 new cancer cases, a substantial proportion of whom will require radiotherapy, will arise annually from a population of one million, and that normally a population of one million is considered to be the smallest to produce a sufficient caseload for a clinically and economically viable ratiotherapy centre.

WALES

Rates

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the average unrebated domestic rate bill paid in each year since 1966 by householders in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is given in the following table:

Estimated average unrebated domestic rate bill (1)

	£
1966–67	32
1967–68	33
1968–69	34
1969–70	35
1970–71	37
1971–72	44
1972–73	47
1973–74	50
1974–75	34
1975–76	51
1976–77	59
1977–78	68
1978–79	77
1979–80	97
1980–81	127
1981–82	154
1982–83	183
1983–84	185
1984–85	202
1985–86	[2]221
1986–87	[2]253

[1] Figures for the period 1966–67 to 1973–74 are not compatible with those for 1974–75 and later years. This is due to changes in local authority responsibilities in 1974, in particular the transfer of water and sewerage services from local authorities to water authorities.
[2] Provisional.

Rate Support Grant

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amount of rate support grant paid to each local authority in Wales in each of the years from 1978-79 to 1986-87 expressed in constant 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Figures for each of the years from 1981-82 to 1986-87 are given in the table below. Prior to 1981-82 rate support grant arrangements were different and comparable figures for individual authorities are not available. Rate support grant consists of a block grant paid to all local authorities and a domestic rate relief grant which is paid to district authorities as a flat rate subsidy to reduce the level of rates including the county precept, paid by domestic ratepayers. The block grant figures for 1986-87 are the amounts that would be paid by scaling all authorities' block grant claims to the total available. Block grant entitlements will be revised by the forthcoming Welsh rate support grant supplementary reports for 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87. All figures are expressed in real terms at 1986-87 prices using the GDP (market prices) deflator.

Rate support grants paid to Welsh local authorities (£000)

Local Authority	*1981-82*		*1982-83*		*1983-84*		*1984-85*		*1985-86*		*1986-87*	
	Domestic rate relief	*Block grant*	*Domestic rate relief*	*Block grant*	*Domestic rate relief*	*Block grant*	*Domestic rate relief*	*Block grant*	*Domestic rate relief*	*Block grant*	*Domestic rate relief*	*Block grant*
Counties:												
Clwyd		98,423		101,655		97,217		95,111		93,667		92,142
Dyfed		87,296		90,728		90,909		87,270		81,895		86,902
Gwent		112,663		119,274		115,886		112,237		105,253		108,547
Gwynedd		63,011		63,987		63,833		61,664		58,494		59,349
Mid Glamorgan		168,544		169,138		163,310		159,920		155,735		158,645
Powys		39,562		43,073		42,088		39,643		38,326		38,371
South Glamorgan		78,847		85,477		81,166		75,579		71,292		68,066
West Glamorgan		87,973		95,455		90,446		88,284		86,928		86,721
Districts:												
Alyn and Deeside	1,871	2,782	900	2,961	868	2,822	844	2,685	804	2,512	778	2,586
Colwyn	1,505	2,430	720	2,544	698	2,473	679	2,168	648	1,986	633	2,111
Delyn	1,667	4,104	802	3,890	774	3,732	752	3,546	714	3,390	699	3,564
Glyndwr	914	2,093	441	1,968	428	2,037	414	1,808	396	1,693	386	1,798
Rhuddlan	1,496	2,962	711	2,817	688	3,109	666	2,906	635	2,757	616	2,903
Wrexham Maelor	2,552	6,011	1,234	5,233	1,197	5,304	1,161	4,833	1,111	4,895	1,078	5,103
Carmarthen	939	3,052	454	2,624	439	2,734	428	2,571	411	2,522	402	2,650
Ceredigion	1,251	3,093	606	3,031	588	3,029	571	2,685	544	2,785	533	2,922
Dinefwr	583	1,886	283	1,922	274	1,753	265	1,665	252	1,625	248	1,667
Llanelli	1,410	5,083	676	4,631	654	4,767	630	4,499	598	4,408	579	4,405
Preseli	1,318	2,738	634	2,732	614	3,038	596	2,797	566	2,833	553	3,025
South Pembrokeshire	857	939	413	1,217	400	1,096	388	815	369	1,122	363	1,215
Blaenau Gwent	1,354	6,481	648	6,556	628	6,534	603	6,672	569	7,080	550	7,025
Islwyn	1,167	4,542	569	4,139	550	4,375	533	4,077	505	4,143	492	4,843
Monmouth	1,741	3,063	845	3,033	817	3,033	812	2,641	776	2,472	763	2,595
Newport	3,485	5,670	1,672	5,802	1,622	6,143	1,556	4,241	1,477	5,040	1,440	6,091
Torfaen	1,948	5,557	935	4,907	903	4,848	875	4,923	833	4,651	814	4,521
Aberconwy	1,406	3,039	673	2,731	653	2,779	630	2,569	599	2,382	582	2,288
Arfon	1,006	3,549	489	3,593	476	3,463	464	3,039	440	2,732	431	2,541

Local Authority	1981-82		1982-83		1983-84		1984-85		1985-86		1986-87	
	Domestic rate relief	Block grant	Domestic rate relief	Block grant	Domestic rate relief	Block grant	Domestic rate relief	Block grant	Domestic rate relief	Block grant	Domestic rate relief	Block grant
Dwyfor	618	1,533	307	1,708	296	1,833	290	1,605	279	1,641	273	1,744
Meirionydd	785	1,388	380	1,722	368	1,874	357	1,259	339	1,619	329	1,722
Ynys Mon	1,350	3,329	753	3,320	731	3,647	712	2,946	682	2,655	668	2,757
Cynon Valley	964	5,282	461	5,354	446	4,995	431	4,657	408	4,604	397	4,888
Merthyr Tydfil	955	5,427	458	5,186	444	4,909	427	4,831	406	4,816	393	5,153
Ogwr	2,570	7,905	1,241	7,521	1,201	6,567	1,177	7,121	1,122	6,730	1,097	6,826
Rhondda	934	7,628	447	8,655	435	8,674	417	7,864	392	8,144	380	8,486
Rhymney Valley	1,825	8,443	877	7,471	847	6,963	822	6,636	780	6,345	759	6,444
Taff Ely	1,729	5,268	836	5,435	813	4,907	792	3,743	753	4,019	735	4,018
Brecknock	806	2,180	389	1,865	376	1,842	366	1,844	349	1,650	341	1,710
Montgomeryshire	982	2,073	482	2,151	468	2,413	459	2,093	441	1,889	433	2,091
Radnor	450	1,038	219	989	213	1,003	209	869	200	763	195	818
Cardiff	8,164	13,554	3,938	14,848	3,815	15,334	3,707	13,786	3,521	13,584	3,440	14,372
Vale of Glamorgan	2,949	4,433	1,426	4,433	1,384	4,092	1,351	3,553	1,293	3,191	1,272	4,009
Port Talbot	1,014	2,019	484	2,381	469	2,028	451	2,578	424	2,466	409	2,485
Lliw Valley	1,047	3,160	506	3,313	490	3,314	474	3,154	452	2,987	443	3,169
Neath	1,272	3,420	610	3,159	591	3,094	569	2,706	536	2,617	519	2,862
Swansea	4,338	12,127	2,079	11,193	2,011	12,623	1,946	11,820	1,833	12,939	1,776	13,260

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 24 October 1986

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Higher Education

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in tabular form the amount of money from public funds allocated to *(a)* the universities and *(b)* public sector institutions of higher education in each year from 1970 to the latest available date; and what this represents in terms of public expenditure per student in each case.

Mr. Walden: The following table shows the readily available information in respect of *(a)* central Government funding, plus home fee income, for the universities, and *(b)* estimated central and local government expenditure on public sector higher education net of income, except fees.

£ million cash *Financial Years*

Capital and current	*Outturn*					
	1979–80	*1980–81*	*1981–82*	*1982–83*	*1983–84*	*1984–85*
Universities (GB)	1,006	1,279	1,360	1,473	1,520	1,562
Open University (UK)	42	52	55	56	57	60
Public Sector higher education (England)	652	796	881	925	965	998

The following table gives the average cost per student based on net institutional expenditure. Broadly speaking, this consists of the above expenditure less capital, and central administration costs.

£ Cash

	1979–80	*1980–81*	*1981–82*	*1982–83*	*1983–84*	*1984–85*
Universities (GB)[1]	[2]3,350	4,125	4,285	4,550	4,905	5,210
Maintained higher education (England)						
Polytechnics	2,500	2,915	3,050	3,090	2,975	3,015
Other higher education	2,090	2,460	2,720	2,875	3,010	3,120

[1] Revised and on an academic year basis.
[2] Estimated.

Further Education Unit

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what role the further education unit will play in relation to the new National Council for Vocational Qualifications.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department is currently undertaking a review of the future of the further education unit, in the light of changes over recent years in the context of its work. One such change is the establishment of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. The Department's consultative document raises, as one possible option, a merger between the unit and the council. Irrespective of the outcome of that review, I am sure that the unit will have a considerable contribution to make to the research and development effort needed to support the council's activities the council has already commissioned some work from the unit.

Willesden College of Technology

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action has been taken to improve matters which were the subject of criticism by Her Majesty's inspectors reporting on their inspection of Willesden college of technology in November 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: In line with usual practice the Department has written to the local education authority and expects to hear by 21 November, 1986 what action it and the college governors are proposing to take in response to the report's findings on aspects of part-time FE professional courses in construction and engineering.

Mathematics and Science Teachers

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action is being taken to alleviate the shortage of qualified teachers in the subjects of mathematics and physics.

Mrs. Rumbold: Various measures to improve the numbers and quality of mathematics and physics teachers were set out in the consultative document "Action on Teacher Supply in Mathematics, Physics and Technology'. Since that document was published we have announced a new in-service teacher training grants scheme for 1987-88 which accords priority funding to mathematics and physics. Funds have been set aside to support specially-designed training courses in local authority higher education. From this autumn bursaries will be payable to postgraduate students training to teach mathematics and physics.

GCSE

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what Government funding is available to provide the necessary facilities for the new GCSE courses and examinations within the county of Avon.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government have directed substantial resources to ensure the smooth introduction of the GCSE, in addition to local education authorities' own plans. In support of expenditure for books and equipment in schools in Avon we have made available £251,200 through education support grants this year. A further £178,200 will be supported through ESG in 1987-88. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment in conjunction with the Manpower Services Commission has made a grant of £81,400 available to Avon for the provision of scientific and technological equipment in schools.

For the introductory GCSE in-service training programme, expenditure up to £132,260 has been supported in Avon. Under the new arrangements for in-service training in 1987-88, expenditure of £276,000 has been set aside to support the continuing training of teachers of the GCSE in schools and further education in Avon.

WALES

Mental Health Services (Gwynedd)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has received the Health Advisory Service's report on services for mentally ill people in Gwynedd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Yes. I fully recognise that the HAS report on services for mentally ill people in Gwynedd identifies many real problems and deficiencies which must be tackled. I am aware that both the Gwynedd district health authority and the county council's social services department accept the thrust of the report and the need for urgent action. They have already produced a consultative document setting out their strategy for adult mental health services in Gwynedd. I commend them for the promptness of their response. The development of locally based mental illness services is a complex process requiring the close co-operation of a number of authorities, including the county council, voluntary bodies and professionals from a number of disciplines.

I have decided in view of the relevance of the issues raised for the whole of Wales that a consultation paper should be prepared setting out the ways in which services for those who are suffering from mental illness can be further developed and improved. With regard to the response which is required locally, the Gwynedd and Clwyd district health authorities and the social services departments of the representative county councils have formed a joint planning team to plan the development of mental illness services in North Wales and this group will consider amongst other things the future of Gwynedd residents at North Wales hospital, Denbigh. Arrangements for these patients are the subject of major criticism in the report and a specific area in which HAS considers that my Department has a role to play. Officials of my Department will be in touch with the authorities in north Wales to review the plans and arrangements that they have already set in hand as well as to consider any further action that may be required.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade Statistics

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the average annual rate of increase in the EEC share of United Kingdom exports and imports on manufactures between 1972 and 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: The average annual rate of increase in the proportion of United Kingdom exports of manufactures going to the European Community between 1972 and 1985 was 0·7 per cent. For imports, the figure was 0·9 per cent.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of the United Kingdom market for manufacturers was taken by *(a)* the EEC six and *(b)* the EEC ten in 1975 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimated proportions are given in the table:

Share of United Kingdom Demand[1] (per cent.)

Imports from:	*1975*	*1985*
EC 6[2]	8	15
EC 10[3]	10	17

[1] Home demand for the principal products of manufacturing industry. Divisions 2-4 of the Standard Industrial Classification (Revised 1980).

[2] EC 6 comprises France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg.

[3] EC 10 comprises the EC 6 countries, plus Greece, Denmark, the Irish Republic and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the United Kingdom's share of EEC ten imports of manufactures in each year since 1980.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is:

United Kingdom share of European Community[1] imports of manufactures[2]

	per cent.
1980	8·5
1981	8·4
1982	8·0
1983	7·8
1984	7·9
1985	[3]8

[1] Excludes Portugal and Spain.

[2] Standard International Trade Classification Sections 5 to 8.

[3] Provisional estimate.

Source: OECD, EUROSTAT.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to what extent the UK/EEC balance of trade in manufactured goods has been offset by United Kingdom exports of fuels to the EEC.

Mr. Alan Clark: A comparison of United Kingdom exports of fuels to the European Community and our balance of trade in manufactures with the Community in recent years is in the following table.

United Kingdom with the European Community[1]
Balance of Payments basis £ million

	Exports of fuels[2]	*Visible balance manufactures*[3]
1977	1,250	−488
1978	1,404	−1,727
1979	2,779	−2,580
1980	4,355	−1,168
1981	5,702	−2,613
1982	6,466	−4,335
1983	8,412	−7,174
1984	10,045	−8,082
1985	11,676	−8,678
1986[4]	4,449	−7,860

[1] Present membership throughout.
[2] Standard international trade classification section 3.
[3] Standard international trade classification sections 5 to 8.
[4] January—September.
Source: Department Trade and Industry.

Furniture (Fire Regulations)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to review the regulations covering the fire resistance of fabrics used in the manufacture of household furniture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Teats (Safety Regulations)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will review the safety regulations concerning materials used in the teats of babies bottles and dummies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to ban the use of silicone substitutes in the teats of babies bottles and dummies; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has any plans to seek the incorporation of World Health Organisation standards on the composition of materials used in babies teats in a new British standard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Nissan

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has been involved in any discussions with the Nissan Motor Co. in the Houghton and Washington constituency regarding United Kingdom companies and tendering for materials in the manufacturing process.

Mr. Shaw: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further measures are being planned, following the implementation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement; if he will list them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I have placed in the Library the joint statements issued after each meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference. They list those things which have been discussed in conference as well as subjects for future discussion.

Francis Bradley (Shooting)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Brent, East on 16 June, *Official Report*, columns *434-5*, what has been the result of the investigation into the events leading to the shooting of Francis Bradley in county Derry on 18 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Paul Fitzgerald Smyth

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what precautionary and other action has been taken by the education and library boards, and by the Northern Ireland Office, following the conviction of Paul Fitzgerald Smyth, of Lisnaskea, who had been recruited for the Irish Republican Army by a woman teacher at his school.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Robert Bennett in South Tyrone on 7 September 1984; and if he will give details;

(2) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Malcolm Cullen in South Tyrone on 7 September 1984; and if he will give details;

(3) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Melvin Simpson in South Tyrone on 8 October 1984; and if he will give details;

(4) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have caused the death of Fred Jackson in South Tyrone on 19 October 1984; and if he will give details;

(5) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Peter W. Gallimore in Fermanagh on 19 October 1984; and if he will give details;

(6) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Jimmy Graham in Fermanagh on 1 February 1985; and if he will give details;

(7) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Hugh McCormac in Fermanagh on 3 March 1985; and if he will give details;

(8) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Robert Gilliland in Fermanagh on 21 June 1985; and if he will give details;

(9) what information he has as to whether anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Seamus McAvoy, a constituent of South Tyrone, shot in the Irish Republic on 20 August 1985; and as to details;

(10) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of George Gilliland in South Tyrone on 7 December 1985; and if he will give details;

(11) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of William J. Clements in South Tyrone on 7 December 1985; and if he will give details;

(12) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of John Early in Fermanagh on 3 February; and if he will give details;

(13) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of Derek Breen in Fermanagh on 11 February; and if he will give details;

(14) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of John McCabe in Fermanagh on 11 February; and if he will give details;

(15) if anyone has been made amenable for the murder claimed to have been committed by the Irish Republican Army of David Wilson in South Tyrone on 17 May; and if he will give details.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1986]: There have been convictions in relation to three of these deaths. One person was convicted of the manslaughter of Robert Bennett and Malcolm Cullen and another of conspiracy to murder in regard to the incident in which Frederick Jackson was killed.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General what steps he proposes to take to encourage recruitment to the ranks of the Crown prosecution service of *(a)* legally qualified staff and *(b)* non-legally qualified staff.

The Attorney-General: So far as legally qualified staff are concerned, the recruitment position in the Crown prosecution service nationally but excluding London is particularly encouraging and 82 per cent. of posts for legally qualified staff are filled. The position in London is gradually improving. Recruitment will continue to be organised by means of monthly competition advertised prominently in the legal sections of the national press and in legal journals. Considerable success was achieved in raising awareness of the Crown prosecution service as a consequence of the media launch to coincide with the official start date of 1 October. This seems to have been reflected in the number of candidates applying for legal posts in the current competition round. A total of 92 applications were received which represented an increase on previous rounds.

The position with regard to recruitment of non-legally qualified staff is that staff will continue to be engaged locally, as necessary, in respect of clerical grades. Recruitment levels for these grades are satisfactory and no special measures are necessary. Recruitment of executive officers, organised centrally by the Civil Service Commission, has produced a total of 162 staff since April 1986 out of a bid of 197. The remaining vacancies are expected to be filled within the next month.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General whether he proposes to reconsider the salary structure of the Crown prosecution service; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The salary structure of the Crown prosecution service is, with one exception, linked to that for the remainder of Civil Service. The exception is the grade of Crown prosecutor — the most junior grade for legally qualified staff. The salary structure for this grade has already been substantially improved from the original proposals and has also been subject to a general increase of approximately 6 per cent. as a consequence of the increase in the pay of Civil Servants operative from 1 April 1986.

The position is always under general review to ensure that the CPS is able to recruit and retain sufficient staff of requisite calibre but in the light of my previous reply today to the hon. Member I see no need for any special review of the salary structure at this stage.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General for what period of time he proposes that the temporary secondment from the Crown prosecution service in shire and metropolitan areas to London shall continue

The Attorney-General: The temporary secondment of prosecuting staff to London and other areas will continue to be necessary for some considerable time and it is not possible to estimate when it will end. The need for such secondment into these areas will be reviewed each month taking account of the current or anticipated levels of staffing and will be reduced as quickly as possible.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General what is the average monthly cost of the policy of secondment of Crown prosecution staff from the shire and metropolitan areas to London, including the cost of additional agents in the shire and metropolitan areas.

The Attorney-General: The average monthly cost of the policy of secondment of Crown prosecution lawyers from the metropolitan areas to London was approximately £17,000 for the six-month period to 30 September 1986. This figure includes an estimate of £9,000 for the cost of additional agents. Agents would have been employed in London in the absence of seconded lawyers and the £9,000 does not represent net additional expenditure. A small number of non-legally qualified staff were also seconded for a short time. Some prosecuting solicitors' department staff from shire counties worked for short periods in London prior to 30 September but they were not Crown prosecution staff at that time because the Crown prosecution service was fully established only on 1 October 1986.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General whether he has received any representations in respect of the differences between the pay structure of those who transferred as senior crown prosecutors and that of persons appointed senior crown prosecutors after transfer by way of the promotion boards; and what steps he proposes to take.

The Attorney-General: I understand a number of representations have been received by the Director of Public Prosecutions and his officials. The point has also been made by several staff in conversation with my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General who is presently undertaking a series of visits to CPS areas. Careful consideration is being given to this issue and a discussion paper proposing possible approaches to pay differences has been circulated to chief crown prosecutors and trades unions for urgent comment. It is proposed to review the response to the paper shortly and to implement any necessary action immediately thereafter.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General whether it is proposed that members of the Crown prosecution service shall be entitled to see the assessments made of them by their seniors when applying for consideration by the promotion boards; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service has recently implemented an agreement with the trades unions in respect of promotion boards. The agreement covers an interim period and includes the requirement for an application form to be completed by line managers to assess suitability for promotion to the next higher grade. The form devised for this purpose is not subject to any agreement which would entitle a member of staff to see the assessments made although line managers are encouraged to inform staff of the general tenor of their comments. It is proposed to introduce a staff appraisal report form for all staff, including the large number who have transferred from prosecuting solicitors departments of local authorities, and this will replace the application form with effect from 1 April 1987. In accordance with Civil Service procedures this form is designed to enable all staff to see the assessment of their performance and if desired, to be informed orally or in writing of promotability markings (but not detailed assessments).

Juvenile Courts

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General whether there are any proposals to create special juvenile court teams within each of the *(a)* London areas, *(b)* shire counties and *(c)* metropolitan areas; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: In the Inner London Crown prosecution service area a branch has been established whose principal function is to man the juvenile courts within that area. Elsewhere in England and Wales lawyers have been designated to co-ordinate administrative arrangements for juvenile case work and to take particular responsibility for ensuring that proper standards are applied. On designation those lawyers receive special training to assist them in the discharge of their duties.

PRIME MINISTER

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *179*, if she will state to which Government Minister British Nuclear Fuels Limited is responsible for the operation of its reactors at Calder Hall and Chapel Cross for the production of nuclear material for defence purposes.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to my previous answer. The operation of these reactors is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels. I also refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) on 3 June at column *466*.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EEC Budget

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out, by main expenditure heads, details of the 1986 EEC budget *(a)* as agreed by the Council in December 1985, *(b)* as approved by the Assembly and Commission and *(c)* as agreed after the judgment of the European Court; and if he will give similar details for the proposed 1986 supplementary budget and the draft 1987 budget.

Mr. Brooke: The information requested is in the table.

1986 Budget

payment appropriations mecu

	Draft Budget as agreed at the 26 November 1985 Budget Council	*Budget as voted by the European Parliament 12 December 1985*	*Including the preliminary draft Supplementary Budget No. 1 May 1986*	*Adopted Budget 10 July 1986*	*1987 Draft Budget 19 September 1986*
Total Budget	32,686	33,315	35,126	35,174	35,945
EAGGF Guarantee	21,012	21,012	21,927	22,112	22,961
EAGGF Guidance Chapters No. 30-34 and 46	738	773	873	768	884
Regional Fund	2,063	2,223	2,373	2,373	2,422
Social Fund	1,773	2,033	2,533	2,533	2,499
Overseas Aid	1,090	1,142	1,142	1,142	1,045

Excludes Ch 100 appropriations.

EEC Agricultural Policy

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what mechanism exists to ensure that common agricultural policy expenditure take a decreasing proportion of the EEC budget; if this principle holds good even if there are exceptional circumstances such as changes in the dollar/European currency unit rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Expenditure under the guarantee section of the European agricultural guarantee and guidance fund in the EC budget is constrained by the financial guideline. The methodology for calculating the guideline was set out in the meaures adopted by the Council of Ministers on 4 December 1984 to guarantee the effective implementation of the conclusions of the European Council on budgetary discipline. The financial guideline limits the increase in agricultural market support expenditure to no more than the rate of growth of the own resources base. The measures adopted by the Council make specific provision that account has to be taken of exceptional circumstances.

The ECOFIN Council on 7 July, reported in *Hansard* at column *195*, agreed that the limit on agricultural spending in 1986 could be increased by the

"amounts which can be justified mainly by the exceptional circumstances of the abnormally large depreciation of the dollar".

The United Kingdom Government have consistently argued for adherence to the financial guideline and will continue to do so in the future.

EMPLOYMENT

Coventry Climax

Mr. Park asked the Paymaster General what steps he proposes to take to alleviate the social consequences of Coventry Climax going into receivership.

Mr. Lee: I understand that the receiver hopes to sell the company as a going concern. All the facilities of the Manpower Services Commission will be available to help anyone who is made redundant find a new job or retraining.

Engineering Apprentices

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General how many engineering apprentices were taken on and made redundant, respectively, in each of the last 20 years for which records are available.

Mr. Trippier: The information is not available in the detail requested. There is no central record of all engineering apprentices, many of whom are employed outside the engineering industry.

However, the engineering industry training board has maintained a record of those trainees registering the basic craft and technician training. This record covers firms within scope of the board. Figures for the years 1966-67 to 1985-86 are given at table 1. In addition, since 1977, the board has maintained a record of those trainees employed by companies in other industries who choose to register their trainees with the board. This record, given at table 2, does not claim to include all engineering craft and technician trainees in industries other than engineering.

Formal records are not maintained of engineering apprentices who have been made redundant. However, since 1980 the engineering industry training board has kept a record of the number of redundant trainees who have come to its attention. This is given at table 3.

Table 1—Registration—in scope companies

Year	*Registrations*
1966-67	23,980
1967-68	27,539
1968-69	2[illegible],290
1969-70	2o,452
1970-71	26,589
1971-72	21,942
1972-73	16,788
1973-74	16,920
1974-75	23,496
1975-76	25,549
1976-77	23,994
1977-78	24,515
1978-79	24,519
1979-80	22,751
1980-81	20,044
1981-82	14,960
1982-83	10,886
1983-84	9,743
1984-85	9,140
1985-86	9,302

Source: EITB records.

Table 2—Registrations—other industries

Year	*Registrations*
1977-78	3,047
1978-79	3,239
1979-80	3,435
1980-81	3,109
1981-82	2,587
1982-83	2,002
1983-84	1,921
1984-85	1,181
1985-86	1,256

Source: EITB records.

Table 3—Redundant trainees

Training year	*Total redundant apprentices*
1980-81	2,959
1981-82	1,468
1982-83	1,031
1983-84	602
1984-85	172
1985-86	93

Source: EITB records.

ENERGY

Oil and Gas Licensing

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether the system of licensing oil and gas exploration operates at a net cost to public funds; and if he will give the most recently available figures.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: There is no net cost to public funds. Estimated costs of administration of the licensing system were of the order of £3·9 million in 1985-86. These costs were far exceeded by licence proceeds, principally royalty, which alone amounted to about £2 billion in 1985-86.

Sellafield

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy what change there has been in the number of visitors to British Nuclear Fuels' Sellafield nuclear site since May.

Mr. Goodlad: From May to September inclusive there were nearly 41,000 visitors to Sellafield. In the same period last year there were some 17,000 visitors.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. has asked Her Majesty's Government's permission to include public information material on its military rôle in the exhibition centre at Sellafield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 25 July at column 601.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply of 4 June, *Official Report*, columns 594-95, to the hon. Member for Penrith and the Border (Mr. Maclean), if he will set out the economic and organisational effects on the reprocessing of Magnox nuclear fuel of the United Kingdom-Euratom safeguards arrangements for Sellafield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy stated in his reply to the hon. Member for Penrith and the Border (Mr. Maclean) of 4 June 1986 at column *594-95*, the introduction of separate civil and non-civil Magnox fuel reprocessing operations will in future involve sequential rather than simultaneous procedures. British Nuclear Fuels plc will incur modest additional costs rendering escort and other assistance to Euratom inspectors.

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meironnydd Nant Conwy, 25 July, *Official Report*, column 602, he will set out the purposes for which the nuclear material withdrawn from safeguards was put; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The material in question was withdrawn from safeguards for defence purposes.

Fluidised Bed Combustion

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy if any overseas commercial scale orders or developments are known to his Department embodying the use of pressurised fluidised bed combustion based upon research carried out in the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department is not aware of any overseas commercial scale pressurised fluidised bed plants under construction or ordered based on research carried out in the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom holds a prominent position in the development of this technology in which there is considerable international interest. Work continues in this country particularly at Grimethorpe where further work is being supported by British Coal and the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Coal Production

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest level of coal production from collieries; and what output per man shift this represents.

Mr. David Hunt: Provisional figures for the week ending 4 October 1986 show a deep-mined output level of over 1·883 mt at an average output per manshift of 3·43 tonnes.

British Gas (Staffing)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what were the staffing levels of British Gas during each of the last five years; and what levels of staffing are forecast for each of the years to 1991-92.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Information covering previous years is published in the British Gas Corporation's annual report and accounts for 1985-86 a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Employment levels for future years are a matter for British Gas plc.

Acid Rain

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps will be taken to ensure that new coal-fired power stations will embody technological developments designed to reduce or eliminate acid rain.

Mr. Goodlad: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment recently announced, any future coal-fired power station will be required to be fitted with flue gas desulphurisation equipment to the requirements of the national industrial air pollution inspectorates. Discussions are now taking place between the industrial air pollution inspectorate and the CEGB about the necessary requirements for any future coal-fired power station in England and Wales.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Namibia

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent it is Her Majesty's Government's policy that Namibia should be included in and affected by measures by the United Kingdom directed against the Republic of South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Namibia is a separate issue and we would not necessarily apply against the territory of Namibia measures taken against the Republic of South Africa.

China

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to China.

Mr. Renton: From 12 to 18 October my right hon. and learned Friend accompanied the Queen on the first state visit to China by a ruling British monarch. It was a great success, with a magnificent welcome from the Chinese leadership and people. As Her Majesty made clear, the visit has set the seal on the warm friendship between our two countries and will provide a foundation for the building of even closer contacts.

My right hon. and learned Friend also had useful discussions with Chinese leaders on bilateral and international issues of mutual interest.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the question of the proposed Daya bay nuclear plant was discussed at his recent visit to China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: During his recent visit to China my right hon. and learned Friend discussed the proposed nuclear power plant at Daya bay with senior Chinese officials. They assured him that the Chinese Government are fully alive to the concerns of the Hong Kong people about safety aspects of the project. We shall remain in touch with the Chinese authorities on the subject, on our own behalf and on behalf of Hong Kong.

Gurkha Service men

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he discussed the dismissal of the Gurkha service men on his recent visit to Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend did not discuss this matter during his recent visit to Hong Kong. I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence on 21 October.

Diplomatic Bags

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many specific occasions he has ordered the scanning of diplomatic bags; on what dates such an order was given and such scanning carried out; and on the bags of which mission and with what results.

Mr. Eggar: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on sensitive matters such as this which directly concern national security.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will hold an inquiry into the effects of the Government's stated readiness to scan any diplomatic bag on a specific occasion where the grounds for suspicion are sufficiently strong and into whether the knowledge that he is prepared to do so has acted as a deterrrent to abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We keep application of the policy set out in the White Paper on Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges (Cmnd. 9497) under frequent review.

Visas

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will name the persons responsible for considering appeals against refusal of a visa by nationals of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh; and if these persons were in post on 15 October;

(2) if he will name, for each country concerned, the persons responsible for considering appeals against refusal of a visa to visit the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: There are no persons responsible for considering appeals against refusal of a visa in the countries concerned.

However, an entry clearance officer, in consultation at larger posts with his senior officer, reconsiders his decision in the light of the grounds of appeal put forward. If the entry clearance officer maintains his decision he prepares an explanatory statement which is forwarded to the independent appellate authorities in this country. Officers competent to undertake this role were in all entry clearance posts on 15 October.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidance given by his Department on the procedure for appeals against refusal of a visa to visit the United Kingdom; and in how many languages such guidance is available

Mr. Eggar: Yes. The guidance is available only in English, as has been the case since the coming into force of the Immigration Appeals Act 1969 in all entry clearance issuing posts. Where a refusal is handed to the applicant, the guidance is, where necessary, explained by the interpreter.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs if he will give a breakdown by British missions in each of the five visa countries of the numbers and categories of additional staff employed to deal with visa applications; and what is the total cost involved to date.

Mr. Eggar: The total planned reinforcement of visa sections in the five countries is in the following table:

Nigeria
Lagos
1 First Secretary
2 Second Secretaries
12 Entry Clearance Officers
7 Clerical and Secretarial Support Staff plus
15 Locally Engaged Staff

Kaduna
1 Second Secretary
3 Entry Clearance Officers
4 Clerical and Secretarial Support Staff plus
3 Locally Engaged Staff

Ghana
Accra
1 Entry Clearance Officer plus
3 Locally Engaged Staff

Bangladesh
Dhaka
4 Entry Clearance Officers plus
19 Locally Engaged Staff

India
New Delhi
2 Second Secretaries
4 Entry Clearance Officers plus
14 Locally Engaged Staff

Bombay
1 Second Secretary
4 Entry Clearance Officers
1 Clerical Support Staff plus
11 Locally Engaged Staff

Calcutta
1 Entry Clearance Officer
1 Clerical Support Staff plus
4 Locally Engaged Staff

Madras
3 Entry Clearance Officers plus
6 Locally Engaged Staff

Pakistan
Islamabad
1 Second Secretary
5 Entry Clearance Officers plus
15 Locally Engaged Staff

Karachi
1 Second Secretary
7 Entry Clearance Officers
1 Clerical Support Staff plus
15 Locally Engaged Staff

Locally engaged staff include interpreters, counter reception staff, clerks, typists and telephonists.

Actual current costs are not yet available but it is estimated that start-up costs of £4.8 million will be incurred in the current financial year, with annual recurrent costs of £14 million (at current prices) thereafter.

President Kurt Waldheim

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations *(a)* he has made and *(b)* he proposes to make to the Austrian Government following President Waldheim's installation as commander-in-chief of the Austrian armed forces in the light of the provisions of article 12 of the Austrian state treaty of 15 May 1955 in relation to membership of Nazi organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None.

NATO (Visits)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list in the *Official Report* those groups which visited the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organisation headquarters from the United Kingdom in 1985 and in 1986 to the nearest convenient date; what groups propose to visit for the rest of the current year; what was the cost of each visit; and upon whom the cost fell.

Mr. Renton: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible, and place copies in the Library.

DEFENCE

Portsmouth Harbour (Dredging)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of the special dredging of Portsmouth harbour to allow the USS Iowa to enter the harbour after Exercise Northern Wedding.

Mr. Stanley: No special dredging was carried out for the visit of the USS Iowa. A continual programme of maintenance dredging is carried out throughout the year to maintain the depths shown in Admiralty chart 2629. The recent dredging was part of this programme.

COD Donnington

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what method and period of consultation is planned with interested parties on the plans for contractorisation at COD Donnington after the feasibility study is completed.

Mr. Freeman: In accordance with our normal procedure the Department's proposals would be set out in a consultative document as a basis for discussion with the departmental trade union sides. In the first instance they will be asked to comment within 28 days.

Plutonium and Tritium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has held, or has any intention of holding, discussions with the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc on the provision of *(a)* plutonium and *(b)* tritium, to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Defence Ministers have not held any discussions with the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc concerning the provision of plutonium or tritium, and have no plans to do so.

Defence-related Work (Scotland)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are employed in places in Scotland at which work related to the strategic nuclear deterrent is carried out.

Mr. Archie Hamilton [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1986 c. 818]: On 1 July 1986 the MOD employed 1,746 civilians at Coulport, 1,701 at Faslane and 7,868 at Rosyth dockyard. No figures are available for other places in Scotland where work related to the strategic nuclear deterrent is carried out.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are employed in defence-related work in Scotland

Mr. Archie Hamilton [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1986, c. 818]: Estimates of the total number of jobs in United Kingdom industry sustained by defence expenditure are derived from generalised statistical information. It is not possible to give a separate figure for Scotland. On 1 July 1986 19,701 United Kingdom service personnel and 17,934 MOD civilian staff were deployed in Scotland.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police (National Memorial)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what support he is giving to the proposed national memorial in St. James park to police officers killed on duty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This proposal has been made by the Police Memorial Trust, a privately funded charity, to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has told him that the proposal has his full support.

Probation Service

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the study of the case for devolving to the probation service responsibility for administering and financing the present scheme of probation and bail hostels and of grant-aiding voluntary after-care projects to be completed; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I am considering, in the light of the responses to the consultative document which the Home Office issued earlier this year to all those with an interest in this subject, how this study might now be carried

forward. I would not, however, envisage any such fundamental changes to the present arrangements taking effect before the 1988-89 financial year.

Extradition

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Her Majesty's Government propose to ratify the Council of Europe convention on extradition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The white paper "Criminal Justice: Plans for Legislation" (Cmnd. 9658) explained that the proposals for extradition law reform would, if enacted, enable the United Kingdom to become a party to the convention.

Sporting Events (Alcohol)

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the revised regulations governing the consumption of alcohol in private boxes at designated sporting activities will take effect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hogg: The necessary amendments to the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985 are contained in Schedule 1 to the Public Order Bill. I cannot yet give a date for bringing the schedule into effect.

Visitors

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for each of the last 10 weeks how many visitors have come from *(a)* India, *(b)* Pakistan and *(c)* Bangladesh, respectively; and in each week and for each country how many have been (i) permitted to enter, (ii) temporarily detained, (iii) returned immediately, (iv) given temporary admission and (v) been subject to a Member of Parliament's stop.

Mr. Waddington: The information is not available in the form requested to answer parts *(a)*, *(b)*, *(c)*, (i), (iii), (iv), and (v). Information readily available to answer (ii) refers only to persons arriving at Heathrow and Gatwick airports. The following table shows details of nationals of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh who were detained for further examination between 6 August and 15 October 1986.

	India	*Pakistan*	*Bangladesh*
August			
6	17	0	4
7	19	16	2
8	31	8	22
9	31	15	4
10	77	28	22
11	25	8	0
12	35	27	40
13	14	10	3
14	35	17	1
15	20	5	25
16	32	18	4
17	42	27	0
18	19	10	3
19	26	6	9
20	28	6	6
21	21	11	1
22	22	10	5
23	21	15	8
24	45	17	21
25	19	19	0
26	31	16	18
27	15	6	9
28	16	13	0
29	14	7	52
30	16	14	5
31	18	7	32
September			
1	19	16	10
2	19	27	33
3	50	9	5
4	34	16	4
5	25	9	33
6	49	30	4
7	54	27	29
8	44	27	2
9	22	69	39
10	47	14	6
11	24	38	3
12	35	16	28
13	39	29	9
14	56	26	51
15	41	38	3
16	27	60	120
17	30	5	5
18	24	26	3
19	40	8	45
20	47	22	8
21	77	42	82
22	37	31	4
23	31	49	46
24	43	14	17
25	55	59	2
26	42	9	73
27	91	41	11
28	100	76	212
29	99	61	3
30	81	73	188
October			
1	43	15	32
2	24	34	4
3	16	123	130
4	34	22	47
5	46	39	81
6	40	32	4
7	17	80	213
8	45	11	38
9	31	65	2
10	48	34	166
11	62	61	59
12	102	60	160
13	74	165	371
14	209	206	580
15	25	11	3

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will give a breakdown by *(a)* country of origin and *(b)* date of entry into the United Kingdom of all those currently detained;

(2) if he will state the number and country of origin of visitors from the five visa countries who arrived in the United Kingdom up to and including 15 October who are still detained.

Mr. Waddington: The information readily available relates to passengers from the five countries who arrived at terminal 3, Heathrow in the period 11-15 October 1986 and, as at midnight 22 October, was as follows:

Nationality	Number currently detained
Bangladesh	56
Ghana	1
India	17
Nigeria	1
Pakistan	12

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors from the five visa countries who have sponsors residing in Newham are currently detained.

Mr. Waddington: No record of sponsors' addresses is maintained centrally. Of the passengers arriving at the Heathrow and Gatwick airports from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Ghana and Nigeria since 1 October 1986 who are currently detained, three are known to have sponsors residing in Newham.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors arriving at Heathrow and Gatwick airports between 6 and 15 October from the five visa countries gave an address of a sponsor living in the London borough of Newham.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what countries and organisations were officially notified of the visa requirements for India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ghana and Nigeria prior to 15 October, and which of those countries and organisations expressed *(a)* support and *(b)* opposition.

Mr. Waddington: Representatives of the Governments of Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Pakistan and Nigeria were informed when the decision to change visa requirements was announced. We wrote to the following organisations with an information leaflet about the changes:

Members of the Home Secretary's Advisory Council on Race Relations.
All Community Relations Councils in England, Wales and Scotland.
Advice Services Alliance
British Council of Churches.
British Refugee Council.
Commission for Racial Equality.
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants.
National Association for the Care and Welfare of Offenders.
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.
National Association of Community Relations Councils.
National Union of Students.
Representative for the United Kingdom of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
United Kingdom Council of Overseas Students Affairs.
United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service.

We do not keep lists of comments which have been made.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give a daily breakdown of the number and category of immigration officers who were present at London airports from the date of his announcement of a visa regime on 6 October and 15 October when it was implemented.

Mr. Waddington: The information relating to immigration officers and chief immigration officers on duty at the four Heathrow terminals and Gatwick airport for the period in question is:

	Immigration Officers	Chief Immigration Officers
6 October	383	53
7 October	388	54
8 October	348	52
9 October	371	51
10 October	361	53
11 October	405	56
12 October	445	59
13 October	394	55
14 October	435	57
15 October	392	56

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional advice services were provided at Heathrow and Gatwick airports between 6 and 15 October to assist sponsors of intending visitors from the five visa countries.

Mr. Waddington: Special arrangements were made at terminal 3 for representatives of the Bangladesh and Indian high commissions, and Pakistan embassy to have unrestricted access to their nationals who were detained in the control areas and to visit them at detention centres. At terminals 2, 3 and 4 periodic situation reports were passed to waiting sponsors either by immigration staff direct or via the airport public address system.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many telephone lines were made available between 6 and 15 October for the use of sponsors inquiring about visitors arriving from the five visa countries at Heathrow and Gatwick airports; what telephone number was given; to whom they were connected; how many staff were available between 6 and 15 October to answer inquiries and between what hours; and how many telephone calls were received.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is set out in the table:

		Public exchange numbers	Number of lines available	Other available numbers	General arrangements	Number of staff dedicated to answering telephone enquiries	Hours of availability
Heathrow	Terminal 1	01 897 1282 01 857 2731	2	Airport Information Desk has a facility to make calls on the airport internal network	Calls are answered by any available member of staff	None	24 hours

		Public exchange numbers	Number of lines available	Other available numbers	General arrangements	Number of staff dedicated to answering telephone enquiries	Hours of availability
	Terminal 2	01 897 3129 01 897 3120	3	Airport Information Desk has a facility to make calls on the airport internal network	During normal office hours calls are answered by a clerical assistant who diverts callers to the appropriate officer/ extension	One	0900-1700
					After 2200 calls will be answered by any available member of staff		1700-0900
	Terminal 3	01 897 9631	15	Two telephones are available in the public concourse providing a direct link to the Immigration Office switchboard	Switchboard operators divert calls to appropriate officer/ extension	Total 3 per day (2 on 8 October)	0700-2100
					Calls are diverted to the officer dealing with the individual case	Number available varies in accordance with workload	
					In addition 2 officers are available during each shift period to deal with general enquiries	Total six per day	
					At night an immigration officer mans the switchboard and deals with all callers	One	2100-0700
	Terminal 4	01 897 7261	8	A free telephone is available in the sponsors/ appointments area direct to the Immigration Office switchboard	A switchboard operator is on duty to divert calls to the appropriate IS officer	Two per day	0700-2100
					A night service is provided and calls are answered by any available officer		2100-0700
Gatwick		0293 502019	2	A telephone is provided in the public concourse giving a direct link to the Immigration Office. Another is available at the BAA Information desk with the same facility	The Immigration Office does not have its own switchboard. It is served by the airport network		
					The Immigration Service Duty Officer receives all calls on the number shown and diverts callers to the appropriate officer/ extension	4 per day	0700-2100
					A night service is provided and calls are answered by any available officer		2100-0700

Note: The number or nature of incoming telephone calls is not recorded.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for every day between 6 and 15 October the number of visitors interviewed from the five visa countries at ports of entry throughout the United Kingdom; what were the countries of origin of each visitor; how many were allowed to enter the United Kingdom as *(a)* regular visitors and *(b)* on temporary admission; and how many were refused admission.

Mr. Waddington: Information on the number and nationality of passengers seeking or given entry as visitors to the United Kingdom or of the number of such passengers given temporary admission between 6 and 15 October is not available.

The number of passengers refused entry by nationality at Heathrow and Gatwick airports is given in the table and includes passengers who sought entry for any purpose.

	India	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Nigeria	Ghana
6 October	12	6	3	3	2
7 October	7	20	48	3	1
8 October	12	4	12	4	6
9 October	23	12	3	2	9
10 October	17	4	48	3	4
11 October	17	21	33	10	6
12 October	21	32	79	2	4
13 October	14	8	66	4	1
14 October	18	34	66	1	0
15 October	36	27	30	6	10

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give a breakdown of the number of visitors from each of the five visa countries detained at the port of entry in the United Kingdom for every day from 1 September to 15 October.

Mr. Waddington: The available information relates to the number of passengers of the five given nationalities who were required to submit to further examination at Heathrow and Gatwick airports between the dates quoted and were detained pending their examination at the port. The figures include passengers who sought entry for any purpose.

	India	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Nigeria	Ghana
1 September	19	16	10	9	5
2 September	19	27	33	11	17
3 September	50	9	5	16	5
4 September	34	16	4	22	4
5 September	25	9	33	14	12
6 September	49	30	4	16	26
7 September	54	27	29	16	1
8 September	44	27	2	16	12
9 September	22	69	39	18	13
10 September	47	14	6	19	8
11 September	24	38	3	20	8
12 September	35	16	28	19	5
13 September	39	29	9	25	25
14 September	56	26	51	25	1
15 September	41	38	3	13	5
16 September	27	60	120	26	16
17 September	30	5	5	18	4
18 September	24	26	3	20	3
19 September	40	8	45	15	16
20 September	47	22	8	26	16
21 September	77	42	82	11	1
22 September	37	31	4	11	12
23 September	31	49	46	7	15
24 September	43	14	17	10	16
25 September	55	59	2	11	5
26 September	42	9	73	17	6
27 September	91	41	11	32	14
28 September	100	76	212	31	3
29 September	99	61	3	37	1
30 September	81	73	188	9	19
1 October	43	15	32	16	1
2 October	24	34	4	12	3
3 October	16	23	130	0	5
4 October	34	22	47	4	10
5 October	46	39	81	8	4
6 October	40	32	4	4	3
7 October	17	80	213	4	16
8 October	45	11	38	4	7
9 October	31	65	2	5	4
10 October	48	34	166	2	8
11 October	62	61	59	13	13
12 October	102	60	160	7	8
13 October	74	165	371	3	1
14 October	209	206	580	4	21
15 October	25	11	3	5	4

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date he advised right hon. and hon. Members of the visa requirements for India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ghana and Nigeria; and what information he gave them about the new procedures.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. Friend announced the changes in visa arrangements on 1 September and since then I have written to a number of right hon. and hon. Members. My right hon. Friend made a statement on 21 October. A copy of an information leaflet about the new procedures is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors to Britain who were refused leave to enter since the introduction of the visa regime were detained in one of Her Majesty's prisons; what was the duration of their imprisonment; what criteria his Department operated in order to decide which visitors were accommodated in hotels and which were put in prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The information readily available relates to Heathrow and Gatwick airports. No citizen of Bangladesh, India or Pakistan refused leave to enter at these airports since the introduction with effect from 15 October of the visa regime has been detained in prison.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors arrived at Heathrow terminal 3 on 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 October; and how many arrived in October 1985.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1986, c. 799]: Figures of admissions of visitors are compiled only on a monthly basis. A total of 137,000 non-EC foreign nationals were admitted as visitors at Heathrow terminal 3 in October 1985; the corresponding figure for October 1986 will not be available until early in the new year.

Mr. John Stalker

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the date on which the inspectorate of constabulary became aware of allegations against the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester; if he will give details of what action was taken by the inspectorate of constabulary at the time of this information; and if he will give details of what discussions took place between the inspectorate of constabulary and Greater Manchester police prior to the suspension of the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary was advised in October 1985 of the existence of information alleging that a relationship might exist between the deputy chief constable and certain persons whose activities were under investigation in Greater Manchester. No evidence was available to justify any action in respect of this information until May 1986. At that time the Inspectorate advised on the appointment of the chief constable of west Yorkshire to carry out the investigation instituted by the Greater Manchester police authority into the allegations. The decision to suspend the deputy chief constable from duty was taken by the police authority and approved by the Police Complaints Authority.

Visas

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state, in respect of each country concerned, the number of appeals against refusal of a visa to visit the United Kingdom which were *(a)* received and *(b)* upheld in 1985.

Mr. Waddington: The available information relates to appeals by persons refused an entry certificate or visa to the United Kingdom for any temporary purpose, analysed by broad nationality groups, and is given in the following table.

Appeals in 1985 by persons refused an entry certificate or visa to the United Kingdom for temporary purposes

Number of persons

	Nationality					
	Bangladesh or India	*Pakistan*	*EEC*	*Other Commonwealth*	*Other foreign*	*All nationalities*
Appeals to Adjudicators						
Referred[1]	208	33	2	488	496	1,227
Allowed[2]	64	5	1	95	186	351
Appeals to Tribunal by applicants						
Referred[1]	8	1	—	10	8	27
Allowed[2]	—	—	—	4	4	8
Appeals to Tribunal by Entry Clearance Officers						
Referred[1]	1	—	—	1	2	4
Allowed[2]	1	—	—	1	1	3

[1]Including appeals which were subsequently withdrawn before determination and appeals over which the immigration appellate authorities had no jurisdiction.

[2]Appeals allowed in 1985 had not necessarily been referred in 1985.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for visas by nationals of Pakistan, Bangladesh and India have been received by Her Majesty's diplomatic missions in Saudi Arabia; and how many have been granted.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not available centrally.

ENVIRONMENT

Air Pollution

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the monitoring and enforcement of controls on industrial air pollution by the industrial air pollution inspectorate.

Mr. Waldegrave: Details of the industrial air pollution inspectorate's performance in monitoring and enforcing controls on industrial air pollution are published each year in the chief inspector's annual report. The latest report "Industrial Air Pollution, Health and Safety 1985", was publised by HMSO for the Health and Safety Executive on 15 October. Copies are available in the Library.

Rates

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average unrebated domestic bill in England, excluding local authority hereditaments, in each year since 1973.

Mr. Chope: Average rate bills of all properties, are:

Average unrebated domestic rate bills in England

	pounds
1973-74	60
1974-75	77
1975-76	94
1976-77	103
1977-78	119
1978-79	131
1979-80	155
1980-81	199
1981-82	245
1982-83	282
1983-84	303
1984-85	323
1985-86	351
1986-87	400

Comprehensive records excluding local authority hereditaments are not held centrally. The available data suggest that average unrebated domestic rate bills of non-local authority hereditaments are slightly higher than the average of all properties.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give figures to show, for each year since 1973, the average level of domestic rates, net of rate relief, payable as a percentage of gross household income, excluding those households where rebates are received.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is not held centrally. Following are the available United Kingdom figures for domestic rate income, gross of rebates, as a percentage of gross household income.

Rate income as a percentage of gross household income

	per cent.
1974-75	2·0
1975-76	2·1
1976-77	2·0
1977-78	2·1
1978-79	2·0
1979-80	2·0
1980-81	2·2
1981-82	2·5
1982-83	2·6
1983-84	2·6
1984-85	2·6
1985-86	2·6

TRANSPORT

Bus Industry

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress of deregulation in the bus industry.

Mr. Moore: Deregulation has got off to a very good start. Service levels have been largely maintained, but there have been substantial savings in local authority subsidy, thanks to the introduction of competitive tendering. New forms of service have been introduced, including minibuses (by the end of the year the National Bus Company expects to be running 3,000 minibuses) and taxi buses (over 50 such services have been registered). Progress has been made with the privatisation of the National Bus Company as a series of separate subsidiaries, to promote competition; four subsidiaries have been sold already, three to a management buy-out. I am confident that deregulation will mean a better deal for those who depend on local bus services for transport, after many years of decline.

British Rail

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Railways.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend last met the BR chairman on 6 October.

National Bus Company

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the price obtained from the selling of the Badgerline, a National Bus Company subsidiary; and what was the estimated value of the assets sold;

(2) which subsidiaries of the National Bus Company have now been sold; and what selling price was obtained for each company and the individual company assets in each case.

Mr. Moore: So far, the National Bus Company has sold four of its subsidiaries: National Holidays Ltd., Devon General Ltd., Badgerline Ltd., and Southern Vectis Omnibus Company Ltd. The prices obtained in individual sales are confidential while sales are in progress. I shall report to the House in due course the aggregate proceeds of sale.

A423 (Stubbings Bypass)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, column *452*, when he is likely to make a decision regarding the A423 Stubbings bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The inspector's report is being considered. We hope to make an announcement during the first half of next year.

Uttoxeter Bypass

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make an additional allowance to Staffordshire county council for the construction of a bypass of Uttoxeter.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Staffordshire county council's current transport policies and programme includes an A518 bypass of Uttoxeter in a list of schemes to be undertaken in the medium to long-term. Assessment of relative priorities is a matter for it.

SCOTLAND

Hardwoods

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the promotion of greater self-sufficiency in hardwoods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The Government's policy for Britain's broadleaved woodlands was set out in a written statement made to the House on Wednesday 24 July 1985, columns 557-61, by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger)

Forestry Commission

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received concerning the large scale sale of Forestry Commission-owned forests.

Mr. Rifkind: Since 1 July 1986, my right hon. and learned Friend and his colleagues in the Scottish Office have received nine letters on various aspects of the Forestry Commission's sales programme.

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will ask the Forestry Commission to consult the Scottish Development Department on the protection of ancient monuments and historic sites;

(2) if he will make it his policy to prevent ancient monuments being lost through forest planting schemes.

Mr. Rifkind: The present procedures for safeguarding ancient monuments and historic sites against loss or damage by forestry planting schemes are being examined jointly by the Scottish Development Department and the Forestry Commission to see whether improvements can be made.

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on Government policy concerning the sale of Forestry Commission-owned forests in the Borders region;

(2) if he will make it his policy to conduct full inquiries into the social, economic and environmental implications of any proposal to sell off Forestry Commission-owned forests in the borders region.

Mr. Rifkind: The main purpose of the sale of land by the Forestry Commission, in the Borders region and elsewhere, is to enable the commission to rationalise its estate with a view to improving its efficiency and the commercial effectiveness of the forestry enterprise. It is the forestry commissioners who select the land to be sold, taking account of ministerial guidelines which include factors of the kind the right hon. Member has in mind. These guidelines were set out in appendix V to the commissioners' 62nd annual report (1981-82), copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Broadleaved Woodlands

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to monitor the effectiveness of the various broadleaved assistance schemes in reversing the decline of deciduous woodland in the borders region.

Mr. Rifkind: New measures for maintaining and enhancing broadleaved woodlands were announced by my right hon. Friend, the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) on Wednesday 24 July 1985 at columns *557-61*. He indicated that the Forestry Commission had been asked to report regularly on the operation and effectiveness of these measures and that they would be reviewed after some three years.

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to prevent any further reduction of ancient broadleaved woodland areas by conversion to coniferous sites in the borders region.

Mr. Rifkind: In a statement on broadleaved woodlands made to the House on Wednesday 24 July 1985, columns *557-61*, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) indicated that one of the objectives of the Government's policy was to ensure that the special interest of existing ancient semi-natural woodlands was recognised and maintained.

Forestry and Woodlands

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will carry out a feasibility study concerning the establishment of a nature conservation and landscape strategy in relation to forestry and woodlands in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The Forestry Commission maintains close contacts at national and local level with the Nature Conservancy Council, the Countryside Commission for Scotland, local authorities and a number of voluntary conservation organisations, with a view to ensuring that, as far as possible, forestry developments in Scotland are in harmony with the landscape and reflect the needs of nature conservation. The commission also liaises on a regular basis with the Scottish Development Department. I am not persuaded that any new initiatives are required.

Ancient Monuments

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to ensure that detailed designs of planting and drainage are devised in relation to ancient monuments on Forestry Commission land.

Mr. Rifkind: It is already Forestry Commission policy to plan forest work such as planting, soil cultivation and drainage, so as to safeguard known ancient monuments and their surroundings.

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures are being taken to preserve public access to ancient monuments in Forestry Commission sites and those Forestry Commission sites that have been privatised.

Mr. Rifkind: It is already the Forestry Commission's general policy to allow public access to ancient monument sites on its land. It does not impose public access conditions in the titles of land it sells, and there is no evidence to suggest that the majority of purchasers act unreasonably with regard to continuing public access.

Forestry Schemes

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make it his policy to encourage private forest companies to include recreational provision in their planting schemes;

(2) if the Forestry Commission will consult the Scottish Development Department on the inclusion of recreation provision in any large scale forestry grant scheme.

Mr. Rifkind: Applicants for grant under the Forestry Commission's forestry grant scheme and broadleaved woodland grant scheme are already required to accept as an objective that they should provide such opportunities for recreation, including provision for public access, as may be appropriate. Any necessary consultations on these matters are carried out by the Forestry Commission with the relevant local authority and the applicant at the time that the grant application is received, and the Scottish Development Department would not normally be involved. I see no reason to modify these arrangements.

Forestry (Access)

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to preserve current, and encourage future, new public access to Forestry Commission land and privatised forest sites.

Mr. Rifkind: Subject to any legal or safety constraints, the commission's forests are open to the public on foot.

It is not the commission's practice to impose public access conditions on the sale of land, other than those which are already in the title; there is no evidence, however, to suggest that the majority of purchasers act unreasonably with regard to public access.

Forestry Commission Roads

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the linking of Forestry Commission roads with the public road system in respect of weight restrictions on the public roads.

Mr. Rifkind: Where weight restrictions on public roads are of a permanent nature, the Forestry Commission plans its network of forest roads to avoid the restricted roads wherever possible. If the restrictions are temporary, the maximum use is made of forest roads where these can provide reasonable alternative access, but the commission's operational efficiency can be affected if these restrictions are for long periods.

Timber

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make data available on projected future output levels of timber, classified by major forests in the Scottish Borders.

Mr. Rifkind: For the three Forestry Commission forest districts of Lothian and Tweed, Borders and Lockerbie, the forecast of average annual timber production is as follows:

Cubic metres

Period	*Lothian and Tweed*	*Borders*	*Lockerbie*	*Total*
1987-1991	40,000	86,000	54,000	180,000
1992-1996	58,000	118,000	77,000	253,000
1997-2001	103,000	98,000	83,000	284,000

It is not possible to forecast accurately the production from privately owned forests, but the equivalent figures for the whole of the private sector in the Forestry Commission's south Scotland conservancy are as follows:

	cubic metres
1987-1991	306,000
1992-1996	424,000
1997-2001	598,000

Re-Chem International

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date he received a transcript of the Re-Chem International log book of 28 May 1984, detailing the operations of its chemical waste disposal plant at Roughmute, Bonnybridge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: A transcript of the Re-Chem International log book of 28 May 1984 is contained in the dossier compiled by Dr. Jonathan Wills and submitted to the Scottish Office by Mr. Alex Falconer MEP on 28 January 1986.

Pollution

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West on 29 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *467*, he will detail the difference in standards between manufacturers' instructions and specifications and the best practicable means as set out by Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate.

Mr. Ancram: Manufacturers' design specifications and instructions for plant which they supply must meet the best practicable means requirement for the industry concerned based on current technology. In applying the best practicable means to individual processes, HMIPI take into account any published guidelines and also local circumstances.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what standards his Department uses as safe background soil levels of PCBs, PCDs and furans.

Mr. Ancram: At present there are no agreed United Kingdom standards for acceptable levels in soil of PCBs, PCDs and furans. The Government are, however, seeking advice from a number of expert committees on safe levels.

Waste Incineration

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, pursuant to his written answers to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West on 29 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *471* and 25 June 1986, *Official Report*, column *200*, he will now report on his Department's study of waste incineration operations in Sweden.

Mr. Ancram: The Scottish Development Department will continue to keep abreast of the relevant literature on

waste incineration including operations in Sweden. The information obtained to date remains as set out in the answer I gave the hon. Member on 25 June 1986 at column *200*.

Chemicals (Incineration)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will set a public inquiry in the light of the concern expressed by the Royal Commission on the Environment that there may be insufficient and inadequately distributed capacity to burn off chemicals for which incineration is the best environmental option.

Mr. Ancram: No. My right hon. and learned Friend is not at present aware of any insufficient or inadequately distributed capacity in Scotland.

Rates

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give figures to show, for each year since 1973, the average level of domestic rates, net of rates relief, payable as a percentage of gross household income, excluding those households where rebates are received;

(2) what was the average unrebated domestic rates bill in Scotland, excluding local authority hereditaments, in each year since 1973.

Mr. Ancram: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

School Transport

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston, can expect a reply to his letter dated 3 October regarding the effect of the Transport Act 1985 on contracts for school transport.

Mr. Ancram: I replied to the hon. Member on 22 October.

Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to implement and enforce the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Circular NHS 1986(GEN)21 was sent on 2 October to general managers of health boards describing the content and implications of the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986 which came into force on 8 October 1986. The circular was also sent to chief constables, directors of education, directors of social work, health education officers, procurators fiscal, regional reporters to children's panels and regional chairmen of children's panels. Copies of the circular, which also refers to research undertaken into the incidence of smoking among secondary school children and suggests that the new Act clarifies the law and simplifies its enforcement by putting all tobacco products, including oral tobacco in sachets, on the same footing as cigarettes, have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and publicised by means of a news release.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Cervical Screening

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will list by region those district health authorities which do not have a call or recall scheme for screening for cervical cancer, detailing the date or dates on which Department of Health authorities presently plan to introduce either or both services.

Mrs. Currie: In January this year all health authorities were told to give priority to implementing computerised call and recall systems no later than March 1988. We are closely monitoring health authorities' progress towards achieving this objective through their annual outturn reports on short-term programmes. These showed that all those health authorities that were not operating a district-wide recall or call scheme as at 31 March 1986 were planning to implement computerised call and recall systems over the next two years. The health authorities concerned are as follows, together with the financial year in which they intend to implement computerised systems.

Regional Health Authority	*District Health Authority*	*Planned year for implementation of call and recall*
Northern	Hartlepool	1987-88
	Northumberland	1987-88
	South West Durham	1986-87
Trent	Doncaster	1987-88
	Leicestershire	1986-87
	Sheffield	1987-88
East Anglian	Huntingdon	1987-88
	Peterborough	1987-88
North West Thames	Hounslow and Spelthorne	1987-88
North East Thames	Bloomsbury	1987-88
	Hampstead	1986-87
South East Thames	Eastbourne	1987-88
	Hastings	1986-87
	West Lambeth	1986-87
Wessex	Swindon	1986-87
West Midlands	Central Birmingham	1986-87
	East Birmingham	1986-87
	Mid Staffordshire	1986-87
	North Birmingham	1986-87
	North Staffordshire	1986-87
	South Birmingham	1986-87
	West Birmingham	1986-87

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Birmingham, Erdington constituency in 1979 and 1985; what percentage change that represents; and what was the percentage change in *(a)* staff handling supplementary benefit claims and *(b)* all staff at his Department's Kingsbury road, Erdington and Walsall road, Perry Barr offices for the same period.

Mr. Lyell: Birmingham, Erdington constituency is covered by two of the Department's offices, Erdington and Perry Barr, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency.

Comprehensive figures are not available before 1982-83 and information on the number of individuals who claimed supplementary benefit is not available in the form requested.

Information that is available for the offices is as follows:

	Erdington	*Perry Barr*
Number of new and repeat claims to supplementary benefit (including unsuccessful)		
1982-83	21,503	13,619
1985-86	21,534	20,039
Percentage change	+0·1	+47·1
Number of people receiving supplementary benefit[1]		
1982-83	13,629	13,027
1985-86	16,348	14,510
Percentage change	+20·0	+11·4
Percentage change in complement 1982-83 to 1985-86		
Supplementary benefit staff	+29·8	+32·9
All staff	+6·1	+7·4

[1]Based on 100 per cent. count of cases in action at May.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claims and misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes. Examples of such changes are the introduction of housing benefit and postal claim forms.

AIDS

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to reduce the risk of acquired immune deficiency syndrome to students from countries known to be at high risk; if Her Majesty's Government have considered blood tests for those people on short stays in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: As my noble Friend has already said in the other place the present position is that visitors, or for that those returning to the United Kingdom, are not screened for AIDS and the Government have taken no decision to introduce such screening in the future.

Alternative Medicine

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he plans to meet representatives of practitioners of alternative medicine regarding the establishment of a state register of osteopaths; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps his Department take to monitor the standard of practice by alternative medicine practitioners; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what steps his Departmemt takes to monitor the adequacy of training given to alternative medicine practitioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Medical practitioners in the National Health Service, who must by law be registered with the General Medical Council, can offer to use any form of treatment, including alternative medicine, which they consider to be in the interests of their patients and which they feel competent to provide. Practitioners of alternative medicine who work outside the National Health Service are at liberty to offer their services privately, subject to the provisions of statute and civil law. The Department does not monitor or endorse the training of such practitioners. We have no plans to do so. The establishment of a state register of osteopaths is primarily a matter for the practitioners of that therapy. However, my noble Friend has met representatives of the General Council and Register of Osteopaths and the British Chiropractic Association, at their request, so that they could inform her of their proposals for state registration.

Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to implement and enforce the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986, and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Circular LAC(86)14 was issued on 8 October to coincide with the coming into effect of the Act. The circular, a copy of which has been placed in the Library, was sent to all local authorities and local authority associations, chief education officers and teachers' associations, chief officers of police, chief probation officers and probation committees, voluntary organisations, professional training councils and district health education officers. The circular refers to research which showed that 80 per cent. of children who smoked said they bought their cigarettes in shops or from machines, and to the fact that there were only 26 convictions in 1985 for illegally selling cigarettes to children. It suggests that the new Act clarifies the law and simplifies its enforcement by putting all tobacco products, including oral tobacco in sachets, on the same footing as cigarettes.

National Blood Products Laboratory, Elstree

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) why the national blood products laboratory at Elstree is behind schedule; when it was originally due to open; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the national blood products laboratory at Elstree will be open;

(3) what estimate he has made of the financial implications for regional health authorities of the delay in the operation of the national blood products laboratory at Elstree.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Reye's Syndrome

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the over-the-counter medicinal products sold for babies and children which contain aspirin or aspirin derivatives; and what advice he has received regarding the continued sale of these products.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 23 October 1986]: I understand that, following the recommendation by the Committee on Safety of Medicines in June this year

concerning a possible association with Reye's syndrome that aspirin should not be given to children under 12 except on medical advice, manufacturers voluntarily stopped the supply of all aspirin-containing products for children. At the same time they arranged for the recall of existing retail stocks. I am satisfied that the manufacturers would immediately follow up any detailed allegations that children's aspirin products are now still on sale and, if correct, would see that action was taken to withdraw them.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how significant was the risk factor study regarding Reye's syndrome in the decision of the Committee on Safety of Medicines on the use of children's aspirin; who paid for the study; what was the nature of his Department's involvement; and in what way he intends that his Department should support continuation of the study of work and its implications.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 23 October 1986]: The preliminary report to the Reye's syndrome risk factor study was one of several pieces of evidence which were examined by the Committee on Safety of Medicines in March 1986. The committee based its conclusion that the use of aspirin may in some cases be linked to the causation of Reye's syndrome on the totality of the available evidence which my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe) outlined in his reply to the right hon. Member on 13 June at columns *366-67*.

The public health laboratory services board was responsible for meeting the costs of the risk factor study but received a contribution towards those costs from pharmaceutical industry. The Department is responsible for funding the PHLSB but had no direct involvement in the study. The risk factor study is now complete but the PHLSB has agreed to continue to fund the British Reye's syndrome surveillance scheme for the next three years. The CSM will continue to keep the issue of Reye's syndrome and aspirin under review and will make further recommendations if this is warranted.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Committee on Safety of Medicines received any representations or communications from the aspirin manufacturers during the period in 1985 when it was considering the relationship between the use of aspirin and Reye's syndrome.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 23 October 1986]: Two papers were received from the Aspirin Foundation. These were among the many papers and publications from other sources considered by the Committee on Safety of Medicines in March and April 1985 before it advised at that time that the available evidence had not established a causal link between aspirin use and Reye's syndrome.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services precisely when the Committee on Safety of Medicines first received evidence from the United States that the number of reports of Reye's syndrome had fallen in line with the fall in the use of aspirin; what was the source of the information; wo sent it; and what was the response of the Committee.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 23 October 1986]: Evidence of a fall in the number of reports of Reye's syndrome in the United States of America was published in "Paediatrics" on 1 January 1986 and in the United States "Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report", on 7 February 1986. Both reports were seen by members of the secretariat of the Committee on Safety of Medicines shortly after publication. Evidence of a concurrent fall in aspirin use became available to the CSM's secretariat on 10 March 1986. These reports, with other evidence, were considered by the Committee on 26 March and its response has already been reported in the reply by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe) to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 10 June; at columns *145-46*.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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SESSION 1985–86

21st July—24th October 1986

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

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Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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